

# The Lord's Supper



# The Lord's Supper

Doctrines, Encouragements,  
and Duties

John Shower

Edited by Joel R. Beeke



Soli Deo Gloria Publications  
*. . . for instruction in righteousness . . .*

*The Lord's Supper*

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## CONTENTS

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Foreword . . . . .	vii
Author's Preface. . . . .	xiii

### **Part 1: Discourses before and after the Lord's Supper**

1. Union to Christ, and the New Creature (2 Cor. 5:7) . . . . .	3
2. Christ Going to Gethsemane (John 18:1–2) . . . . .	33
3. Spiritual Washing (1 Cor. 6:11) . . . . .	59
4. The Communion of Christ's Body and Blood (1 Cor. 10:16) . . . . .	85
5. The Sin and Danger of Unworthy Receiving (1 Cor. 11:29) . . . . .	107
6. Christ's Last Passover and Its Accomplishment (Luke 22:15–18) . . . . .	129
7. The Feast of Christ's Love (Song 2:4) . . . . .	157
8. Christ's Cure of a Disciple's Weak Faith (John 20:27–28) . . . . .	181

### **Part 2: Questions about Salvation, Assurance, and the Lord's Supper**

9. How Much Assurance Is Necessary to Come to the Table? . . . . .	207
10. Two Sacramental Questions on Our Duty to Take Communion . . . . .	237
• Are All Baptized Christians Bound to Partake of the Lord's Supper? . . . . .	237

- Why Do So Many Good People Live in Neglect of this Ordinance? . . . . . 246
- 11. Four Sacramental Questions on Those Unworthy to Take Communion . . . . . 255
  - Is the Lord’s Supper a Means of Converting Souls? . . . . . 255
  - Should I Partake If Unworthy Communicants Are Admitted to the Supper? . . . . . 259
  - What Is an Unworthy Receiver of Communion? . . . . 261
  - What Is the Danger of Unworthy Receiving? . . . . . 263
- 12. Wasn’t Judas Present at the First Celebration of the Lord’s Supper? . . . . . 275

**Part 3: Sermons Related to the Lord’s Supper**

- 13. The Purposes of Receiving the Lord’s Supper. . . . . 289
- 14. The Cross of Christ, a Christian’s Glory (Gal. 6:14). . . 307
- 15. The Promise and Oath of God (Heb. 6:16, 18) . . . . . 329
- 16. Christ’s Love for Us Like the Father’s to Him (John 15:9). . . . . 349
- Appendix: A Paraphrase of the Lord’s Prayer . . . . . 373

## Foreword

What does the Lord's Supper mean to you? Is it a mere ceremony performed to remember something that happened long ago? Or is it an exercise of faith by which you meet with the Lord? Is it a mere duty or a meaningful delight? In the Supper, do you worship in the presence of God and find grace for your soul?

As you will learn later in this book, Christ gave us the Supper as a sign of faith in His death for our sins so that believers are accepted by God. By eating and drinking as He commanded us, by faith in Him we share in the benefits of His death, and the Holy Spirit causes us to grow in God's grace. The Lord's Supper is a means of communion with Christ in His sacrificed body and blood (1 Cor. 10:16). Just partaking of sacrifices offered to idols is fellowship with demons, so partaking of this Supper is fellowship with God (v. 20). We fellowship with our earthly friends by eating a meal with them, and we fellowship with the Lord by doing this in remembrance of Him.<sup>1</sup> It is the banquet, this book teaches us, where we find in faith and experience that His banner over us is *love* (Song 2:4).<sup>2</sup>

The author of this book, John Shower (c. 1657–1715), was an English Presbyterian minister who served when the light of the Puritans was fading away under the persecuting regime

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1. See the discourse in chap. 4.

2. See the discourse in chap. 9.

of Restoration England.<sup>3</sup> The son of a rich merchant from Exeter, William Shower (d. 1661), and older brother to the prominent lawyer Bartholomew Shower (1658–1701), John was educated at nonconformist academies such as that of Matthew Warren (1642–1706). At an early age he distinguished himself by his grave and serious manner, diligence, obedience to his mother, fear of God, devotion to private prayer, and keen intellectual abilities.

When eighteen years old, he renewed his commitment to God according to the words of Joseph Alleine's (1634–1668) suggested covenant:

O most dreadful God, for the passion of Thy Son, I beseech Thee to accept of Thy poor prodigal, now prostrating himself at Thy door; I have fallen from Thee by mine iniquity, and am by nature a son of death, and a thousandfold more a child of hell by my wicked practice. But of Thine infinite grace Thou hast promised mercy to me in Christ, if I will but turn to Thee with all mine heart. Therefore on the call of Thy gospel I am now come in, and throwing down my weapons, submit myself to Thy mercy.... I do here take Thee, the Lord Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for my portion and chief good, and do give up myself, body and soul, for Thy servant, promising and vowing to serve Thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life. And since Thou hast appointed the Lord Jesus as the only means of coming to Thee, I do here on the bended knees of my soul accept of Him, as the only new and living way, by which sinners may

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3. On John Shower's biography, see W. Tong, *Some Memoirs of the Life and Death of the Reverend Mr. John Shower* (London: for John Clark and Even. Scadgel, 1716); *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 50:447–48. For a brief account, see Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans: With a Guide to Modern Reprints* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006), 531–33.

have access to Thee, and do here solemnly join myself in a marriage-covenant to Him.<sup>4</sup>

The illustrious preacher Thomas Manton (1620–1677) encouraged Shower to pursue the gospel ministry. He preached his first sermon at age twenty on Psalm 119:30, “I have chosen the way of truth.” He was ordained on December 24, 1679, by a group of Puritan ministers led by Richard Adams (c. 1626–1698), Bible commentator and friend of John Howe (1630–1705).

Though a young man, Shower regularly preached at a sponsored lecture at a coffee house on Exchange Alley, London, and served as an assistant pastor to the polemical Vincent Alsop (1630–1703) in the congregation meeting at Tothill Street, Westminster, London. Shower had received from the Lord a double portion of the Spirit of prayer, and his preaching was full of application “suited to strike the consciences of sinners and the experiences of saints.”<sup>5</sup> Shower’s first book, *An Exhortation to Youth to Prepare for Judgment* (1681), was well received and went through twenty editions over the next century and a half.

From 1683 to 1686, Shower traveled through Europe as a companion to the younger Samuel Barnardiston (1659–1709), nephew of his more famous namesake, making the “grand tour” regarded at that time as an important experience for young men of nobility or wealth. One factor in Shower’s decision to tour Europe was the hostility against nonconformists from the royal court and the Church of England. He returned briefly to London to resume his preaching at Exchange Alley,

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4. John Shower, “My Solemn Covenant with God,” signed Jan. 31, 1675, in Tong, *Some Memoirs*, 10, 12. See Joseph Alleine, *An Alarme to Unconverted Sinners* (London: by E. T. and R. H., 1672), 164, 166.

5. Tong, *Some Memoirs*, 76.

but rising persecution drove him back across the sea to Utrecht, where he visited Howe. At Utrecht, Shower met and married Elizabeth Falkener. The newlyweds moved to Rotterdam, and for three years Shower preached at the evening service of the Presbyterian Church of England, pastored by Joseph Hill (1625–1707), the renowned Greek lexicographer.

Shower returned to England in 1691, where after a brief ministry as Howe's assistant he became the pastor of the Presbyterian congregation at Currier's Hall, Cripplegate, London. A few months later, Elizabeth died, leaving him after less than four years of marriage a widower with their one surviving child, Ann. In 1692, Shower married Constance White, with whom he had several children, three of whom survived infancy. Shower's congregation grew to be one of the largest in the city, moving to a bigger meeting house on Jewen Street in 1692 and building a new facility on Old Jewry in 1701. Shower was assisted in ministry until 1708 by Timothy Rogers (1658–1728), who struggled with depression but bore much fruit in preaching and writing, and then by the younger Joseph Bennet (1665–1726).

Shower faithfully served the Presbyterian church at Cripplegate to the end of his life, though his last years were marked by grief and declining health. In 1701, his second wife, Constance, died in childbirth with a stillborn child. Shower found himself a widower again after a mere eight and a half years of marriage. Shower himself almost died in 1706 from a fever that put him in bed for three weeks; he regarded his healing as evidence that the almighty God answers prayer. Ann, his daughter by his first wife, died in 1707 when both she and her newborn child were struck down by smallpox. Shower suffered a stroke in 1713 but was able to return to preaching until he died from an asthmatic condition in 1715. In his last days, he was heard saying, "My God is good. He is good to me.

Though I am very bad, God is very good.” He was remembered as a “tender and affectionate” man, “a very compassionate minister and friend.”<sup>6</sup>

Over the course of his life, Shower authored more than twenty published works, including many funeral sermons, several of which were published together as *The Mourner’s Companion* (1692, 2nd edition expanded into two parts in 1699). Other works of note include *Serious Reflections on Time and Eternity* (2nd ed. 1689); *Practical Reflections on the Late Earthquakes in Jamaica, England, Sicily, Malta, Etc.* (1693), following the disaster that struck Port Royal, Jamaica, in 1692; *Family Religion in Three Letters to a Friend* (1694); and *God’s Thoughts and Ways above Ours, Especially in the Forgiveness of Sins* (1694), a moving book about God’s pardoning mercies to those who repent of their sins (Isa. 55:7–9).

The book that you are presently reading had its genesis in Shower’s *Sacramental Discourses, on Several Texts, Before, and After the Lord’s Supper*, first published in 1693.<sup>7</sup> The work consisted of a preface, eight “discourses” or sermons given before or after the Lord’s Supper, and a paraphrase of the Lord’s Prayer. The discourses range in topic from the meaning and responsibilities of communion to the new creation in Christ. A second edition was issued in 1702 in two parts. The first part consists of the material found in the first edition.<sup>8</sup> The second part is a volume of new material, consisting of four “discourses” that addressed questions about the Supper, four “sermons” on

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6. Tong, *Some Memoirs*, 74.

7. John Shower, *Sacramental Discourses, on Several Texts, Before, and After the Lord’s Supper* (London: for Abr. Chandler, Sam. Clement, and Sam. Wade, 1693).

8. John Shower, *Sacramental Discourses, on Several Texts, Before, and After the Lord’s Supper. With a Paraphrase on the Lord’s Prayer. The First Part*, 2nd ed. (London: for Tho. Parkhurst and J. Robinson, 1702).

related themes (the purpose of receiving the Supper, Christ's cross as the glory of a Christian, God's oath, and Christ's love), and three more sermons on Jephthah's vow and the necessity of keeping one's vows.<sup>9</sup>

This present volume is a lightly edited version of the second edition in both parts. We have moved the paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer to an appendix and adjusted the numbering of the chapters to bring the whole into one volume. Some chapter titles were shortened, and titles added to those lacking them. What had been "the second part" is now divided into part two (questions) and part three (sermons). The three sermons on Jephthah's vow are omitted because they are not pertinent to the theme of the Lord's Supper. Since "Sacramental Discourses" does not communicate much to modern readers, a new title was crafted: *The Lord's Supper: Doctrines, Encouragements, and Duties*. As the reader can see in the pages to follow, this title is distilled from the opening sentences of Shower's preface.

Thanks are due to Jay Collier for his helpful suggestions to improve this book, to Linda den Hollander for ably typesetting the book, and for helpful proofreading by Samuel Caldwell and Gary den Hollander. May God use Shower's discourses to enrich the church's spiritual communion with her Lord in his saving death to the glory of the triune God.

—Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley

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9. John Shower, *Sacramental Discourses, on Several Texts, Before, and After the Lord's Supper. The Second Part*, 2nd ed. (London: for Tho. Parkhurst and J. Robinson, 1702).

## *Author's Preface*

There are three things especially requisite to a worthy communicant: to believe and own the truths which our Beloved Lord would preserve the memory of by this institution, and to have a lively sense of the comforts and encouragements that may arise from thence, and then to perform those duties of love, gratitude, and faithful obedience, which result from our covenant relation to Him and the open profession of it. The doctrines, the encouragements, and the duties of Christianity are admirably connected and joined together. The principal of all these we are called to consider in this sacred ordinance, which yet is shamefully neglected by many who would take it very ill not to be thought good Christians, who live from year to year in the omission of it, who make no conscience of remembering the death of Christ in this manner. As if they had no Savior who died for them; or He had not appointed this way of remembering His dying love; or as if the command, "Do this in remembrance of me," because spoken to the apostles, did only concern them and the ministers of the Christian church. Whereas, though our Lord sat down with the Twelve, the command is given to them as disciples and representatives of all His church, rather than as apostles. Or if the latter, He gave it to them to dispense it afterwards to others (not excluding their own communicating, for they who deliver the elements as ministers do partake of them as disciples, Christians, and brethren). "What

I have received of the Lord, that also I deliver unto you," says the apostle, and if ministers are bound to deliver it, the people are bound to receive. If our Savior's words, "Do this in remembrance of me," relate to ministers as such, it is a command for them to administer the Lord's Supper; and the same command must be supposed to bind the people to receive it that does oblige ministers to deliver it.

There are some who omit it from superstitious, unbecoming fears and misgivings, as if our Lord were more to be honored by our absenting from His table than by frequenting of it. Many, on the other hand, are guilty of presumption and rashness by careless, unprepared approaching to it. Several cases are here spoken to which relate to both sorts, though many more should be added.

As to the manner of performing this duty, we cannot come too humbly in a sense of our ignorance, weakness, and sinfulness, owning that we are nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing, without His grace, that may be pleasing to Him, and that we have done very much to dishonor and provoke Him (especially by our recent transgressions), that we deserve to be cast out of His sight, and denied the privileges of His house and family, never to taste of the children's bread. But having renewed our repentance before we come, we are called to express our love, gratitude, and joy. When we view a dying Savior, a crucified Jesus before our eyes, lifted up upon the cross, drawing all men to Him, bowing down His head, and stretching out His arms to embrace us, as He appears all bloody, to frighten us from our sins, so He opens His side, that we may see His heart flaming with love. He calls us to behold His wounded body, with hearts wounded by a penitent sense of sin, and a growing love to the Redeemer. He calls us to seal a covenant of fidelity to Him, and to accept the purchased benefits of a gracious covenant, sealed back from Him to us.

Here we behold the Lamb of God, a sacrifice for those sins we have so recently repented of, removing that wrath which we so recently trembled at, as having justly deserved, and therefore we should approach this table with gladness and rejoicing. Here we are called to give public expressions of the love and honor we bear to the remembrance of Christ. We do it in thankfulness to Him for all He has done and suffered for us. Here we profess our faith, hope, and trust in a crucified Savior. We own Him for our Lord, and our Jesus. We declare we are not ashamed of His cross, or of any difficulties, trials, or sufferings we may be exposed to for His sake.

He needed not have cared whether we were saved or not, and yet how low has He condescended to purchase our happiness and salvation, and to assure us of it? What manner of love is this that the Eternal Son of God, incarnate, should endure a painful, ignominious, cursed death for us, that we might not die eternally? How wonderful and incomprehensible is this love! How pleasant should be the contemplation of it! Here is an abyss of love—adorable, almighty love (on this side of heaven, but leading to it) which we cannot fathom, but are called to admire.

A crucified Jesus represented, and commemorated, as a sacrifice for us—what more glorious sight can we desire to see? How should this awaken all our affections and, in some respect, puzzle not only our passions but our faith too as an object too large for our narrow thoughts, too high for our finite minds, too great for our wonder, and for our little love and joy! How delightful is it to be thus even lost in the consideration of this matchless condescension and grace of our Redeemer, when the object is too big for our highest raptures and transports, and we are swallowed up in silence and astonishment?

How should this love constrain and draw forth ours when we consider for what vile and sinful creatures the Son of God

gave His life, and made His soul an offering! How His love to us, enemies and rebels, was stronger than fear, or shame, or death—without bounds and without example! When we feast on this sacrifice, what can we do less, in requital for this infinite love, than devote ourselves, souls and bodies, to Him, as the purchase of His death and lay all our affairs and dearest concerns at His feet to be disposed of as He pleases! How can it be but our love to Him must be kindled, maintained, and increased by such an institution? Remembering and considering His love to us, until we are brought practically to conclude and determine that our love to Him is too little, if we love anything besides Him, except it be by His order, for His sake, and to His glory, except it be according to the prescribed rules and limits He has set us.

And how proper is it here to renew our baptismal covenant: faithfully to promise to be entirely the Lord's, to be obedient and resigned to Him, to be treacherous to Him no more, but steadfast and resolved in His service? Taking His law as our rule, His will to be our will, to love what He loves, to hate what He hates, to have the same friends and enemies with our blessed Lord. For here we put God in mind of His covenant with us, through Jesus Christ, and ourselves in mind of our covenant with God. And upon renewed repentance for any sins we have committed, after any instance of unfaithfulness to our solemn engagements, by unsuitable walking, we here implore His mercy and grace to pardon us. We declare at the same time that we desire to take hold of His covenant, that though we are sinners, we are not apostates—we confess our sins, and beg forgiveness, and repeat our resolutions of fidelity to Him. We trust in the unshaken faithfulness and truth of God to His gracious promises. We place our hope and confidence in the stability of His everlasting covenant, which the blood of Jesus (the blood of the covenant) has confirmed, and made

everlasting; not trusting in our own faith, but to His free mercy and invariable truth; not to our repentance, but His gracious pardon; not to our own preparations, but His merciful acceptance of us in His beloved Son; not to anything we ourselves can do, but to the merits of Christ, the fruits of His death, and the purchase of His cross, as dispensed and applied according to the rule, method, and tenor of the gospel promise.

This is our privilege, and this our employment at the table of our Lord. And there is hardly any subject [that] will better bear to be treated of, in several different methods, than this, or upon which repeated discourses by several persons may be more useful. I grant there are many excellent books already written to instruct men in the nature, and to direct and assist their devotion in the observation, of this Holy Sacrament. I design not to wrest them out of their hands into whose this may fall. I pretend not to add, but to urge and prosecute the same great end, and sometimes by the same arguments and expressions. I acknowledge my having profited by the writings of others. I hope it is what they designed. These discourses were acceptable to many when preached, and being since reviewed (some of them with some enlargement) I hope they may be of use, at least to those who heard them and desired their publication. And it must be granted that what is so universal and important a concern as a due participation of this ordinance ought to be treated and inculcated in as many different ways as may best suit the various capacities of several persons. It may be [that] a shorter account of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, with meditations and devotions adapted thereto, would be more proper for the younger and more ignorant sort. This I have intended, if God permit, but have not yet had time to do. The Lord follow this, and all endeavors, for the furtherance of real godliness, with an abundant blessing.



**PART 1**

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**Discourses before and after  
the Lord's Supper**



## CHAPTER I

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# *Union to Christ, and the New Creature*

A SERMON PREPARATORY TO THE LORD'S SUPPER

*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.*

—2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

Through the merciful forbearance of God, we now begin another year, and have outlived several, who, twelve months ago, were as like to have seen this New Year's day as any of us. That we may begin it with some serious reflections suitable to the beginning of the year and the approaching solemnity of the Lord's Supper, I have chosen these words as proper to both. They are brought in, as one inference among others, from the constraining love of Christ, which the apostle had mentioned in the 14th verse. Many useful things might be observed in explaining the context and showing the connection of this with the preceding verses. But I shall at present consider them more absolutely, and in the general.

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,” or, “let him be” a new creature. He ought to be so. The original will bear either sense. The words may be taken imperatively or affirmatively, for we find not [the word] “is” in the original. It is true that whoever is in Christ is a new creature, and it is true that he is obliged thereby to prove his union to Christ; he ought to be a new creature. Neither sense is to be excluded, that the state

of such as are in Christ, and likewise their obligation, may be comprehended. It is the character and qualification of such as are in Christ, and it is their duty. So that we may consider these words either as a doctrinal assertion, that such as are in Christ Jesus are always new creatures, or as a seasonable exhortation, that they should manifest that they are in Christ by discovering themselves to be new creatures.

In both senses the new creature is a necessary consequence of union to Christ. The connection is inseparable between these two. So that we may truly affirm that all such are so, and we may rationally exhort all that pretend to such a privilege that they would be so, and show it. But whether considered as a command from God or as a wish and prayer of the apostle, there are three things obvious enough to be explained, and spoken to:

1. Something concerning this privilege of being in Christ, and the import of it
2. Concerning this new creation, which is to be connected with it
3. Of the connection between them, and the universal obligation upon all that are in Christ to be new creatures; that if any man be in Christ, he is, he must be, a new creature; or where there is no such change, it is in vain to pretend to be in Christ; or he that is not a new creature is not in Jesus Christ; he has no part in Him, and shall have no benefit by Him

Every man's title and claim to a special interest in Christ, and relation to Him, must be tried by this rule. This is more fully expressed, "But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation

the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:20–24).

*1. “If any man be in Christ”*

Sometimes it will be necessary to speak concerning this union to Christ, from which we are said to be in Him, as sometimes Christ is said to be in us. And both are sometimes joined together, “He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwells in me, and I in him” (John 6:56).

There are three sorts of unions, which we cannot sufficiently admire. The first from all eternity, in the impenetrable secrets of inaccessible light. The second, in the fullness of time, in the womb of the virgin. The third is made daily by the Spirit and grace of Christ. The first of these is the essential union between the eternal Father, and the eternal Word, in the adorable mystery of the ever blessed Trinity. The second is the personal union of the human nature with the divine, in that unspeakable mystery of the incarnation. The third is the spiritual union between Christ and Christians, which depends on the two former, and has some dark resemblance of them. Concerning which let me mention a few things.

a. That there is a real union between Christ and the souls of believers, howsoever difficult it is to understand the manner of it. He is not only Emmanuel, God with us, as partaker of flesh and blood, having assumed our nature; He is not only for us, in the work of redemption, by giving Himself to God a ransom and sacrifice for us; but He is said to be in us, and to dwell in our hearts; and we are said to be in Him, and dwell in Him, as the branches are in the vine, and by many other images and ideas on union, is this set forth, by allusions and metaphors,

and similitudes of many sorts, to signify and represent to us this blessed union between Christ and real Christians, and as He did partake with us of flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14). We are said to be made partakers of Christ as the principle and measure of all spiritual enjoyments and expectations (Heb. 3:14), and to be in Him that is true, in Jesus Christ (1 John 5:20).

It is sometimes set forth by the natural union between head and members; at other times, by the marriage union; and both are discoursed of together. "We are the members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. 5:25, 30), by allusion to what is said of Eve as to the first Adam. He is set forth as a foundation for never-failing support, as a husband for the dearest love; as a vine, as a head for vital influence; as food and nourishment for the most intimate conjunction. He is said to be one flesh with us, and we are said to be<sup>1</sup> one spirit with Him. Yes, as Christ is said to be in the Father, believers are said to be in Him, and He in them (John 14:20). Yes further, He is said to be one with them, as He and the Father are one (John 17:21). And He is said also to live in them, and they to live in Him (Gal. 2:20). Insomuch that sometimes the Scripture speaks of Christ and the church as of one person where the church is called Christ (1 Cor. 12:12).

How amazing and admirable is the expression, Christ in us, and we in Him! "What riches and glory is there in this mystery!" as the apostle speaks (Col. 1:27). Whoever heard before of a servant's being in his master, or a disciple in his lord, or the members being in the head? But here is a mystery of divine love and grace, which the apostle seems with some kind of affectation to speak of, at every turn, and upon every occasion; to mention it several times in one chapter, in one verse; yes, and over and over in the same verse; so genuine

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1. Footnote in original: Edward Polhill, *Christus in Corde*, pp. 10, 12.

and so fervent was his love to Christ. If he fight or triumph, it is in Christ Jesus; if he blesses God, or God blesses him, it is still spoken of as in Christ Jesus: he speaks, as if he could do nothing without Him; his life, his motion, his very being is to be in Christ.

We must silently adore this wonder of divine love, and cover our faces in humble adoration for such an honor, which the blessed angels might envy, if they are capable of it: for however Christ be their Head, they are yet at His feet, they are not in Him, as believers are. It is true, the angels serve Him, and worship in His presence; they follow Him by millions, they compass His throne with flames of love, they quit heaven to obey His orders, they fly swift as the wind to execute His pleasure; but Christ is not in them, as He is in us; nor they in Him, as we are said to be. The name Emmanuel is to them an inexpressible name; they cannot say, God with us, in the sense that we can, for He took not the nature of angels at first, and He has not taken them into such a union with Himself as He has the sons of men. But:

b. That you may not mistake, remember that all Christians are not in Christ in a like manner. Some are so only by baptism, and a visible profession, others by a living union. Such a difference our Savior makes where He tells us, there are some branches of a tree that have only influence enough to bring forth leaves, and no fruit, and are cast off “as branches”<sup>2</sup>; they seemed to be branches in Christ; they appeared as branches; they profess union to Him, but were not what they seemed to be (John 15:6). In this sense I understand the being in Christ spoken of. I “was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ” (Gal. 1:22), that is, to the body

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2. Greek: *hos klema*.

of professing Christians there, as distinguished from the Jews, though there were many rotten members among them that were not in Christ by a lively faith. Therefore:

c. The great bonds of union between Christ and real Christians, or true believers, are the Spirit on His part, and faith and love on ours. On which account, Christ is said to dwell in us by His Spirit, and we are said to dwell in Him by faith. By the Spirit He comes down to us, by faith we ascend up to Him. It is by faith [that] we are joined to Christ as our foundation (1 Peter 2:6). And by the Spirit we are built together for a habitation of God (Eph. 2:22). And he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17). Our union to Christ immediately arises from the communication of His Spirit to us, and the participation of the same spirit with Him, by which spirit the divine nature, as the image of Christ, is formed in us (2 Pet. 1:4; Gal. 4:19). And the introduction of this new spiritual form gives denomination to the person. Christ enters into us by faith, and inhabits in us by His Holy Spirit. And of these two bonds, the Spirit is the primary one, as being the author of the other. And therefore believers are said to live in the Spirit of Christ, and to walk in the Spirit, and after the Spirit, and to be led by the Spirit. "Hereby," says the apostle, "know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (1 John 4:13; 2 Cor. 13:14).

I confess it is hard to conceive any union nearer than that between God and every creature; for God, as creator, is as near to every creature as that creature is to itself, and yet distinct from that creature, for that creature is not God. But the different sort of union must be distinguished by different operations. God is near to creatures in their natural state, working on them as the God of nature. Christ is near to the souls of believers by His Spirit, working on them as a head of holy,

gracious influence. The different operations make the great difference, though we shall not fully understand this until we come to that place and state where that which is imperfect shall be done away. However, we are said to be built on Him, as on a foundation; to be inserted into Him, as branches into a vine; to be incorporated with Him as a head; and what words can be used more significant of an intimate union? Therefore:

d. We may add that it is more than a relative and political union, such as is between king and subjects. It exceeds it in the intimacy of the union, as well as the benefits of it. The similitude between head and members, making one natural body, amounts to more. Besides, His kingdom is not of the same sort, and He rules His subjects after another manner. And the mystery of the Trinity in unity, to which it has some resemblance, carries it yet hither and further. It is therefore a most near and immediate spiritual union, whereby every particular believer is joined to the Lord. This is a great mystery (Eph. 5:32). Oh, how mysterious and ineffable is this union of the Lord and the soul!<sup>3</sup> Who would not admire at their proud disdainful folly, that while they cannot explain the union between soul and body, [they] are ready to jeer at their just, humble, and modest ignorance, who call this other a mystical union: or, because they know not what to make of it, would make nothing; and will not allow there should be any such thing at all, or would have it to be next to nothing. But have those words no sense belonging to them, or not a great sense? “But he that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit with him” (1 Cor. 6:17). This is a mystery, says the apostle, that has riches of glory in it (Col. 1:27).

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3. Footnote in original: “John Howe’s Funeral Sermon of Mrs. Baxter,” p. 10.

And that union is the foundation of fellowship and communion with Him, as the apostle speaks (1 John 1:3), that He may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. That is, that you may have like fellowship with God and Christ as we have. Not that our union and communion is first with the church, as some of late have argued, though therein they contradict a learned man, whose opinions, in other instances, they are very fond of—I mean Episcopius. For upon that place he says that this sense is carefully to be avoided, that we are first united to the apostles, and then to God and Christ. This is both absurd in itself, and of very ill consequence. It is in itself absurd because we, and the apostles themselves, are but brethren, in respect of union to Christ; they are united to Him in the same manner with us. And there are very ill consequences that would follow from that opinion, for then there must be union and communion with some men and company of men, before we can have union and communion with Christ, which error, by degrees, was serviceable to introduce the papacy. Let me add:

e. This union is not to be supposed without regeneration, without the renovation of our corrupt nature by the Spirit of Christ, in order to communion with Him. The union otherwise between Christ and us would be like Nebuchadnezzar's image, the head of gold, and the arms of silver, and the feet of clay. If there be not spiritual life from Christ by the quickening Spirit, the body of Christ would be partly dead, and who would ever endure a dead body to be joined to him, though it were the carcass of one he never so dearly loved?

f. This must also be remembered, that this union between Christ and us is to be brought about by mutual consent, and therefore often set forth by the conjugal union, to which

consent is necessary. Our Lord has laid the foundation, and declared His readiness to receive us into union with Him, by the publication of His gospel; and it is the work of His Spirit, to make us willing to yield ourselves to the Lord, that we may enter in union with Him, and be brought under the bond of the covenant. We must know Him, choose Him, and accept Him for our Teacher, Savior, and Lord, by a present compliance with His terms. We must devote and give up ourselves heartily, and genuinely, and unreservedly to be His; and then we may say, my Beloved is mine, and I am His; I am in Christ, and Christ in me.

And here is the great office and work of faith in this work, to bring Christ and our souls into this blessed union, upon which account we are now in Him, as hereafter we shall be with Him. When the work of faith is over, and we are brought to glory, we shall be with Christ, and shall be ever with the Lord; but now we are said to be in Him.

It is true, we are now said to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; but hereafter it is promised, we shall sit down on His throne with Him. Now He dwells in us, and we in Him; hereafter we shall be with Him, to behold His glory. For so He prays (John 17). And He promised the penitent thief that he should be with Him that day in paradise. Our spiritual life is now hid with God in Christ, as to present union by grace; but it is hid with Christ in God, as to eternal glory. The expressions are observably different; in Christ now, with Christ hereafter; now united with God in Christ, hereafter with Christ in God; in Christ upon earth, in God in heaven. For to be in Christ refers to the Mediator, and is by faith; but faith shall cease in heaven, and the Mediator will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all. Thus for a brief explication of the privilege of being in Christ.

*2. Let us consider what is affirmed of those that are in Christ, or what they are exhorted to, what they are if they be in Christ, what they must manifest themselves to be if they will prove an interest in such a privilege, that is, new creatures*

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,” or a “new creation,” for so the original will bear. And it is not in this place only, but several others, where the like expressions are used, concerning that great change that is made by the grace of God on the souls of men. It is termed a creation, for the greatness of the change; and a new creation, for the excellency of it.

One may be apt to think that the extraordinary conversion of the apostle Paul made so great a change in him that it is on that account he so often speaks in such terms; that he mentions so often old things done away, and the old Adam put off; that he speaks of a new man, a new creation, and new creatures, and a spiritual resurrection from the dead, and the like; as that glorious light, which shone around about him, when he was struck to the ground in the way to Damascus, might occasion him so often to use the expression of light; for, at every turn, he speaks of the Father of lights, the armor of light, the kingdom of light, the inheritance of the saints in light, of illumination, of opening the eyes, etc. But how fit a representation is this of the change by converting grace? As might be illustrated, by considering the state of spiritual death that we are in before, and by considering the nature of the change itself, and the effects and operations that do afterwards manifest and discover it.

We are created in Christ Jesus to good works, begotten again, born from above, quickened and made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Several words are used, according to the several powers of the soul, and according to the different objects the new creature is conversant about; for as this change discovers itself in the understanding, it is a

translation from darkness into marvelous light, and brings us to the true and saving knowledge of God in Christ. The first thing that God created in the natural world was light (Gen. 1:3; 2 Cor. 4:6; 1 Pet. 2:9–10). As in the will, it is a choice of God, and full purpose of heart to cleave to Him. And as to the different objects, it has also other names; as referring to Christ dying, it is faith; to Christ living, it is love; to Christ ruling and commanding, it is new obedience.

But here it is called a new creation. Not as if it were a removal of the old substance, or any of the powers of the soul; but a rectifying, a sanctifying of them, by setting up a new light in the understanding, giving a new bias and inclination to the will, turning the heart from sin and the world, to God and Christ, to holiness and heaven. Not changing the nature of our affections, but curing the corruption and disorder of them, and changing the objects about which they are conversant.

Some think the metaphor is taken from the proselytes to the Jewish religion, whose conversion to Judaism was accounted a kind of new birth, and they reckoned new creatures. Which our Lord seems to allude to in His discourse with Nicodemus, and wonders such a doctor in Israel should be ignorant of it [John 3]. Others think it may allude to the Jewish custom; with respect to their children, they taught them to read at three years old, and then instructed them until five, then put them to school, where they learned the law of Moses until ten, and for three years more they applied themselves to understand the Jewish traditions, and the mysteries of the synagogue; and when that time was expired, at the age of thirteen, they said a child was a new creature; that is, sufficiently instructed how to live and please God, alleging, “This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise” (Isa. 43:21).

Our state of nature and sin is ordinarily expressed by the metaphor<sup>4</sup> of old age. Our natural corrupt affections, that are born and grow up with us, are called the old man; as if since Adam's fall we were decrepit and feeble, and aged as soon as born; as a child begotten by a man in a consumption never comes to the strength of a man, is always weak, and crazy, and whining, has all the imperfections, and corporal infirmities of age, before he is out of his infancy. And accordingly, all that is opposite to this old, decrepit state, is termed new. And so we read of a new doctrine, and new covenant, new tongues, a new commandment, new man and the state of grace expressed by this, "all things are become new" (Mark 1:27, 16:17; John 13:34; Eph. 2:15). The man, when old, has entered a second time into his mother's womb, and is born again, and is become a glorious, beauteous, new creature, so that you would wonder to see the change. You have heard in the primitive church of a grain of faith removing mountains; the work of regeneration, the bestowing of a spiritual life on one dead in trespasses and sins, the making of a carcass walk, the natural old man to spring again, and move spiritually, is as great a miracle as that.

Therefore called a creation, because of the necessity of divine grace, and the power of the Spirit of Christ (that power that made us at first, and raised Christ from the dead); it is the necessity of that power to this change that is the principal ground of this term creation. The efficiency of it, by the power of victorious grace, making us a willing and holy people in the day of His power, comprehending habitual sanctification as the root and life of actual holiness. The excellency and extent of this, I might show, as to the inward and outward man, heart and life; all the powers of the soul, and members of the body, and our whole carriage, course, and behavior; and that this is

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4. Footnote in original: Dr. Hammond's sermon on Gal. 6:15.

common to all the children of God, all that are created again in Christ Jesus, all that are born from above; “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17). To this end:

*3. Let us consider the certain and inseparable connection between these two, that all who are in Christ are, and must be, new creatures*

Every real Christian is in Christ Jesus, his union to Christ does constitute him a living member, and his being a new creature does prove it. The one is his essence, the other his property, but they are inseparable.

What makes a man, but the union of soul and body? What makes a Christian, but the union of the soul with Christ? How know we that a man has a soul, but by the motions, actions, and operations of a reasonable soul? How know you that such a professing Christian is united to Christ by His Spirit, but by the effects and operations of this Spirit, making such a change in heart and life, from which they may be denominated new creatures. Therefore they are said to walk in the Spirit, and after the Spirit; and at other times, as the foundation of this, to be born of the Spirit, and born from above; so as the divine life and likeness is introduced. But more particularly:

a. They who are thus spiritually united to Christ must be new creatures, because they partake of the divine Spirit; the same Spirit that formed Christ in the womb of the virgin has formed the new creature in all that are in Christ; the same Spirit that quickened the dead body of Christ, and raised Him from the dead, employs the exceeding greatness of His mighty power towards them that believe, and by faith are united to Him; the same Spirit that carried out the soul of Christ to go to God as a Father, does enable believers to cry, “Abba Father.” For the Spirit of Christ is the spirit of adoption (Gal. 4:6). The same Spirit that led Christ into His trials and temptations, and

brought Him off with victory, does the like for all the followers of Christ. They are partakers of His Spirit. The blood of Christ cannot save those who are destitute of His Spirit.

The same Spirit of holiness conforms them to the image and life of God; they are under the conduct of the same spirit of humility, meekness, love, charity, prayers, courage, resignation, and the like, which acted in Christ; and this makes them like to Him; like Him in their judgments and opinions of things; like Him in their affections, like Him in their designs and ends, and like Him in a course of actions, by which they prosecute those designs for the glory of God. I might show their resemblance and conformity to Christ in graces, in the rise of them, in the kinds of them, in the exercise of them, all of which depends upon their participation of the same Spirit.

b. They must be new creatures if they are in Christ, because the new creature is an imitation of Him. It is a little model of Christ in its birth, and a conformity to His pattern in its growth, and fully so in its perfection. And therefore we read of coming to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13). All that are united to Christ are conformed to Him. Every branch in Him answers to the root; every member suits to the holy Head in heaven, and in some measure does resemble Him. That the members of Christ should be of a contrary temper to their Head, is utterly impossible.

I might here urge the imitation of Christ, as becoming those who profess to be in Him, in several instances: as in the inward delight which He took to do the will of His Father, in His active zeal for His Father's glory, in a patient submission to the hand of His Father and dependence on Him under all discouragements, and in His constancy and perseverance to do good, notwithstanding all the hatred and malice of the world, etc.

c. Because the new creature is represented in Scripture as a conformity to the death and resurrection of Christ (Phil. 3:10). By putting off the old man, we die to sin; by putting on the new, we are alive to God, and live to righteousness. We are hereby changed into the image of Christ, and that good work begun, which is to be finished and consummated in the day of Christ (Phil. 1:6). There is a conformity to His death and sufferings in the mortification of sin. Our old man is crucified with Him (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:24). And a conformity to His resurrection, in heavenliness of mind and in newness of life (Col. 3:1; Rom. 6:4).

d. Because nothing else will so prove our union to Christ, as to enable us to take comfort in such a privilege; no external advantages whatsoever will do it. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Gal. 6:15). The highest profession of religion without such a change will not save you. Except a man be born again, or from above, he cannot enter into heaven (John 3:5). Neither can he be accepted of God, or have fellowship with Him (1 John 3:2).

No external duties or performances will avail you without this; you may read, and hear and pray, and give alms, and do many other things, and yet not be in Christ; if you are not regenerated, renewed, and inwardly changed, by the power of the divine Spirit; if you are not made new creatures, you can never prove that you are in Christ. You may be baptized in the name of the sacred Trinity; you may continue in the bosom of the church, hear the sound of the glorious gospel, and receive the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper, and yet not be united to Christ. You may have some lesser change from the grosser pollutions of the world; you may have some partial reformation, which is far short of being new creatures;

some outward temporary change in your carriage and conversation, while the heart is unrenewed. In a word, our present fellowship and communion with God, our subsequent service and obedience in the fruits of righteousness, to the praise of God, and our final blessedness in the enjoyment of Him, do all depend upon this change, this new creation; and therefore be assured, none can be in Christ without it; none in Christ, so as to have any special distinguishing, saving benefit by Him.

### **Application**

1. Are none in Christ but new creatures? How many then must be excluded! How many of excellent and laudable qualifications, of great attainments and high professions, and moral accomplishments must yet be excluded and shut out from having any part in Christ; because they are yet strangers to this new creation; and consequently are not in Christ, but under condemnation. Mere civility, and a plausible inoffensive carriage is quite another thing. We need but view the lives and actions of the generality of such as are called Christian to confirm this, that the number is but small of those who are in Christ: how few have had any awakening convictions about these things? And yet many such miscarry.

2. How miserable is the condition of all unrenewed souls; without a change, they are excluded from all saving benefit by the Redeemer. They are not in Christ, and therefore are under the curse and condemnation which by union to Christ we are delivered from (Rom. 8:1). "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. 13:5). All our hopes of life and salvation by Christ depend upon it; the guilt of all our sins does otherwise lie upon us; and all the black clouds of divine vengeance hang over our heads; the wrath of God abides upon us; as if there were no

Christ, no gospel; and there is nothing between us and everlasting ruin, but a little breath.

3. Then none but new creatures have a right to the Lord's Table; for the invited guests are such who are in Christ. The covenant of grace cannot be sealed in that ordinance to those who are not under the bond of the covenant; the benefits purchased by Christ are not confirmed at His table to those who are none of His. I grant there is an unworthiness, as to present frame, that even those who are in Christ may have, but it is the unworthiness as to state that I am speaking of; such as are not in Christ having nothing to do to eat His flesh and drink His blood, for fear that they eat and drink judgment and condemnation to themselves. He that does not truly repent cannot be truly interested in the promise of pardon, and therefore cannot have a right to the seal of it. They that are dead in sin cannot receive nourishment by this spiritual food. The least that can be said, as one observes, is this: that it is in vain, and to no good purpose, for such can no more receive Christ in the sacrament than a chicken that should come into the assembly, and pick up some of the crumbs of the bread from the ground, after consecration, can be said to receive the body of Christ. But the danger is unspeakable of eating and drinking unworthily, for such eat and drink judgment to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body.

You may desire to come to this table, and you may say enough, it may be, to satisfy a minister of Christ, who cannot judge of your heart and conscience, and does not know the whole of your life; but you yourselves must look to it, that you be in Christ, and that you evidence you are so, by being new creatures. We can but warn and admonish you, and offer our assistance and help; at your own peril be it, if you come, and yet live in any known sins, and cherish the enemies of Christ,

though you profess to be His, and presume upon all the privileges of His house and family, as real members of it.

But, I will yet add that those who are in Christ, if they would have assistance and grace from the Spirit of Christ, to walk as new creatures, they ought, on the other hand, to take heed how they absent themselves from that ordinance. If they would either have the comfort of their being in Christ, or would have supplies of grace, to walk as new creatures, they should be frequent and serious in sacramental duties. Have you not weak graces to be strengthened? And manifold corruptions to be more subdued? Inordinate love to this world more crucified? Do you not need more ability to discharge several duties, and overcome diverse temptations? Do you not desire to be more partakers of the image, and life, and Spirit of Christ? Is your likeness to Christ so complete, your faith, in all its branches, so active and firm, your love to Christ so warm, your heavenly desires so fervent, your patience and resignation so perfect, your obedience so exact, your standing so sure, that you need no more influence of the Spirit of Christ? Should not your own necessity oblige you to be frequent in this work, besides the authority of your Lord, which is motive enough to those that are in Christ? And He requires that you should remember His dying love this way, and show forth His death until He come. It is proper work for us to begin the year with, to renew our covenant with the Lord, by partaking of the symbols of Christ's body and blood, giving up ourselves again to be the Lord's, with renewed repentance for the sins of the year past, and repeated exercises of faith, for pardon and peace, and grace, and righteousness, and life.

4. The next use may be of examination, to try whether we are in Christ, or not, by inquiring whether we are new creatures or not. Your love to Christ, your likeness to Him, your subjection

to Him, your fruitfulness in Him, will discover it. Are all old things done away with you, and all things become new? Is there still the old darkness and blindness that was upon your minds? Or, are you light in the Lord? Does the old deadness, security, and carelessness remain upon your hearts and consciences? Old thoughts, and old designs, old discourses and conversations? As little savor in the things of God as ever? As little victory over the temptations of the world, and the flesh, as formerly? Are your wills as rebellious and stubborn as ever? Are your desires after vanity, and your affections towards earthly things, the same as formerly? So for your hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, what change has been wrought? Does fleshy appetite, and sense, and carnal interest sway, and govern as much as ever? Or is there a new creation wrought in you? Have you a new mind and judgment, a new heart and new affections? Do you walk in newness of life? Is your internal principle changed, and the external rule of your actions changed too? Are you no longer conformed to the world, but transformed by the renewing of your minds (Rom. 12:2)? Is that sin hated and crucified, that before was indulged? Is that Savior prized (for to them that believe, He is precious, and the chiefest of ten thousands) that before was slighted? Do you delight in the law of God, after the inward man? Do you find the holy law of God written in your hearts, setting you against every sin, in yourselves and others? Do you walk in the Spirit, and after the Spirit of Christ, and not after the flesh, or according to the course of the world, as formerly? Is the life you lead in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God?

How do you stand affected as to inward spiritual duties that concern the inward workings of your thoughts, and conscience, and affections, and such things as none but God and you do know of? Is it as great a burden and trouble to your souls to act contrary to the renewed nature, as before to

contradict the inclinations of the flesh? Is prayer your daily work and delight? Do you cherish and promote the new creature? Are you restless after you have fallen into sin, until by repentance you recover pardon and peace? Do you grow up daily into greater conformity to Christ, and imitation of Him, desiring nothing more than that His image may be drawn more lively on your hearts, and expressed more fully in your lives according to the various providences of God that call for the exercise of such and such graces, and according to the various institutions of Christ, wherein such and such holy affections are to be employed? The knowledge of this union to Christ, upon examination, will give us the comfort of all those privileges which result from it.

Examine how matters are with you as to these things, and what care you take to maintain the bonds of union, to strengthen faith and obey the Spirit, and whether it be better now than it was a year ago. While merchants and tradesmen cast up their books and make up their accounts at the end of the year, let us not neglect the like work, as Christians, with reference to our spiritual state; let us not be less concerned to know whether we thrive or decay, whether we advance and go forward, or else decline.

5. The next use may be of comfort to such as are in Christ. Our union to Him is the foundation of all our fellowship with Him, and subsequent supplies of grace and life. If we are in Jesus Christ, He is made of God to us "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). Such shall be delivered from wrath, entitled to eternal life, have the pardon of all their sins, Christ as their advocate pleads for them in heaven, in Him they are adopted, and have free access to God, His Spirit dwells in them, their services are accepted, etc.

If we are in Him, there is no condemnation to such (Rom. 8:1). Such a man is not condemned, is not in a state of condemnation for the present (John 3:18). And such a member of Christ cannot perish, who by union to Him, is united to God, the fountain of life. Our Lord speaks of the union of the Father to Him as Mediator, and His union to us, as both in order to our perfection, and eternal felicity. “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one” (John 17:20, 23). But there is no reconciliation to God, no remission of sins, no adoption, no salvation by Christ, but for such as are in Him, whereas all things are yours, even life and death, things present, and things to come, when you are Christ’s.

There is a train of invaluable blessings following this new creation, and union to Christ, where it is truly wrought (Eph. 2:13–14; 1 Cor. 3:22).<sup>5</sup> You are brought under the bond and blessing of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:33). You are dignified with a new name (Rev. 2:17). You are begotten to a new hope, entitled to a new inheritance (1 Pet. 1:3; John 1:12–13). And you shall be preserved and kept by the powerful grace of Christ, to the full possession of it.

None shall pluck you out of His hands; because He lives, you shall live; nothing shall be able to separate you from Him. If you are planted into the likeness of His death, for the destruction of the body of sin, you shall grow up with Him, in the likeness of His resurrection (Rom. 6:5–6). Not only shall you receive influence of spiritual life from Him while you live, but by virtue of this union you shall die in the Lord and sleep in Jesus (Rev. 14:13; 1 Thess. 4:14). You shall be with Him in glory, and your bodies shall be raised by Him, and be made like His most glorious body (Rom. 8:11).

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5. Footnote in original: See Edward Polhill’s *Christus in Corde*, Chapter 8.

**[Exhortation]**

But, lastly, let me close with exhortation:

1. To all, to labor after union to Christ
2. To those that have good hope through grace that they are in Him, and profess to be so.

Let me exhort them that they would live as new creatures.

*1. Labor after union to Christ*

How earnestly should this be desired, how diligently pursued! For we can have no communion, no adoption, no freedom from condemnation, without it. Faith on our part, and the Spirit on Christ's, are the bonds of union. Let us carefully make use of the Word and prayer, in order to do both, waiting and begging of God, and using all the hopeful means that are in our power in order to do it. How earnest should be our pursuits of this privilege, how fervent our prayers, and constant our endeavors after it! Never leave soliciting the throne of God until the Creator and Father of Spirits have created another breath into your nostrils, another spirit into your souls, even the Spirit of Christ, whereby we are united to Him; lay yourself at His feet, and with all the violence and importunity, and humility that your distressed case may prompt you to, beg the Holy Spirit to overshadow you. And yet learn so much patience from your beggarly state as not to challenge Him at your own times, but wait His leisure, and observe His motions, doing all that possibly you can in the use of common grace to prepare the room against His coming; and continue in prayer, watching thereunto in the use of all the outward means which God has afforded you.

*2. Be exhorted to live as new creatures*

You are obliged to it by your baptism, and by your profession of Christianity. You that come to the Lord's Table are especially obliged, that old things should be done away, all things become new. You consider His sufferings from time to time, as represented in that ordinance. You there feast upon His sacrifice, and consider the cause of His sufferings, your own sins; and the end of them, your redemption from the guilt, and filth, and power of sin. Can you do this, and not feel the obligation to live as new creatures, and resolve upon it? Do you not there renew your covenant, and engage yourselves afresh to walk as the redeemed of the Lord, to all well-pleasing? Do you not there cast yourselves into the arms of a crucified Savior, and plead the merits of His death, and beg the supplies of His Spirit, and bind yourselves to strict fidelity to Him, as long as you live, under a grateful sense of His kindness, who has loved you, and washed you from your sins in His blood, that He might purchase to Himself a people zealous of good works? False are we to all this, if we do not walk as new creatures.

There are but two motives with which I shall enforce this. The text furnishes me with one, and the season of the year with the other.

a. The motive in the text, "old things are done away, behold all things are become new." I shall not consider it as amplifying the other expression, and so referring to the change of those that are in Christ, and consequently of like import with the phrase, "a new creature," but as an argument to urge and enforce it; and accordingly understand these words, as relating to the obligation of the laws of Moses; that that is now ceased; those old things are now done away; the shadows of the ceremonial law are expired at the coming of the substance which is Christ. We are said to be dead with Christ, from the rudiments

or elements of the world, respecting material and worldly things, either to do or forebear them; for of that kind were the ordinances and institutions of the ceremonial law (Col. 2:20). They were the first and lowest lessons, fitted to the infancy of the church; but now the kingdom of heaven is come by the erection of the gospel church, a kingdom which shall not be shaken, and the orders and institutions of it never be changed. Now a more noble and spiritual worship is to take place, those old things are passed away. No wonder if the scaffolding of ceremonies be taken down, when the church of God, the spiritual building, is brought by Christ to its full height.

Now all things are become new by Christ, the Mediator of the New Covenant. The testament He left us is a New Testament. He rent the veil of the temple in two when He died, and put an end, by His own sacrifice of Himself, to all the sacrifices and services of the Jewish temple; and therefore it is observable that the first time He spoke of His death was in the temple; but after His death, He never entered into it, though we read that He was in Jerusalem after His resurrection. We have a new sanctuary, a heavenly one; a new high priest, of a better order than that of Aaron; new heavens, and a new earth, as the gospel state is called; a new light, to enlighten the world, even the knowledge of God in the face of Christ; a new sun, even Christ the sun of righteousness, with healing in His beams; a new Adam, after the image of God, the express image of His person, and the brightness of His glory, in whom all fullness dwells. We have a new celestial paradise, into which the old serpent shall never enter; a new tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations; a new Eve, the church of Christ, bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh, formed of His blood and animated by His Spirit. We have new sacrifices, new sacraments, a new circumcision, a new Passover, a new Jerusalem, a new temple. Behold all things are made new. And

shall not we, that profess to be the disciples and followers of Christ by whom all things are thus made new, answer all this by being new creatures, that we may serve Him in the newness of the Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter (Rom. 7:6)? That is, that we being delivered from the manifold difficult impositions of the Mosaic law, all which we could not fulfill, and from the curse upon those which did not, we should now serve God, with new hearts, and lives, by the Spirit of Christ, according to the laws of grace.

b. There is yet another argument, from the circumstance of time, in the beginning of the new year, which makes the exhortation seasonable, to press you to be new creatures. And when may I expect to be attentively heard upon such a subject, if not at such a season, when I may hope several of you have had serious reflections, this very morning, upon time and eternity, from the conclusion of the last year, and the beginning of another; to awaken your thankfulness for the mercies of the year past, and your repentance for the sins of it, and your good resolutions, and self-dedication to the Lord for the future?

It will be sad if the experience of another year does not teach us some understanding, when day to day utters knowledge, and night to night might teach us wisdom. The very thoughts of our hasty time, measured by years, and months, and weeks, and days, should put us upon considering, how irrevocable and past recovery is the last year, and all our former years, it being utterly impossible to call back yesterday. Almighty power may stop the course of the sun, as in the time of Joshua, but to make that which is past to be present, and not past, is a contradiction, and cannot be done. And oh how small a point does separate and distinguish that which is past from that which is yet to come! They are divided by one moment, by an instant that is almost nothing; by that which we

cannot speak of without losing, it being gone while we open our mouths to say the least word about it. So near is death to life. The very nature of time itself may teach us this.

And certainly the changes of the year past should be very instructive, and give us many reflections, according to our sins, and mercies; according to the trials, and exercises we have been carried through this last year. May not all of you look back upon many changes the preceding year, of several kinds, those especially which God has made among us by death? We are called to review, how many of them we knew, and were acquainted with, with whom we familiarly conversed, not a year since, are now silent in the dust; while their immortal spirits are some in heaven, and others in the place of torment. And of the multitude that have died this last year, could we but separate the corrupted, putrefying relics of those persons whom we honored, valued, and loved, from the rest of the deceased, and view their bodies, as now they are; how affecting would be the spectacle? To think what they were less than a year ago; and to consider what now they are, as to their bodies; and the greater change there is as to their souls. But even as to the former, let us compare in our thoughts the figure they lately made, while acting their parts upon this stage, as living men and women among us; what a change is made in a few months, as to every one of them? And the like may be our own case, within a few months from this moment, long before the end of this year we now begin.

For consider it, Christians, this last year that is now ended is one made towards the grave. Another such may bring us home. Oh, that we may be found ready! Who knows, but as the last year carried off many of our acquaintances, and friends, but that our names may be among those who shall not outlive this? It is true, it may be, you shall live to see the conclusion of this new year, but, it may be, you shall not live until midsummer. It

may be, I may preach twelve months hence; but peradventure you may hear a sermon occasioned by my death before that time; or your own ears may be stopped, if my mouth be not; you may die, if I should live yet a few years more.

I cannot look around on this assembly but I must conclude that of all this number, it is past doubt, but some one or more will die before this year is over; I believe I need not hesitate to pronounce it. There is none can question, but if the number were much less, one or more would die within a year. Therefore the voice of God is to every one of you, "awake and mind your work; turn to the Lord, and seek after union to Christ, and see that you be new creatures, for you shall die before another year."

But you will almost all be ready to say, "To whom, in particular, do you speak this? Surely, not to me." Yes, I speak it to you, to every one of you, whether in youth or older; to you, parents, and to you that are children; to you, husbands, and to you, wives; to you before me, and to you on either hand; this call of God is to every one of you in particular; see that you be found in Christ, for you may not be found alive at the end of this year.

Oh, but I hope the contrary, say such and such; as for me, I hope I have many a fair year to come; I am in sprightly vigorous youth, or I am in settled, confirmed strength, and health; or I am but just entered into the busy world, or just now entering upon it, etc. But, how many younger, and more likely to live, have died this last year; and therefore why may not you be one of those who shall die this year?

Elderly persons are ready to excuse themselves, and say, they have many seniors to go before them; that many, who are older than they, they see, do yet hold out year after year. Their inward thought is that they have escaped many dangers, and been recovered from many sicknesses; and though they

are but weak physically and mentally, and have many infirmities and pains to presage their dissolution, yet notwithstanding these, they make a shift to live, and have rubbed on for several years under such weakness; and several of their acquaintance, as weak and sickly as they, have continued a good while for all that. And so, neither young nor old will admit the supposition as to their own case; nor you, nor anybody, will believe they shall die this year. And so the next year, I doubt not, your hearts will say the same as now; for there will be the same pretense; and therefore it is not to you I must speak of death, but rather with you joy of the long life, which with so much confidence you reckon upon. Well, shall I say then, "Go and enjoy this world, and live as you please if you dare put it to the venture; go and gratify your senses, appetites, and lusts, for this year, as you did the last; and never think of death, or fear it; you are not likely to die this year, or the next"? But, how unreasonable is such security, when some one or more of this assembly, you grant, may probably, or most certainly, die this year; and how can you be certain that you shall be the exempted person; or that your nearest relations, and those you love best, that they shall not die this year? Your parents, your pastors, your husbands, and your wives, and your children; and your bosom friends. You will as hardly admit the thoughts that they shall die this year; but if some or other of those that now hear me, that now look upon me, that now listen, and attend to what I say, should be called away to judgment before another year, why may not you in particular be the persons, or the desire of your eyes, those whose lives are dearest to you?

Certainly, to begin the year with such a thought can do you no harm, but may be improved to many useful purposes. However, I must tell you, if, after all the changes which we have seen within twelve months (and which every year brings fresh experience of), we will not look forward to our own

great change; if we will not heartily concern ourselves for our greatest, truest interest, and prepare for an everlasting state by voluntary, vital union with the Son of God, I must tell you, for a conclusion, that God changes not, and if neither the voice of His providence nor the voice of conscience, if neither the calls of the Word nor the motions of the Spirit, if neither the experience of others nor so much as we have had of our own, will awaken us to change our course, you must know that the holiness of God, His justice, and His truth, are unchangeable. He will not alter the terms of life for you and me; He will not find another way for us to escape condemnation than by being in Christ, and being new creatures. Therefore look to it that you may be found such. And in wishing and praying you may all be such, I do not only wish you a happy new year but a happy life, if it be for many years, and withal, a blessed eternity after death, which such as are now in Christ shall then enjoy with Him when days, and years, and time, shall be no more. God grant it for Christ's sake! Amen.



## CHAPTER 2

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### *Christ Going to Gethsemane*

#### A DISCOURSE AFTER THE LORD'S SUPPER

*When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron,<sup>1</sup> where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oft times resorted there with his disciples.*

—JOHN 18:1-2

Upon Thursday, the day before the crucifixion of our Lord, He goes to Jerusalem from Bethany, and there eats the Passover with His disciples, at the end whereof, He institutes the sacrament of the supper, and then makes a large stirring discourse, contained in the 15th and 16th chapters. Upon which followed His admirable mediatorial prayer in the 17th chapter.

Now, having said and done this, having said these words and sung a hymn with His disciples, He goes forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, etc.

The Jews, it is true, did not go out of their houses that night, after the celebration of the Passover (Ex. 12:22, 24), because of the Angel's passing by the houses of the Israelites when the first born of the Egyptians were to be cut off, that

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1. Cedron: Kidron. So throughout.

the Israelites might not mix with the Egyptians at that time but sprinkle the blood of the paschal lamb on their own door-posts as a mark of distinction. Whereas, our Lord having abrogated the Passover, and instituted His supper to succeed in its room, all the precepts that concern the Jewish Passover, with all the appendixes belonging to it, were made null and of no effect. And consequently our Savior might go out that evening, especially when the Jews tarried within door to avoid suffering the wrath of the Angel; but He goes forth that evening to meet with suffering, for He knew that Judas would betray Him that night, and that he was well acquainted with the place He went to, for He was accustomed to retire there with His disciples.

“He went forth” when He was to be betrayed and taken, as afterwards He suffered death without the gate of the city. He went out of Jerusalem, thereby declaring, it is thought, that the Gentiles had an interest in His sufferings, as well as the Jews; that it was not that particular people alone He was to suffer for, but the rest of the world were to be equal sharers in the benefits of His passion. “He went forth with His disciples, over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into which He entered,” etc.

In these two verses we may consider:

1. The place He passed over: the brook Cedron
2. The company that was with Him: His disciples
3. The time: after He had eaten the Passover, and instituted the supper
4. The place He retired to: the garden of Gethsemane
5. The reason why He chose this place: for meditation and prayer, the beginning of His passion<sup>2</sup>
6. His custom to retire there: He was accustomed to do so

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2. That is, the beginning of His last period of sufferings.

And lastly, I shall consider what practical instructions may be gathered from the whole, for our own use.

*1. The place over which He passed, the brook Cedron, a little rivulet of that name, between the Temple of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, that ran through a dark, deep valley*

In summer it was often dry, and in winter, or after the fall of any considerable rains, it was full. The cursed things were burnt here, when Hezekiah and Josiah purged the Temple and city of idolatry. The filth and uncleanness of the Temple was cast into the valley through which this brook ran, that our Lord passed over, which may mind us<sup>3</sup> of His being made sin and a curse for us, to abolish the curse of the law, to purge us from our filthiness, and to bring about everlasting righteousness for us.

As hardly two circumstances of our Savior's passion but had a type, so in this, for instance, we have an eminent one, in David's going over the brook Cedron, when, by the rebellion of his son Absalom, he was forced to quit the city of Jerusalem (2 Samuel 15). David was then forsaken by his own countrymen, and, as he and all the people wept when they went over the brook Cedron, to the ascent of the Mount of Olives, our Lord, when He went over this brook, retired to a garden on a part of that mount, and there prayed Himself into an agony, and wept tears of blood. As soon as David had passed over this brook, he worshiped God, and poured out a prayer, recorded in the 3rd Psalm. So did our Lord pour out strong cries and intercessions to God, on the same mountain, when he had passed over this very brook Cedron.

From this first particular, before I proceed further, we may learn to expect, in imitation of Christ, to follow Him in the

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3. Mind us: remind us, make us mindful of.

like path, to go through the dark valley of suffering, before we come to God's holy mountain. As He passed over the brook Cedron to the Mount of Olives, we must ascend likewise by the cross to God's holy hill. But for our encouragement, we may consider too, that He, having drank of the brook by the way [Ps. 110:7], has sanctified the bitterest cup of affliction to us. This little brook, this rivulet, would never have been fordable for us, but we must have been drowned in the waters of Cedron, if He had not passed over before us. But now a cup of consolation is put into our hands; He has prepared a path for us to Mount Olivet; He has smoothed our way to God's holy hill by His own sufferings and death, so as we need not fear to walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

*2. Let us consider the company wherewith our Lord passed over this brook, "with his disciples"*

There may be two accounts of this, the one, in reference to their future preaching of the gospel, the other, for their more resolute and courageous suffering for it.

a. As to their future preaching of the gospel. It was fit and necessary [that] the disciples should be spectators of the most considerable passages of our Lord's suffering, not only because some of them were to write the history of His life and death, and transmit this everlasting gospel to future generations, but they are also to preach to Jews and Gentiles in the name of Christ. And what more powerful argument could they use to gain credit to what they said than by being able to attest the truth of their history by their own evidence, and to say upon their own knowledge, "we...speak that which we have seen and heard"? The apostle Peter and the evangelist John, we find, insist much on this: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen" (Acts 4:20; 1 John 1:3).

b. Hereby they might not only be the better fitted for their ministry to preach in His name, but be thereby the better prepared to suffer for His sake. His example of patience, and meekness, and resignation, might be of singular use to them upon that account. He had foretold and forewarned them, by His discourse in the way, that they must expect to suffer. He had told them that when the shepherd was smitten, the sheep should be scattered. And what more likely to animate them to patience and perseverance than the example of their Lord's voluntary suffering? Especially if in any measure they understood the design, and reason, and end of His suffering, for if He drank of the brook in the way, they might well expect to taste of it. If He traveled through the dark valley, they could not expect a smooth and a pleasant path to glory. If He endured the contradictions of sinners against Himself, they could not think that they should escape opposition. Let us remember this, and not think it strange if we meet with such usage as our Lord and His followers have already done.

i. We may learn from the influence their presence with Christ might have upon their future ministry, by being eye-witnesses of the truths that they delivered, that if ever ministers would persuade others to believe any doctrine, the best expedient is to endeavor to be fully persuaded ourselves of the truth and certainty of those things that we deliver. No wonder if other men are not persuaded by us, if we speak to them such things as we believe not ourselves, or do either preach or live in such a manner as to give them reason to think so.

ii. From the other reason, to encourage them to patient suffering, we may observe that the example of Christ's courage and constancy should be very influential upon all His followers, and, if duly considered, is like to be so. For He is

our captain and forerunner; we are to follow Him, and fill up that which remains of His sufferings. All that we can suffer is but the gleaning of the vintage, after He has trodden the wine press alone. God has spoken it once, indeed twice have we heard it, that is, in the Old Testament and in the New, that sufferings are the way to glory, that many are the afflictions of the righteous, that through many tribulations we must enter into heaven, etc.

*3. The circumstance of time is next to be considered, when our Lord passed over the brook Cedron*

That is to say, after He had instituted the sacrament of the supper, after He had spoken those words of consolation and instruction to His disciples, and of petition to His Father, then He walked over the brook Cedron with His disciples. He went forth to meet with sufferings, and His disciples were with Him. How admirable is the wisdom and condescension of our merciful Savior, thus to antidote and forearm His poor disciples! Thus to prepare and dispose His fainthearted followers to be witnesses of His sufferings, and partakers of them, for after such a blessed preparative, what should be able to sink their spirits? After they had joined in such an ordinance as the Lord's Supper, administered by Christ Himself; after they had received such excellent instructions, and heard such a sermon from His own mouth; after they had been present when He put up such a prayer to God as that recorded in the 17th chapter of John, what could dishearten them or dampen their courage?

We may hence take notice that the participation of solemn ordinances and communion with God therein, is an excellent preparative to more than ordinary trials. What better preparation for patient and courageous suffering for Christ than the Lord's Supper, wherein we remember His dying love that should engage us to it? And so for other afflictions, even the

calamities common to men, the sacramental bread may be our staff and strength, to fortify and confirm our minds against all difficulties. The sacramental wine may be a cordial to our fainting spirits, to embolden us against all discouragements. On this account, they that neglect this ordinance are wanting to themselves, as to preparedness for, and support in, a time of affliction. And for this reason, we may suppose, the primitive Christians did commune so often, every Lord's Day, sometimes every day, whenever they met for public worship, because they were in continual jeopardy of their lives; and the multitude of martyrs in those times, and their invincible patience and perseverance, was much owing to this, and influenced by it.

*4. Let us consider the place He retired to when He went over the brook Cedron*

That is to say, the garden of Gethsemane. The word "Gethsemane" signifies an oil press. It was a little village situated at the foot of the Mount of Olives, on which mountain there were many olive trees, and so many oil presses in that village. The Mount of Olives has its name with relation to this, and the Jewish writers call it sometimes the "mountain of unction," sometimes the "mountain of light," sometimes the "mountain of health," because of the use of oil as to all these.

This garden of Gethsemane, as some think, was first planted by David or Solomon, and then enlarged and beautified by succeeding princes for their recreation and delight. If that be true, where they took their pleasure, the Messiah, the true Son of David, began His passion; in memory whereof Hellen, the mother of Constantine the Great, afterwards built a chapel there, which was visible in the days of Jerome; and some affirm the Virgin Mary, the mother of our Lord, was buried in or near this place. But to pass that as doubtful, it is very probable that in or near this village (near Jerusalem),

many of the rich citizens had their gardens and country houses, and among them some of Christ's followers, who gave Him and His twelve disciples entertainment; therefore it is said, "He often resorted there, with His disciples."

*5. But why He did so is more to our purpose to inquire*

Why our Lord chose this place to prepare Himself for His suffering and to begin His agony. And this may be answered in three particulars.

a. The first sin was committed in a garden, and therefore the beginning of our Lord's passion, for expiation of sin, did very fitly begin in a garden too. It was in a garden that man began to sin, and in such a place the Son of God began His [final] sufferings. The first Adam incurs the wrath and displeasure of God in a garden; the second Adam trembles, and groans, and sweats, and prays, for the turning away of that wrath from us, in a garden too; He there began His passion for our recovery. Our first parents lost the image of God by their disobedience, and heard the sentence of condemnation in a garden; our Lord comes to restore the divine image, and reverse the sentence of condemnation, by His bloody [final] sufferings and death, which begin in this garden of Gethsemane, as the promise of it was first made in the garden of Eden, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.

Compare Eden and Gethsemane. We were first seduced by the old serpent in the garden of Eden, and his head was bruised by the agony and bloody passion of Christ, which began in this garden of Gethsemane. In the one garden, the devil conquered the first Adam, but [he] is overcome by the second Adam in the other, when He resolved to drink the cup, saying, "not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). In the first garden, that of Eden, man indulged in the forbidden

fruit, and fell from God, for which our blessed Redeemer had a bloody sweat in the second, the garden of Gethsemane. We were turned out of the earthly paradise by sinning in the first; we have the purchase of the heavenly paradise by our Lord's [final] sufferings which began in the second. The beginning of our calamity, and of all the miseries of mankind, had its rise in the garden of Eden, and the beginning of the Messiah's [final] passion for our recovery was in the garden of Gethsemane. There our Lord signed the decree for His own crucifixion by His bloody sweat, as the pledge and earnest of His shedding His blood, the next day, upon the cross.

b. Another and more evident reason why our Lord chose this garden was because it was a solitary place, fit for meditation and prayer, and the more solemn preparation of Himself for His crucifixion, which was now so near. He was now in prospect of His approaching death; He knew that within a few hours He should be apprehended and taken, judged and condemned to a shameful cross; and therefore [He] retires here for meditation and prayer, concerning it. To bear the curse of the law, and struggle with the wrath of God, the due wages of our sin, which He undertook to expiate, and to conflict with all those sufferings antecedent and concomitant to such a death, needed such preparation. Indeed, the solemn resignation of Himself to the will of God, by prayer, in this garden, before He offered Himself upon the cross, was necessary as the accomplishment of a legal type that prefigured it; for all the Levitical sacrifices were first consecrated by prayer, before they were burned upon the altar. This Lamb of God, the truth of all those sacrifices, the substance of all those types, was first to devote Himself to God by prayer, before He was nailed to the cross; and this garden of Gethsemane, being a solitary place, was fit for the purpose.

c. I may add another reason. He went there because it was a place that Judas knew of, where His enemies might be sure to find Him, and so accomplish the eternal counsels of God concerning His sufferings and death. Several times before this, they endeavored to lay hands on Him, but His hour was not come. But now He was willing and resolved to die; and therefore knowing that Judas would betray Him, and having bid him do quickly what he intended to do, He does not go about to abscond and hide Himself to prevent it. He retires to this garden which the traitor was well acquainted with; and when he comes with a company to take Him, He tells them more than once, He is the person they seek for.

Let me make a few reflections on this particular. As:

i. Since our Lord's [final] passion began in a garden, let me caution you not to abuse your gardens, and places of retirement, and recreation, to vanity and sin, but improve them by holy meditation, when you are walking there. How often is Christ dishonored in such places, either when you are in company or when you are alone? In company, by intemperance in banqueting, or by vain or wanton discourses, or by uncharitable and backbiting stories of others, etc. Or when you are alone, by wanton and lustful thoughts, by speculative uncleanness, wicked projects, etc. But thus to retire into a garden is to retreat from men, and fall into the hands of the devil. Such persons imitate their mother Eve, in the garden of Eden, and hold a dialogue with the old serpent.

Others, who are less criminal, are yet to be reprov'd, that make no holy improvement of such places, but only for recreation and pleasure, to gratify their senses. Every wife and good man loves sometimes to be alone, and ought to be so, for serious meditation. Now a garden is a fit place for such a purpose, and may be of excellent use to such an end. And

there is no object can meet our eyes, or affect any of our senses there, without giving us some notices of God, and directing us to some useful instructions in reference to ourselves, if we did not lack a holy heart and spiritual wisdom to improve them.

Especially in your garden walks, meditate on the garden of Eden, and think of this garden of Gethsemane. Consider how man sinned in the one, and how Christ suffered in an agony in the other. First, from the garden of Eden, you may take occasion to contemplate the state of innocence, the entrance of sin, the fall of our first parents, the subtlety of the tempter, the danger of gratifying the sensual appetite, from their example in eating the forbidden fruit, the prevalence of temptation, when a near and beloved relation is the instrument of the devil to urge it, etc. Secondly, think of the garden of Gethsemane too, when you are delighting yourself in some pleasant walk in your own garden. Think how the Son of God lay prostrate on His face in an agony in this garden of Gethsemane. When you look upon a fruit tree, especially a vine, or taste of a grape, remember the blood of Christ that trickled from His sacred body. If you are sometimes merry and cheerful with your friends in a garden, forget not how your Savior was exceeding sorrowful: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death" (Mark 14:34). When you are cooling yourselves in the shade, remember His agony, and bloody sweat, under the apprehensions of the wrath of God, due to your sin. How His soul boiled up, as one of the Greek expressions does signify, and His blood broke out at every part of His body, with [the] extremity of the heat. You may consider how the first Adam was tempted by an evil angel in the garden of Eden, and the second was comforted in His agony by a good one. Adam's sentence in the former was to get his living by the sweat of his brow; Christ, by His bloody sweat, in this, procures our life. And let not such places be abused to sin and vanity,

that may so easily be improved, to put us in mind of such important truths.

ii. In that this was a solitary place, we may observe that it is fit to retire for meditation and prayer to some secret place, from the company and observation of others. There are many things which are proper enough, and may become us in an affectionate prayer in secret, especially for a penitent, which are not allowable in social worship, or public prayer with others. Prostration of ourselves on the ground, beating the breast, extraordinary sobs and sighs, plentiful tears, and passionate expostulations with God, etc., which either modesty or prudence may restrain in public, may be used with greater liberty in secret, where is no temptation to hypocrisy or vainglory to abuse them. And therefore our Lord directs us (Matthew 6) that we enter into our closets, and shut the door, and then pray to our Father, who is in heaven, who sees in secret, and will reward us openly.

iii. In that Christ retires here to prepare Himself, with the greater solemnity, for His approaching death, we may learn that whenever we have a prospect of our change at hand, we should not content ourselves with habitual preparation, but use a more solemn, distinct, and actual preparation for it. Our Lord, no doubt, was always in a readiness for that which He knew was the great end of His incarnation; and yet the night before His sufferings, He retires into this garden to prepare Himself for that hour. We should always so live as to be fit to die, because every hour we make some steps towards the grave. Every thought, every word is a sand running from the glass of time. We sleep every night in the outer chambers of death, and should by prayer prepare ourselves for it, even for that image of death—and shall we not much more for death itself, when

we have a prospect of its approach, in whose arms we must rest prisoners, until the great morning of the resurrection?

If God give us notice and warning by old age, or a dangerous sickness, or a languishing body, or by any other method, that we shall shortly leave this world, solemn, actual preparation in such a case is fit and necessary. If God tell any of you, by a bodily sickness, your change is near; if the decays and infirmities of old age (the most incurable of all diseases) tell you that you have not long to live, that it is high time to set your hearts and your houses in order, you ought actually to prepare solemnly to do so. You that have one foot in the grave already, forget not this, for fear that the devil trip up the other before you are ready. But you who have served the Lord from your youth, and have the comfortable review of your past sincerity in walking with God, you may rejoice upon any such summons that your race is almost run. Your warfare will shortly be accomplished. You have but a few steps more of your pilgrimage to make, a few temptations more to resist, a very little time longer of trial and conflict, before you shall receive the end of your faith and hope, and be forever with the Lord. Should you not then, with such a warning, stir up the grace of God, quicken holy desires, strengthen faith, and exercise it about the invisible world, and solemnly resign yourselves into the arms of the Redeemer?

iv. Because this was the place that Judas knew of, where he might find our Lord, and betray Him, let us take notice of Christ's willingness and resolve to suffer death, and what an obligation it lays upon us of love and gratitude to this merciful Savior. This I shall a little urge, as suitable to the past solemnity of this day to make us thankful, who have been partakers of the memorials of His dying love in the sacrament of the supper.

He was free and voluntary in suffering. He went to the place which Judas knew of, though He knew Judas would come and betray Him. He freely offered Himself in the council of God, to undertake our redemption. He voluntarily left His Father's bosom in the fullness of time, to assume our nature, and therein suffer and die. He was not forced into a state of poverty and humiliation, but for our sake became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich. The necessity of His death arose from His own holy will, His free act and undertaking, which does not lessen His willingness but heightens the obligation of it. It had been injustice to punish an innocent who was unwilling to suffer in the place of a criminal, but He gave Himself [as] a sacrifice of a sweet smelling odor to God for us. He was not driven by force and violence, as the legal sacrifices to the altar, but He comes to the door of the Tabernacle, He enters into this garden that Judas knew of. He endeavors not to go out of the way to escape their malice, but chooses a place that the traitor was acquainted with. He had a baptism to be baptized with, and He longed for its accomplishment. He walked forth of His own accord, over the brook Cedron, with His disciples, into this garden, where He knew He should be taken; and when they came to take Him, He permits Judas to kiss Him, which was the sign he had given them to distinguish the person. He twice tells the officers that He was He whom they sought for. He would not suffer an apostle to use a sword in His defense, though He could have commanded legions of angels for His guard. He proves that He might have escaped if He would, for He speaks but a mild word, saying, "I am he," and they all fall to the ground, as if He had come to apprehend them, and not they Him. After this, He would not work a miracle to gratify the curiosity of Herod, and make him His friend, in order to His deliverance. Indeed, He was silent under all the accusations of the false

witnesses, and afterward bore His own cross, as far as He was able, towards the place of execution; and then He poured out His soul to death, and rendered up His spirit to His Father, saying, "It is finished."

And that last circumstance is very considerable to prove His willingness, for we read that when they came to break His bones, and found Him dead, which prevented the breaking of His bones, and accomplished the prophecy concerning Him, which says, "A bone of him shall not be broken" (John 19:36), they wondered He was dead so quickly; so quickly indeed, when immediately before He gave up the ghost, He cried with a loud voice, which sufficiently declared that no man took away His life, but that He voluntarily laid it down, for having cried with a loud voice, and thereby given sufficient proof that His strength was not gone, that His spirits were not exhausted, but He might have continued longer alive, He then bowed His head in token of reverence to His Father, and gave up the ghost, which was a circumstance so considerable that a centurion who stood by observing it was thereupon converted, and gave God the glory.

But it may be objected, though His coming into this garden might be a proof of His willingness, yet what passed there seems to intimate the contrary. Why else does He pray so earnestly that the cup might pass from Him, if He was willing to drink it?

I answer that even in the time of His agony, when He seemed most unwilling, as man, even when He prayed, that the cup might pass from Him, yet was He still willing as Mediator. The text says, He began to be exceeding sorrowful, and sore amazed, saying, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. 26:38). The original words are very emphatic, to express sadness, and fear, and such affections of the soul; His soul, not His body; nor His soul with sympathy only with His body; for He was here alone in the garden, crucified, as it were, without a cross. His body here suffered by reason of His

soul. The whole nature of man had sinned, and the soul being the principal in the commission of sin, the Redeemer, who was to expiate sin, suffered in His soul: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," insomuch that clods of blood dropped from Him, though there was no visible hand to strike Him, which makes Him pray and cry in such a manner to His Father for the passing away of the cup, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me" (Matt. 26:39), "Father, save me from this hour" (John 12:27). Oh, what pain, what fear, what horror, what dismal apprehensions and cruel sufferings must force such words of complaint from such a heart as His! But, no wonder His cries were so strong, His prayers so earnest, His complaints so loud, and the comfort of an angel not sufficient for His support, when the greatness of His agony, and the extreme sufferings of His soul are above our thoughts to conceive, who understand so little of the evil of sin, and the vengeance due to it, so little of the terror of the Lord, and the power of His wrath as a righteous avenger.

However, there is a great difference between what Christ suffered, and what the damned in hell suffer. For they hate God and holiness, and are hated of Him and forsaken by His Holy Spirit, and are under the power of sin, and are tormented by the conscience of their personal guilt. But what Christ suffered was for us, and He was still in the love of God, and continued to love Him, etc.

Let us consider Him encompassed with grief, and seized by sorrow, appalled with fear, lying prostrate on His face on the ground deprecating that cup of vengeance which the justice of God had mingled, saying, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!"

He prays again, a second time, in the same place, to the same purpose, "Abba Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass." He adores His majesty, He owns His omnipotence, He takes

hold of His power, He pleads His filial relation, with all imaginable earnestness, submission, and importunity: “Father, if it be possible,” and, “with thee all things are possible”; “Abba Father, holy Father, let this cup pass from me”; and then He groans, and sweats, and His sweat was, as it were, “great drops of blood falling to the ground.”

He prays again, the third time, using, in effect, the same words, as if nothing else would, yet His importunity might, prevail for the removal of the cup. And yet notwithstanding all this, He was then willing. All the struggling of His innocent nature issued in this, that the will of God should be done, and His glory be accomplished: Holy Father, glorify Thyself. “Not my will, but Thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). It was for this end I came into the world, “for this cause came I unto this hour” (John 12:27). The desire of His human soul submits and yields to the determination and will of His Father. And therefore those words, “If it be possible,” must be explained by those other, “If thou wilt,” if it be most for Thy glory, of a possibility in respect of the divine will and glory, rather than of the divine power. And having two natures, He must needs have two wills; He could not else be the true Son of God, and true man. He desires to decline His sufferings as a man, for so they were against nature; but as they were the means to reconcile us to God, He is willing, as Redeemer, to undergo them. We may abhor a medicine as bitter, and yet resolve to take it as wholesome. So that after all the reluctance of His human nature, He was still willing; and His entering into this garden, when He knew that Judas was acquainted with the place and would find Him there, and betray Him, is a proof of it.

*6. It was our Savior’s custom to retire to this garden*

He was “accustomed to resort there with his disciples.” This garden of Gethsemane was on the side of the Mount of Olives,

and that we are told was at the distance of a Sabbath day's journey from Jerusalem (Acts 1:12). If we reckon from the foot of the mountain, or the nearest part of it to the city, it is thought to be about five or six furlongs, or 2000 cubits, or half yards, computing by that cubit after which the tabernacle and all things about it were measured. And it is most probable that the people in the wilderness were to keep from the tabernacle at the distance of 2000 cubits; and, on that account, this distance is supposed [to be] the measure of a Sabbath day's journey, when they went to the ark to worship. It is an ordinary tradition among the Jews that it was not lawful on their Sabbaths to walk above 2000 cubits, which seems to be founded on that text (Josh. 3:4), where the people are commanded in their march after the ark, and on either side of it, to keep at the distance of 2000 cubits; and when they encamped, did usually pitch their tents at that distance from the ark; and so the custom arose of traveling but 2000 cubits on their Sabbath days, which is reckoned not above half a mile. It may be, for this reason, the Holy Ghost measures the distance between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives by a Sabbath day's journey, and not by so many furlongs, because, in fair weather, many devout Jews were accustomed to retire there for meditation, after the public worship was over. From hence let me make two reflections for our own practice, and so conclude.

a. Since our Lord was accustomed to retire from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives for meditation and prayer, let me hence take occasion to press these duties. It is certainly one of the best evidences of an upright Christian to be serious in this secret work. It is of mighty advantage to our growth in grace, to the evidence and comfort of it; and he deserves not the name of a serious Christian who can pass whole days and weeks contentedly without meditation and secret prayer. Our

steadfastness in the ways of God, and our daily walk in holy security and peace, is manifestly assisted by it. Such a course cannot consist with regarding and indulging deliberately any known sin. This will be a good argument of our integrity before God, this constant intercourse and communion between God and us; these frequent visits to heaven will be so, conversing with God, and pouring out our hearts before Him in secret, retiring as it were, to the other world, so as no temptation of applause or reputation from men can be thought to bias or mislead us; when no eye sees us but the great searcher of hearts; when no ear hears us but that of our invisible judge; when no hand can reward us but the omnipresent Lord, our Father and our Redeemer in heaven, who “seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly” (Matt. 6:4). You have been often told that the conscientious performance of secret prayer will make you leave sinning, or a course of sin will make you desist daily serious praying.

b. I infer from this example of our Lord that after the participation of solemn ordinances, especially on the Lord’s day, it is very fit and useful for Christians to retire by themselves, to spend some time alone in meditation and prayer; to call yourselves to an account, to reflect on your ways and frame; to make a trial of your state and temper; to observe your spirits, how they have been influenced, or not, by the divine Spirit in the solemn duties of worship; to humble yourselves before God, for the sins you are convinced of, such especially as other men cannot charge you with, but God and conscience know you are guilty of; to thank God for His numberless mercies, to beg the suitable supplies of His grace, and whatever blessings you stand in need of, for you and yours. This is the right improvement of Sabbath, and sacraments, and such seasons of mercy, as God is pleased to continue to us, in order to eternal

life; and without something of this kind, though you frequent the public assemblies, and sit before Him as His people, you do but mock God, and trifle with heaven, while you pretend to religion, and assume the name of Christians. You act a scene, and a part, and have only a form of godliness, but must expect to pay dearly for your solemn hypocrisy.

**[Practical Instructions]**

Let me therefore advise you to three things in your retirement after the public worship and solemn ordinances of Christ, as the end and reason for which I will press it.

*1. That you retire in order to the confession of sin and the exercise of repentance*

That when you have finished the public work of a Sabbath, or come from any special ordinance of the gospel, by meditation afterwards, you would reflect upon yourselves, and take notice of your defects, and failings, discomposures, and distempers of mind; what unsuitableness of spirit there has been to heavenly mysteries, or what unprepared addresses we have made to the Majesty of heaven and earth, the roving of our fancies, the vanity of our thoughts, etc.

We should humble ourselves on such occasions, that we attended with no more reverence and diligence to the Word of God; that we did not receive the truth in the love of it; that it was not mixed with faith; that we did not make particular and close application of it to ourselves; that our hearts were not lifted up in the ways of the Lord, and our souls under an awe of God in prayer, with becoming affections, and suitable exercise of grace, under the influence of the divine Spirit, and in the name of the Mediator. That we approached the table of the Lord with no more examination of our hearts and ways before we came, with no more repentance for our past guilt,

no more hungering after the bread of life, no more spiritual thirst for the fountain of living waters. That we beheld the memorials of a broken, bleeding Savior with no more raised affection; that we remembered the agonies of His soul with no more correspondent impressions upon our own. In a word, we may lament (for the most part I fear we may) after such ordinances, that our spirits were but in a common frame, our repentance so partial, our love so cold, our faith so weak, our hope so low, desires so faint, charity so narrow, thankfulness and joy so little, in the participation of such glorious mysteries, in conversing with such adorable objects, under the offers of such rich grace, under the loud calls to such manifest duty, under the assurances and expectations of such great and blessed things as the word and sacraments propose and seal.

*2. Another reason and ground of this retirement is in order to petition and intercede for needful mercy to ourselves and others*

Have we been convinced of any duty we had formerly neglected? Shall not that reflection on it excite us to beg wisdom and strength to perform that duty? Has any sin been called to remembrance by the preaching of the Word? Should we not beg forgiveness and grace to leave and forsake it, as the best testimony of our repentance? Have we joined in prayer and supplication with others for the greatest blessings, and are sensible we are undone if God deny us, and shall we not beg the same things again in secret? Have we renewed our vows, and entered into fresh obligations to be the Lord's, and shall we not beg that God would heal our past backslidings, and confirm our holy resolutions? That having sworn we may perform it, that we will keep His righteous judgments?

You therefore, who have this day been at the table of the Lord, let me beseech you, in a special manner, to retire when you come home, and think of these things, that you may wrestle with God in secret for a future blessing. Oh, what can He deny you, when He has given you His Son, and sealed that gift in so solemn a manner? Go therefore, and represent to Him all your necessities and needs, all your griefs, and groans, and complaints, and fears, and secret desires. Pray earnestly for yourselves, your families and relatives, for your ministers and fellow Christians, for all that have communed this day with you, and in other assemblies; and for all that desired to do so that were providentially hindered; for all of your brethren, for all the churches of Christ throughout the world, especially for those in this nation; for those in others, which are oppressed by the tyranny of the sons of violence, for all actual believers, for all those for whom Christ died, for your friends and enemies, for the whole world.

*3. Retire in secret to express your gratitude and thanksgiving to God for mercies received and hoped for*

Thank Him for the liberty of His sanctuary, for public assemblies of social worship, for Sabbaths, and sacraments, and the ministry of the gospel, considering how the case now is with our brethren and neighbors in other places. Thank Him for another opportunity for the communion of the body and blood of Christ, and for so much health as to be able to partake of such a privilege in a public solemnity. But above all, as the foundation of all the rest, for that inestimable blessing of divine love, the gift of His Son, for the inexpressible love of Christ, in giving Himself for us sinners, and enemies, and while we were so.

Thank Him for the means of grace, and the hopes of glory, for any good hope through grace of present pardon and

everlasting communion with God in heaven; for the offer of forgiveness by a covenant of grace; for the promise of eternal life by Christ, purchased by His blood, confirmed by the word and oath of God, who cannot lie, witnessed to so many ways by the Holy Spirit, made sure by the everlasting covenant, and that sealed by baptism, and by the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Indeed, let us thank Him for another such solemn occasion of paying homage to a crucified Christ, and of holy fellowship with the Father, and the Son, by the Spirit, which this day has been afforded us. Praise Him for any assistance of His grace in the actual celebration, and for any help in our preparatory work; for reviving any of our convictions, awakening our repentance, strengthening our faith, animating our hope, quickening our zeal, exercising and increasing our love to Christ, clearing our adoption, dispelling our doubts, scattering our fears, warming and filling our desires. Let our souls and all within us bless Him for any beams of His heavenly light, for any glimpse of His reconciled countenance, for any token of His love to us, any expression and exercise of our own to Him.

Let us thank Him for what He has given and sealed to us, and promised to give us; for what we have already received, as the first fruits, and the earnest, and the pledge of a great deal more.

We may express our gratitude and joy to some such purpose as this which follows:

O my gracious God, Thou hast surpassed all human comprehension in Thy love! Is this Thy usage of unworthy prodigals! I feared that Thy wrath, as a consuming fire, would have devoured such a guilty soul, but while I condemned myself, Thou hast forgiven and justified me, and surprised me with the sweet embraces of Thy love. I see now Thy thoughts are above our thoughts, and Thy ways above our ways, and Thy love above the love of man,

even more than the heavens are above the earth; with how dear a price hast Thou redeemed a wretch that deserves Thy everlasting vengeance! With how precious and sweet a feast hast Thou entertained me, who deserved to be cast out with the workers of iniquity! Shall I ever more slight such love as this? Shall it not overcome my rebellion, and melt my cold and hardened heart? Angels are admiring these miracles of love, and shall not I admire them? Their love to us causes them to rejoice while they stand by and see our heavenly feast; and should it not be sweeter to us that are the guests who feed upon it? O my God, how dearly hast Thou purchased my love! How strangely hast Thou deserved and sought it? Nothing is so much my grief and shame as that I can answer it with no more fervent and fruitful love. Oh, what in addition would it be to all this precious mercy if this love poured out might draw forth mine, and my soul might flame by approaching to these Thy flames? And that love drawn out by the sense of love might be all my life? Oh, that I could love Thee as much as I would love Thee! Indeed, as much as Thou wouldest have me love Thee! But this is too great a happiness for earth. Thou hast shown me the place where I may attain it. My love is there in full possession, who has left me these pledges, until He come and fetch us to Himself, and feast us there in our Master's joy. Oh, blessed place! Oh, blessed company, that see His glory, and are filled with the streams of those rivers of consolation! Indeed happy we, whom Thou hast called from our dark and miserable state, and made us heirs of that felicity, and passengers to it, and expectants of it, under the conduct of so sure a guide! Oh, then we shall love Thee without these sinful pauses and defects, in another measure and another manner than now we do. Until then, my God, I'm devoted to Thee. By right and covenant, I am Thine! My soul bears witness against myself that my defects of love have no excuse. Thou dost deserve all, if I had all the love

in heaven and earth to give Thee. What has this vain world to do with my affections? What is there in all the sufferings that man can lay upon me, that I should not joyfully accept them for His sake who has redeemed me from hell by such matchless voluntary sufferings? Lord, seeing Thou dost so regard so vile a worm, my heart, my tongue, [and] my hand confess that I am wholly Thine. Oh, let me live to none but Thee, Thy service, and Thy saints on earth! Oh, let me no more return into iniquity, nor venture on that sin which killed my Lord! And now Thou hast chosen so low a dwelling, oh, be not a stranger to the heart Thou hast so freely chosen! Oh, make it the daily residence of Thy Spirit! Quicken it by Thy grace, adorned with Thy gifts. Employ it in Thy love, refresh it with Thy joys, and the light of Thy countenance! And destroy this carnality, selfishness, and unbelief! And let the world see that God will make a palace of the lowest heart, when He chooses it for the place of His own abode.<sup>4</sup>

To conclude, did we so retire at the close of every Lord's day, after the participation of solemn ordinances, to renew our repentance, to beg needful mercies, to offer the sacrifices of praise and thanksgivings, for the blessings we have and hope for, the advantages of such a course would be so many and so considerable, and the consequences would be so comfortable to our own souls, and so beneficial to others, it would be so influential to exercise, and increase our grace, to promote our assurance, to secure our establishment and perseverance, to render us useful in the world, for the honor of Christ and His gospel, and the credit of our holy profession, that it surpasses the possibility of an exact description, and reserves its full discovery to be the reward of experience.

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ.

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4. Footnote in original: Almost in the words of Richard Baxter.



## CHAPTER 3

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### *Spiritual Washing*

#### A DISCOURSE BEFORE THE LORD'S SUPPER

*And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

—1 CORINTHIANS 6:11

Our Lord's condescension to wash the feet of His disciples, and the discourse between Him and the Apostle Peter upon that occasion, contain many things very observable and instructive to all Christians. Saint Peter is astonished at His Master's proposal to wash his feet. He wonders He should ever design or attempt so low a service. He cries out as a man amazed, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" (John 13:6)—words that favor of humble respect and reverence to Christ, and had he proceeded no farther, it had been very commendable, for these expressions seem to proceed from a true sense of his own unworthiness, considering both himself and our blessed Lord, and the meanness and inferiority of the action which He offered to do toward him. To which our Lord replies, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" (John 13:7), namely, when the Spirit shall be more abundantly poured out, as it was upon His ascension to heaven. But Peter is not satisfied with this, but peremptorily refuses to submit to

an order which he did not yet understand the reason of, and therefore replies again, "Thou shalt never wash my feet" (John 13:8), or, "Far be it from me, that you should wash my feet."

This gave occasion for that severe rebuke and threatening which went to his very heart, in those words of Christ, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me"—no interest in Me, no communion with Me. It cannot well be thought that the external washing should be the only thing here meant, for Judas was partaker of that as well as the rest, and yet our Lord says, at the tenth verse, "Ye are clean, but not all." Upon this, we find the Apostle Peter submits to his Savior, and instead of denying that He should wash his feet, he passionately cries out, "Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head," namely, "Lord, wash me all over—hands, head, and feet, the three most visible parts of the body for the whole." Our Lord tells him that was not necessary, for he that washes need not but to wash his feet (v. 10), as one that comes out of a bath may have contracted some filth in walking out of it, and therefore needs only to have his feet washed, alluding to the custom<sup>1</sup> of the Jews, as to those who did officiate in the temple, who after having been purified, and washed in the morning, as often as they came out, and returned again, did only wash their feet. Doubtless therefore the necessity of inward purification and holiness must be comprehended as the import of this washing, the being sanctified in soul, body, and spirit, as necessary to all that are accepted of God, and in a covenant relation with Christ, necessary to a saving interest in Him, and communion with Him. And such a change as this some of the vilest and worst of sinners have experienced, upon true repentance and a genuine faith. This the words I have read give us an account of—"And such were some of you," etc.

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1. Footnote in original: Dr. Lightfoot.

In the beginning of this chapter, the apostle reproves a very unwarrantable practice among these Corinthians, to have lawsuits with one another in matters of right and wrong before the heathen tribunals, which seems to blemish the Christian profession and contradict the prescribed rule of our Lord (Matt. 18:15). They were also injurious and unjust in their carriage to their brethren, from which he endeavors to deter them by that dreadful threatening, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?” (1 Cor. 6:9). And for the further confirmation of it, [he] enumerates several kinds of such persons, and bids them look well to it, and not deceive themselves (though one would hardly think that men should be deceived in so plain a case), as if their profession of Christianity would save them while they lived in any such wickedness. “Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers...shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

He then adds another argument in this text, to dissuade them from such an unchristian behavior, that is to say, from the mighty change that had been wrought upon several of them by their conversion to the faith of Christ—“And such were some of you: but ye are washed,” etc.

The change is represented by three several expressions. And the means by which it was brought about is double, that is to say, “In the name of the Lord Jesus” and “by the Spirit of our God.”

*1. The mighty change which was wrought upon them by their conversion to the faith of Christ, in those words, “But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified”*

Some would consider these three expressions as a regular gradation, and make this washing to signify the first change by regeneration, or the new birth; and “being sanctified” to denote the further progress, measure, and degree of the

Spirit of holiness; and “being justified” follows as that which by a real change of heart and life is evidenced, and cleared, to the comfort of believers. Others think we may consider this “being washed” as the general term comprehending the other two, sanctification and justification. For we find that expression used in both senses, for our deliverance from the guilt of sin, by pardoning mercy, and from the impurity and stain, the power and filth of sin, by renewing grace. David begs to be washed and made clean in both respects (Ps. 51:2, 7, 10). And our Lord is said to have “loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Rev. 1:5), which comprehends both the forgiveness of sin and the sanctifying influence of the Spirit of Christ. Others think all the three terms, “washed, sanctified, and justified,” are here synonymous, as significant of the great change that is wrought by the renewing and converting grace of God; and that “justified” in this place is not to be taken in a forensic or law sense,<sup>2</sup> but has the same import with the other two expressions, “washed and sanctified”; so the expression which we render “turn many to righteousness” (Dan. 12:[3]) in the original is “justified many.”

So sanctification, they think, may be comprehended under the term “justified” (Rom. 8:30). Or else one of the greatest advantages we enjoy by Christ is not there enumerated. So here where our justification is ascribed to the Holy Spirit, whose office and work it is inwardly to renew and change us, and whereby those Corinthians who were vile and impure before are now qualified for the kingdom of God (Titus 3:5–6). However, I exclude not our being washed from the guilt of sin as part of the sense of this text, but it is the other washing by sanctification of which I would speak at this time.

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2. Footnote in original: Le Blanc, *Theol. de Usu et Acceptatione Vocis Justificandi*, etc. p. 256. §.6.8, 9. Answered by Dr. Owen, *Justification*, p. 179.

2. *You have the double means whereby this is brought about, "in the name of the Lord Jesus," and "by the Spirit of our God," etc.*

In the name of the Lord Jesus, or "by, and through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ," as the Greek particle does often signify. For it is the same in the original, in both clauses. The first may as well be rendered, "by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ," as the other, "by the Spirit of our God," the same preposition being used in both, referring the whole to sanctification. In my present discourse I shall not need to assign reasons why the word "justified" is put last, or search for the like instances of a "recapitulation"<sup>3</sup> or "lagging-behind,"<sup>4</sup> though such may be given to vindicate the order of the expressions; and why the name of Christ, which especially refers to justification, should be mentioned before the Spirit of our God, which especially refers to sanctification, which yet is named before our being justified.

"In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ," or "by His name," may import,<sup>5</sup> in the general, "for the sake of Christ, upon the account of His merit, and mediation," and so we pray in the name of Christ, and beg mercy for His sake. But more distinctly, the name of Christ may be considered:

a. In relation to His office of Mediator, and the sovereign authority of it. He is the Jesus, the Savior. This is the name that is given Him above every name, and so "in, by, or through the name of Christ" does signify "through faith in Him, as the only Mediator between God and man." In several like expressions we must grant that faith must be supposed when it is not expressed, as when we are said to be baptized in the name of

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3. Greek: *epanados*.

4. Greek: *hysteresis*.

5. Import: signify.

Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), namely, believing on His name.

b. It may be considered in relation to the truth of his doctrine and the divine authority of that revelation which he made from God to the world, upon which his name is engraved, as when we read of suffering for the name of Christ, namely, for owning the profession of the Christian religion. To this purpose our sanctification is said to be "by the belief of the truth" (John 15:3; 17:17; 1 Peter 1:22; 2 Thess. 2:13). "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you," says our blessed Lord. And in His mediatorial prayer to the Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Accordingly, we find sanctification is ascribed to faith in Christ as the true Messiah, or a sound belief of the revelation He has made, purifying the heart by faith (Acts 15:9). So that we are washed and sanctified through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, or by Christ known, and believed on, as one means of it, and by the efficiency of the Spirit of God, as the other, which I shall afterwards speak of—"in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

In discoursing of these words, I shall therefore, first, give some brief account of the nature of this change, here expressed by "being washed, sanctified, and justified." Secondly, of the two great means whereby it is brought about, "the name of the Lord Jesus" and "the Spirit of our God." Thirdly, [I shall] make some improvement, by application, especially to assist you in examining yourselves in order to the Lord's table, that we may know whether we are in the number of such upon whom this change is passed, whether we are washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

**Concerning the nature of this change**

1. It is evident that the defiling nature of sin is here supposed; there could not otherwise be any need of washing. And we find it represented in Scripture by spots and blemishes, by mire and vomit, by the blood and pollution of a new born child, by the most filthy dung and excrements, and whatsoever is reckoned the most vile and abominable. Therefore whatsoever excellencies and ornaments, whatsoever privileges and advantages an unsanctified person may partake of, to recommend him to the eyes of the world, he is yet a vile person, loathed and abominable in the sight of God.

2. Consider that by nature we are all as an unclean thing. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” (John 3:6; Rom. 3:10; Job 14:4). All the purifications and washings under the law did suppose our inward defilement, and represent our need of cleansing.

Whatever was enjoined by the Mosaic institution of this kind (which we find was very strictly charged, and earnestly pressed, and indispensably required, and the neglect of it most severely punished), yet did but signify and represent this which proves our sanctification necessary. He saved us by “the washing of regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5). All men are defiled and unclean by nature, and need to be washed.

3. We are all-over unclean, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot—universally diseased and polluted—and so need to be sanctified in soul, body, and spirit (Eph. 5:26; 1 Thess. 5:23; Isa. 1:6). We read of the filthiness of the flesh and spirit, from which we are to be cleansed (2 Cor. 7:1). All the powers of the soul, and all the members of the body, are tainted; heart and hand must be cleansed, the inward and

outward man sanctified. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (James 4:8).

4. The change therefore by sanctification must be universal, in heart and life—by the knowledge of God, and affection to Him (of whom we were ignorant, and to whom before we were disaffected); by the image of God recovered; by participation of the divine nature and life; by the law of God written on the heart and expressed in the conversation. Holiness and love to God must be the frame and temper of our souls, so that the actings of it become easy, pleasant, and delightful. The old man must be put off, the new put on; old things be done away, and all things become new; new principles, new ends, new motives, new rules, new comforts, which will make an unspeakable difference between this change and that of negative religion and common honesty, which many may pretend to who are strangers to regeneration. There were many philosophers and sophists among these Corinthians who boasted of purity and reformation, which came inexpressibly short of this sanctification which I am now speaking of, as owing to some other cause than the Spirit of Christ, to whom the production, continuance, and progress of this sanctification is alone to be ascribed.

5. It may further be considered in its beginning or progress or consummation. As begun by the Spirit of life and power from Christ; as maintained and carried on by a continual influence from the same Spirit, and the diligent use of God's appointed means, whereby the lineaments of the divine nature are rendered more clear, holy impressions more powerful and efficacious; whereby we go from strength to strength, and are enabled to perfect holiness in the fear of God, pressing on towards perfection, to the fullness of the stature of the man Christ Jesus, until it be consummate in heaven, when, by seeing

Christ as He is, we shall be made like Him, and be presented to the Father without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

6. For the sake of those who intend to come to the Lord's table, let me add that such washing and sanctification is requisite to our communion with Christ in the special ordinances of the gospel, particularly that of the Lord's Supper. This is intimated by our Lord in the 13th chapter of John, verses 7–8, in His words to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." It must have a spiritual meaning because, notwithstanding the external washing, Christ says, all of them were not clean. And soon after this He instituted His supper, to the due participation whereof it is necessary we be washed and sanctified. For we cannot otherwise have a right to the benefits purchased by His blood, which are sealed to us in that ordinance; and we can have no communion with Him there, until partakers of the Spirit of Christ. Unless we are sanctified by that Spirit, we have no interest in Him, no right to His supper, and so we can have no communion with Him if we are not cleansed from our filthiness, if we have spots upon us that are not the spots of God's children, to whom this feast does particularly belong. And therefore I may say, as Peter to Simon Magus, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God" (Acts 8:21), neither can it be, if this change does not precede. The inquiry therefore is highly seasonable, whether we are thus washed, and sanctified, or not. But before I give the characters of such persons, it will be expected [that] I should speak somewhat concerning the double means of this change, "In the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

**The double means of this change, by the “name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”**

*1. First, we are purified, and washed, by the “name of the Lord Jesus,” or by faith in Him*

To this purpose, consider:

a. First, that all the arguments laid down in Scripture to press sanctification, and holiness of heart and life, have influence and force according to our faith. The arguments from God, from Christ, from ourselves, from the divine nature, from the example and life of Christ, from His redeeming grace, and dying love, from His precious promises, etc., all depend upon our faith, and have no force or power any further than we believe in Christ, and heartily embrace the gospel revelation.

b. Secondly, it is by the name of Christ, or by faith in Him, that we are sanctified, because in order to our sanctification, Christ is to be contemplated, and improved [in] several ways.

i. First, the blood of Christ must be contemplated in order to our sanctification. Our faith must be employed upon a crucified Savior, as His blood is able to cleanse us from all sins, who “loved us, and washed [us] from our sins, in his own blood,” who “gave himself for [us] that he might sanctify and cleanse us with the washing of water by the word” (Rev. 1:5; Eph. 5:25). For, as the apostle argues from the taking away of ceremonial uncleanness by the legal purifications, “For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works” (Heb. 9:13–14), accordingly we find the sanctification of

the Spirit connected with the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, or, as the purchase of His blood (1 Peter 1:2).

ii. Secondly, faith makes use of the intercession of Christ, and His prayer in heaven, in this effect. The whole fruit of the death of Christ, whereof the sanctifying Spirit is one principal part, is given out by the Father upon the intercession of Christ. What He merited on the cross by His great sacrifice, He prays in heaven may be applied to particular souls, as the fruit of it; and upon the account of the everlasting value of His death, His intercession founded on it is always prevalent.

iii. Thirdly, His promise and covenant, whereby He has engaged to cleanse us from all iniquity, and to sprinkle clean water upon us (Ezek. 36:25). He has promised His blood shall be a fountain open for sin and uncleanness (Zech. 13:1). That Christ shall save us from our sins, and be exalted to give repentance, and to turn us from our iniquities, and bring us back to God, etc.

iv. Fourthly, hereupon our faith must contemplate the Spirit of Christ as the great sanctifier of souls, and the author of all our purity. This great benefit, which is promised in the Word, purchased by Christ upon His cross, and bestowed, granted, and given out upon His intercession, is applied by the efficiency of the eternal Spirit. He sanctifies our hearts and natures, and continually vouchsafes holy influences of light, and life, and power, answerable to the duties, difficulties, and necessities of particular souls, in every age and place of the world.

This brings me to consider the other means of our sanctification, that is to say:

2. *Secondly, "by the Spirit of our God"*

And that He does two ways; first, by removing our defilement and pollution; and secondly, as the author of actual grace and holiness. First, by the removing our defilement and pollution; and accordingly He is promised sometimes as a refiner's fire, and fuller's soap (Mal. 3:2), and sometimes under the notion of water (Isa. 4:4). Because all things under the law were purged from their typical uncleanness either by fire or water. What would abide the fire was to be purified by fire, and what would not was to be cleansed by water (Num. 31:23). And here I might consider a threefold defilement, wherewith we are chargeable. First, that of our nature, by original sin. Secondly, that which is contracted by actual sin. Thirdly, the pollution and defilement that cleaves to our best duties. So far as we are delivered from our pollution, as to either of these, the Holy Ghost, in the virtue of the blood of Christ, is the author of it.

Secondly, we may consider the Holy Spirit as the author of positive holiness and grace in the soul, and show:

First, how He convinces us of our need of it.

Secondly, that He enables us to pray for it.

Thirdly, to believe the value and virtue of the blood of Christ, as able to procure it.

Fourthly, how He makes use of the Word, as the ordinary means of our sanctification.

And fifthly, sometimes enables us to improve afflictions, to promote the influence and efficacy of the Word, to this purpose.

### **Application**

1. First, from the consideration of what these Corinthians were before this change, we learn that some of the worst and vilest of sinners may be called, and sanctified, and find mercy with God. Such were some of you, such idolaters, such drunkards,

such extortioners, such adulterers, etc. “Such things,”<sup>6</sup> such things, such sins, “were some of you,” to express the height of their wickedness. Sins of a crimson and scarlet dye may be cleansed and forgiven. The most polluted sinner may be purified by the blood of Christ. The most loathsome diseases may be healed by our heavenly physician. The most unpolished stones may be framed by the Spirit, for a spiritual building; a Manasseh, a Mary Magdalene, may be changed and justified. God will hereby magnify the truth, and authority of His Word, and the power of His Spirit. He will hereby bear testimony to the freeness of His love, and the riches of His grace. He will hereby hearten and encourage the greatest offenders to hope for pardon, upon repentance. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return to the LORD, and he will...abundantly pardon [him]” (Isa. 55:7). He will hereby encourage ministers in their work, though among a dissolute and perverse people; for we preach in hope, that if the vilest of men can but so far break the snare of the devil, as to hear the Word, we preach to them in hope of success; we know not whose hearts God will touch. It may be the most unlikely person in the whole assembly shall feel the power of the Word.

2. Secondly, what love and thankfulness do we owe to Christ? And how should we admire and praise Him, for His blood and Spirit, to which we owe this great blessing of sanctification? That there is a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, for the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for all sorts and degrees of persons, and kinds of sins. That His blood cleanses from all sin; not only did so formerly, but does so still.

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6. Greek: *tauta*.

3. Thirdly, learn where to go for this benefit, even to Jesus Christ. Beg to be sanctified through the merits of His death, and the influence of His Spirit; endeavor to be sensible of your filthiness, and cry out, "unclean, unclean," "Lord, wash me thoroughly from my sins, and purge me from all my pollutions." Apply the Word of God, and especially the promises of the gospel, in order to your being cleansed from all the filthiness both of flesh and spirit (2 Cor. 7:1).

4. Fourthly, what a difference does the grace of God make upon the hearts and souls of men, from what they were, and what others are. You were some of the most abominable sinners, "But ye are washed"; you were carnal, but you are spiritual; you were proud, but now are humble; you were darkness, but now are light; you were earthly and sensual, but now are heavenly; you did wallow in all manner of impurities, but now are holy; you were sick but now are healed; you were defiled, but now are cleansed; you were at enmity with God, and haters of Him, but now you love Him, and His love is shed abroad in your hearts; you did love and delight in sin, and sinners; you now disaffect and loathe it, and them, and are ashamed to think of those things wherein you once took pleasure. "Such were some of you, but you are washed." You were careless and vain, and worldly as others, but are now a selected, chosen, peculiar people, zealous of good works. You could before live without prayer in your closets, and families, for many weeks, but now dare not live a day without it. You were glad when the Sabbaths were over, and the season of holy worship gone, but now you are as glad when they approach, and think with pleasure beforehand that they do so, etc. Oh, the mighty difference that the grace of God has made between what you were and what you now are! What manner of thankful rejoicing in God

have such cause for as are thus washed? But this will lead me to the principal use, that is to say:

5. Fifthly, to examine and inquire whether we are in the number of such. Whether any such change of heart and life, any such cleansing from the filthiness of flesh and spirit, has been experienced by us.

To assist you a little to understand this, consider:

a. First, what have you ever experienced, and known of any humbling convictions of your own pollution, and defilement by sin? How loathsome to God sin has made you, how odious and abominable to God's holy eye. Have you been made to loathe and abhor yourselves, as in dust and ashes, before God? Trembling before His holiness, and majesty, who hates your sins with a perfect hatred? Being covered with shame and confusion of face, to think of your own vileness? That your hearts are so disaffected to Him, the author of your being, and the fountain of your felicity; that you have so often affronted, and provoked Him to anger, by violating His authority; that you have lived so long as without Him in the world, and could be content to live such a stranger to the God that made it and you. That your corrupt inclinations, contrary to His holy nature, image, and law, so long remained uncured; that you have gratified those inclinations so often, for so many years, etc. Have you thereupon been heartily desirous to be purged, and cleansed, to be sanctified, and renewed, to be delivered from the power and pollution of sin, as well as from the damning guilt of it? If you have known nothing of such kind of convictions, you have no reason to conclude that you have been washed.

b. Secondly, what is your practical judgment concerning holiness, and the divine image and life? And what prevalence has it with you? Do you esteem and yield conformity to the image of God? Is holiness accounted your honor, your glory, your pleasure, as unspeakably preferable to all the riches, and pleasures, and dignities of the world? Is this your fixed judgment? And does it put you upon the diligent use of God's appointed means, to recover this image, and to be made partaker of His holiness? Does it make you watchful over your hearts, and sensual appetites, passions, words, and ways, so far as ordinarily to prevail against the power of worldliness, and sensuality? I do not ask whether it keeps you from every sin, but whether it prevails so far that you regard no iniquity in your hearts. Is there no secret way of wickedness you indulge, and continue in? But do you loathe yourselves in the presence of God, and mourn in secret for those sins that none but God and conscience can charge you with? And do you carefully watch, and walk, as believing sin to be the greatest evil? Is this your habitual frame, and ordinary course? If it be thus, you are washed, and sanctified.

c. Thirdly, examine yourselves, from what motives, and upon what principles, you abstain from those sins you are otherwise inclined and tempted to. Is it from the fear of God, and love to Him? Is it from the awe of His authority, and gratitude for the innumerable obligations you are under by His kindness and grace? Is it because sin is hateful and displeasing to God, and Christ, as well as because of its miserable and destructive consequences and effects to you? Is it from an inward ruling principle, that makes the pleasing of God your daily and delightful work?

d. Fourthly, how do you stand affected by the impurities and sins of other men? Are you grieved at the dishonor of God,

by the sins of others? Do you pity and pray for your sinful neighbors, relations, and acquaintances—especially when they fall into the same sins that you yourselves have formerly committed and repented of? And therefore do you endeavor what you can to promote the repentance and salvation of others, in your place and station?

e. Fifthly, how are you affected by heart sins and by the remainders of impurity in your own souls? If the fountain be cleansed, and the heart purified, the inward motions of sin will be abominable and hateful to you. Do you feel the burden of the body of sin and death, and complain of it? Do you walk humbly under the sense of your remaining pollutions? The more you are washed, and the more assurance you have of it, the more you will mourn for your remaining uncleanness. “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.... A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit.... Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings, that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves...for your iniquities and your abominations” (Ezek. 36:25–26, 31).

Are you diligent in the use of all means for further purification of hearts? Is it the grief of your souls that there is so much filth yet remaining? Do you go to sermons and sacraments with this desire and design and hope, that you may be more sanctified in soul, body, and spirit? Do you beg that all providences may be blessed and improved to that purpose? Can you thank God for such afflictions as you hope have been serviceable to this end, etc.?

f. Sixthly, how are you affected towards the temptations that would ensnare you and defile you again? He that is truly cleansed will take care to keep himself clean. If conscience be not tender to make you watchful, and circumspect to avoid

being defiled, it is a sign you were never truly washed, if you can make as bold with temptation as ever, and are not afraid of entering into it, and being overcome.

g. Seventhly, how are you affected towards Christ, by whose blood and Spirit we are sanctified and cleansed? He loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood; and if He has applied it to you in particular, you cannot but adore and love Him, and delight in communion with Him; love Him, and love His image wherever you see it; love Him, and have the same friends and enemies with Him; love Him, and prize your part in Christ above all things in this world. And if you love Him, you will watch and observe His carriage and behavior: whether He smiles or frowns; whether He be angry or pleased; more than what all the world can say, or do, for you, or against you. If you are washed by Christ, it must needs be so.

And the sense of His redeeming love, and pardoning mercy, and sanctifying grace, will so raise your love to Him, as to increase your hatred and detestation of sin. You will remember, and be confounded, and melted, and ashamed, and humbled for sin, by the sense of His being pacified toward you, and having washed you in His blood; for so is the promise, "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the LORD God" (Ezek. 16:63). The experience of Christians confirms this.

h. Eighthly, how do you stand affected as to your company? Washed persons will delight in clean company. They that are the sheep of Christ, washed in the blood of Jesus, cannot take delight in the company of swine. Nothing but necessity, or the design and hope of doing them good, will bring you into such

company. You will not choose it, and take pleasure in it, as formerly; or make such your familiar friends.

i. Ninthly, I might add, that such will long for the perfection of holiness, when they shall be perfectly cleansed and purged from sin. It will be their daily work to purify themselves as Christ is pure, by the hope of seeing Him as He is (1 John 3:3); the thoughts of heaven, as a state of perfect purity, in conformity to the image of Christ, will be very delightful; and death itself, as the way to it, will lose its terrors, and become desirable.

6. Sixthly, the next use I would make shall be for the encouragement of repenting sinners and returning backsliders. Howsoever vile they have been, through repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus, they may yet be washed, sanctified, and justified. If you are under a serious conviction of your guilt and filthiness, and ready to cry out, “O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God for [my] iniquities” (Ezra 9:6); or with the prophet, “We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God” (Jer. 3:25), yet turn to the Lord, and He can heal, and cleanse, and pardon, and sanctify. Though your sins be as crimson, or scarlet, they shall be as snow and wool. The blood of Jesus can cleanse from all sin. That fountain is yet open. Forgiveness and sanctification may yet be had. He is willing to receive and accept you, if you are but heartily willing to forsake your sins, and turn to Him. “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of...his heritage” (Mic. 7:18).

### **Objection 1**

But some of you may be ready to reply, “I have broken my vows, and greatly backslidden from God, after I had returned

to Him; I have defiled my garments, after having been washed; I have turned with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow, that is washed, to her wallowing in the mire; surely God will never be reconciled to me, or gracious to me anymore. I have known somewhat of the truth of Christ, and tasted of the good Word of God, and had some experience of holy walking, and the pleasure of it, and gave up myself again and again to the Lord, at His own table; and yet I have revolted from Him since. My conscience flies in my face; I dare not go to God, as formerly; He may justly upbraid me, and say, 'What iniquity did you find in Me, that you have left Me? Was I a barren wilderness, or a land of drought, that you thus forsook Me? Was I an unlovely God, that you could not like Me? Was My arm shortened, that I could not help you? Or have I ever failed My word, that you might not trust Me, etc.?' How then shall I look Him in the face after such apostasy? How shall I ever hope to be washed again, when I have so defiled myself, after having been washed?"

### **Answer**

But have you not an express call and promise from God to encourage you to return—a promise worth millions of gold and silver? "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (Jer. 3:22). Do but turn, and I will help you. He calls you children, and you must call Him Father, as you can, and not turn your backs upon Him. "I said... Thou shalt call me, my father; and shalt not turn away from me, even though I said, for thy backslidings, How shall I put thee among the children?" (v. 19).

### **Objection 2**

But you will say, "I have wounded my faith, as well as my conscience; I read a promise, but it yields me no comfort. I hear of the fatherly mercies of God, but I cannot apply them,

for I have forsaken God, and He may justly forsake me. My heart is apprehensive, I cannot go to Him as to a father. I question whether ever I was a child or not; I fear my spots are not the spots of His children.”

**Answer**

But consider this: if you be a returning backslider, God can see the truth of your grace, when you cannot discern the truth of His love. Your Father sees and knows your heart, and if you truly repent, and return, He will accept you. He can behold a child through a backslider; when you cannot look up to Him as to a father, there is yet ground enough for you to return, that He may heal your backslidings.

**Objection 3**

“But I have little hope that such a treacherous backsliding heart as mine should ever be healed. If I should be washed now, I shall again defile myself. If I should once more be received by mercy, I should backslide again; and as good never come, as to come to no purpose. If I return to Him, and continue not with Him, it will but be the worse in the latter end.”

**Answer**

If God undertake the cure, He can purge away your iniquities, as well as forgive them. Destroy the power of sin, as well as remove the guilt. He can heal your backslidings in the root, and cause, and principle of them; so that you shall not turn aside from Him, as formerly. He can establish, and strengthen your heart, and give you more steadfastness, and He calls you to turn, in order to pursue it. Therefore turn to the Lord.

**Objection 4**

“Oh, but if I am never healed, until I return, I must die of my wounds. I shall perish in my filthiness, if I am never washed, until I come, as I ought, to the fountain opened. For my heart is hard and impenitent; I feel it so. I have not such a heart to turn to God as I should. It is the grief of my soul that I find it thus. I am without strength, and unable to turn.”

**Answer**

But have you no strength, no power to consider whence you are fallen? And how low you are sunk, and to bewail the wretchedness of your present case, which you begin to be sensible of? Can you not lament the hardness of your heart, which you own to be your grief? Can you not consider your past, and present condition, and thereupon cry to God for help? And a little thing will save a man that is drowning. One look from Christ made Peter remember the warning He had before given him, and go out and weep bitterly. Can you not reflect, and consider how much better it was with you formerly than now? When you had good hopes, through grace, of divine acceptance, when you could go to God with comfort, and pour out your heart before Him with freedom? But now, since the breach you have made upon conscience, if you come at all into His presence, you are dragged by fear, and hardly know what to do when you are there. Are you not ready to cry out, “Oh, the communion with Christ that once I had, in such or such an ordinance; but now it is lost. He is a stranger to my soul. He has justly withdrawn Himself. If I seek Him where I was accustomed to find Him, I find Him not. My peace, my joy, my light, my strength is gone. Therefore let me “Return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now” (Hos. 2:6–7). Can you not thus reflect, to awaken your repentance,

and assist your resolution to return, and stir up yourselves to call upon God for healing mercy?

**Objection 5**

But some may say, "If God should again receive such a returning backslider, will He not bear me a grudge for it? Will He not hereafter upbraid me with it? I shall hear of it again the next sacrament, before, or under the next afflicting providence."

**Answer**

"No," says God, "turn, and I will heal your backslidings; I will receive you graciously, I will love you freely, I will be merciful to your iniquities, and remember them no more" (Hos. 14:1-3). Did He upbraid the returning prodigal, and say, "Where hast thou been?" Resolve, therefore, O backsliding children, to return to your Father, to be again washed, sanctified, and justified. Whatever discouragement be in the way, you may hope for welcome. For you are children still, though backsliding children, and remember He is your Father, though you have displeased Him. For:

1. First, if it be said by the devil, or an accusing conscience, "How dare you take the name of Father into your mouth, since you have so dishonored Him, and grieved His Spirit by your revolt?" a returning backslider may say, "He is a Father still; and the love of a Father is unmeasurable; the kindness of a Father is infinitely tender. Though His paternal justice may correct me with a rod, He will not take away His loving-kindness utterly from me. I will, therefore, go to my Father; though He frown upon me, though He chastise me, though He threaten to turn me out-of-doors, I will yet return and go to my Father, for I must be there. I will die in His arms, or I will die at His feet; I will return." But:

2. Secondly, what, will you venture to go presently, all in rags, like a beggar, rather than a child, all in your filth and dirt? You will shame your Father's house, and discredit His family, if such a one as you should come, and call Him Father. "Notwithstanding this, I will return presently to Him," says the penitent backslider, "for, the longer I delay, the more hardness shall I contract, and the greater will my sin be; and every day I shall be exposed to further sin; and the same duties now lie upon me as before, which I cannot perform duly, except I return; therefore I will return presently." This Dr. Preston, upon 1 Samuel 20:22, advises as the wisest and best way, after the commission of any great sin, or the guilt of any great backsliding.

3. Thirdly, but it will be said, your work is great and difficult; before ever your peace can be made, you must mourn and weep, and repent in dust and ashes, and be humbled to the very mouth of hell, before you and your Father be friends again.

And will not that discourage you?

"No," says the returning backslider, "I will yet go to my Father; I will own that I deserve to be rejected forever; but I will plead the mercifulness of His nature, and the freeness of His covenant love, and promise; you shall never beat me out of it; I will return to my Father. I know He will meet me half way; indeed, He has met me, and preceded me by His grace; He put it into my heart to return, therefore He will accept me."

I easily foresee what will be objected against all this. No backslider is able thus to argue; he is held in the chains of his own sins; he dare not use such language.

I grant that while he is under the full power of backsliding, he cannot thus speak and act.

But to a returning, penitent backslider, that begins to be awakened, who feels the burden of his sin, and seeks after God, the relation of a Father is an unspeakable support. And

notwithstanding his recent backslidings, he may make out his relation to God as his Father, when once he is awakened to repentance; partly by his mourning and godly sorrow for sin; partly by the remembrance of his former covenant, and communion with God, which, when he returns by repentance, may yield him comfort, though before it could not; partly by the inward motions of the Spirit, which he finds lusting against the flesh; partly by his vigorous importunate desires to turn to God, and be at peace with Him.

When it comes to this, he may take heart and ought to receive encouragement by the promise and call of God, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (Jer. 3:22).



## CHAPTER 4

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# *The Communion of Christ's Body and Blood*

### A DISCOURSE AFTER THE LORD'S SUPPER

*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*

—1 CORINTHIANS 10:16

When the apostle would reform the church of Corinth, as to that profane liberty which some of them took, boldly to meddle with the mysteries of paganism, and to eat of things offered to idols, he gives an account of the nature of this divine institution of the Lord's Supper, and leaves it to themselves to judge whether they did not do very ill to be present at the feasts upon the heathen sacrifices, and to eat of things that were offered to idols. I say, he leaves it to themselves, "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say" (v. 15).

That was the case among many of these Corinthians. They did not object to accompany their unbelieving neighbors and acquaintances to the banquets that they made in honor of their false gods. They did not object to eat with them of those things that were taken from their execrable altars, as a part and remnant of those sacrifices to idols, which were performed in the city of Corinth, with all the pomp of an abominable superstition. This the apostle shows to be unsuitable to their

profession of Christianity, and that it could not agree with the honor they had of eating at the table of the Lord, for these heathens were seduced by Satan to make those sacrifices, and they were devils whom they worshiped, as supposed demigods, and in such feasts they have a familiar communion with them. "And I would not," says the apostle, "that you should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partaker of the Lord's table, and the table of devils" (vv. 19–21).

In the words of the text, he leaves it to them to judge whether it be not a most horrid impiety to pretend to join these two together, the divine body and blood of Christ with the impious sacrifices of these idolaters. For he makes the partaking of the Lord's table not only a testimony of our union to Christ, and our communion one with another, as His members, but also a testimony of our disunion and separation from all idolatrous worship.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" And "the bread that we break," etc. Where we are to consider:

1. The two sacramental signs, the cup, and the bread
2. What is to be understood by the body and blood of Christ
3. What by communion in them
4. How the cup and bread in the sacrament of the supper are the communion of the body and blood of Christ

And then I shall help you to apply it.

*1. Concerning the sacramental signs, the cup and the bread.*

The cup for the wine in it, by an ordinary figure, and the bread which we break. These are the two outward elements in this

institution, and neither of them must be omitted. Whereas in baptism there is but one outward element, here are two. And there is good reason for it.

a. Because this represents the violent death of Christ, wherein His blood was shed, and separated from His body. It is therefore necessary [that] there should be one sign to represent His body and another sign to represent His blood, there having been a separation by death, which is here to be represented.

b. The Lord's Supper being the mystery of our spiritual nourishment by Christ, it was proper to employ both eating and drinking, which are the two parts of our corporal nourishment, and that could not have been entirely represented by either of them alone.

The cup of blessing, or benediction, which we bless, or give thanks for, i.e., which we set apart by prayer, and thanksgiving. Blessing and giving of thanks being often put one for another (1 Cor. 14:16), and in the evangelical history (Matt. 26:26–27 and Mark 14:22–23), what one evangelist calls blessing, another calls thanksgiving. By virtue of which blessing, or prayer, by a minister of Christ, in His name, and according to His example and order; that which before was common is set apart to a holy use, and becomes the sign and seal of the body and blood of Christ.

“The cup of blessing.” The Jews were accustomed at the Passover feast, or rather after it, to drink of a cup, which the master of the family did bless, namely, did pray over it, or concerning it. To distinguish this from that, the apostle says, “the cup of blessing which we bless,” which we Christians set apart in our assemblies, to show forth the Lord's death. And from this passage of the apostle, this ordinance is called by the ancients, the Eucharist, upon the account of the blessing, or

giving of thanks. Justin Martyr, who lived but fifty years after the death of the apostle Saint John, calls it the bread of the Eucharist, in memory of the passion of Christ. Rather, the Greek word for blessing, in this text, "benediction,"<sup>1</sup> as well as the other, "thanksgiving,"<sup>2</sup> giving of thanks, is sometimes used by the ancients as the name of this institution.<sup>3</sup> Among others, Cyril, bishop of Alexandria, does often call it by the name of "benediction."<sup>4</sup>

"The cup of blessing which we bless, and the bread which we break." At the feast of the Passover, the Jews made use of such bread as was flat and round, and so was to be broken and cut asunder; and the unleavened bread among the Jews to this very day is of this kind. Now our Lord, instituting His supper the same evening after the celebration of the Passover, we may suppose made use of the same sort of bread; that is, as He changed the signification of this bread from that of their unleavened bread to be a sign of His body, so He employed the breaking of this bread to signify His cruel sufferings in that body upon the cross.

This cup and this bread, even after consecration (for the bread is not broken until after that), is said to be the communion of the body and blood of Christ, not His real flesh and blood. For, besides the vanity of such a sense, and the indecency and uncomeliness of it, indeed, the contradiction and impossibility of it, it is against the express testimony of the apostle here, and in other places. According to the new doctrine of Rome, instead of saying here, "the cup that we bless," he would have said, "the cup that we transubstantiate, and change into the proper substance of the body and blood

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1. Greek: *eulogia*.

2. Greek: *eucharistia*.

3. Footnote in original: See Mr. Daille in loc.

4. Greek: *eulogia*.

of Christ, the cup in which we leave not one drop of wine but, by pronouncing four or five little words, fill it with the body and blood of Christ." And is not this a strange way of blessing a person or thing? To destroy the very nature of the thing, that it shall be no longer what it was before? The bread was not blessed, that it might be destroyed, nor given to be eaten, that it might cease to be before it was eaten. It is to suppose God to put forth miraculous power, to make His own command (of eating the bread) impossible. "The bread that we break"; it is therefore bread after it is broken; after the consecration and breaking, it is bread still; for the transubstantiation, if there be any, is upon the consecration, before it is broken. But I hope most English Protestants are pretty well instructed in this truth, and therefore I need not insist longer upon it.

*2. What are we to understand by the body and blood of Christ, of which this is said to be the communion?*

How is Christ's body and blood present in this ordinance? Our Lord is ascended into heaven with His human body, and the heavens are to contain Him, until the restitution of all things. And therefore as the bread and wine are not annihilated, or not destroyed, nor changed into the flesh and blood of Christ, according to the Romanists, so, nor present with, in, and under the bread, and wine, according to the Lutherans. So that we need not say that the body and blood of Christ are at all present there, for they are in heaven; but the bread and wine are the signs and memorials of the sacrifice and sufferings of Christ. The death of Christ, and His sacrifice upon the cross, with the fruits and effects thereof to us, are especially to be understood by His body and blood; and it is in these that we have communion in the ordinance of the supper.

The expressions, therefore, which some Protestant writers have used about the real presence of Christ's body and blood

in this sacrament, are very careless.<sup>5</sup> For thereby they seem to make mysteries where there is no need at all of any. It is true, in the next chapter it is said of the bread, “this is my body,” that is, the sign and memorial of it, yet here the bread broken is said to be the communion, or the communication of His body; that is, a solemn rite instituted by God, to communicate to us the fruits and benefits of Christ’s broken body, or of His sacrifice and sufferings represented by it. That as verily as we are treated at the table with the bread and wine, so the worthy receiver shall share in the benefits of Christ’s death. This is intelligible and plain.

*3. This will help us to understand what is meant by the communion of the body and blood of Christ*

By this “participation”<sup>6</sup> or communication, as it may as well be rendered, that we have in the body and blood of Christ, in the ordinance of the supper; two things may this import:

a. Our participation of the fruits of Christ’s death and sacrifice; that we share in the privileges of reconciliation to God, forgiveness of sin, peace of conscience, and the promise of eternal life, by virtue of Christ’s death.

b. That others share with us therein, or that we partake of these benefits with others. For so it follows in the next verse, that “though many members, we are all one body, and one bread, for we are all partakers of that one bread.” That is, we are all one church, and one body of Christ, by covenant union to Him; and of Him we do all sacramentally and spiritually

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5. Footnote in original: See a tract on the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper by Mr. John Hales of Eaton College.

6. Greek: *koinonia*.

partake in this ordinance; as many grains of corn make one loaf, and many members one body.

We, being many, are one bread, and one body. The Church of Rome, from that expression, might as well argue, that all Christians are substantially changed, first into the bread, and then into the natural body of Christ, by partaking of this sacrament; as well as that, the bread is changed into the body of Christ; for all Christians are said to be one bread, and one body, by virtue of their communion in this ordinance.

*4. Hereby also we understand how we have communion in the body and blood of Christ by the Lord's Supper, how we and others partake in the benefits of His death and passion*

And that two ways: as this sacrament is a sign and symbol of, and as it is a means.

a. It is a sign of it. All that eat of this bread and drink of this cup do thereby commemorate the death and passion of Jesus Christ, and profess to own that the body and blood of Christ offered upon the cross is the food and the nourishment of their souls to eternal life; that Christ is their Savior, and Redeemer; that they hope for all their acceptance with God in both worlds only upon the account of the sacrifice of Christ. They professedly declare that, living and dying, they are and will be His; they hope for victory over death and the devil, by the cross of Christ, and for a glorious resurrection from death, as the fruit of His death and resurrection.

b. These words do import, further, that the eating of this bread and drinking of this cup are the means appointed by Christ for our communion in His body and blood. We share in the benefits of His death and sacrifice; and, by due attendance upon this ordinance, the precious fruits of His death and the

gifts and graces of His Spirit are augmented and increased in us, in order to our full and final blessedness in the other world, which this is preparatory to, and fits us for.

As the partaking of things sacrificed to idols was a fellowship with devils (1 Cor. 10:20), so the partaking of that which was sacrificed to God is a fellowship with Him.<sup>7</sup> Prayer is an act of homage, and praise, and gratitude; but we have not so near a communion with a person, either by petitioning for somewhat we lack, or by returning him thanks for a favor received, as we have by sitting with him at his table, partaking of the same bread, and the same cup. In all nations the nearest fellowship consists in things of this nature. "Take, eat" manifests a communion.

It would be an empty mystery, and unworthy of an institution by divine goodness, if there were not some communion with God and Christ in it. There would be some kind of deceit in the precept, "Take, eat, and drink, this is my body and blood," if there were not a conveyance of spiritual, vital influences to our souls; for the natural end of eating and drinking is the nourishment and increase of the body, and preservation of life, by that which we eat and drink.

### **[Amplification]**

I might consider this ordinance as a sign and means of our communion in the body and blood of Christ, or of our sharing in the fruits of His death, and amplify it several ways.

1. By considering on what accounts this is a likely means of such a communion
2. How faith must be acted, that it may be so, as to us

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7. Footnote in original: See Mr. Charnock's 2nd Volume, page 759. And of the divine attributes, page 638.

1. As to the former: a. As this ordinance is commemorative of the sacrifice of Christ, and being to be observed in remembrance of Him. b. As it is an open profession of the cross of Christ, that we glory in it, and therefore show forth the Lord's death that way, professing ourselves not to be ashamed of our character, as the followers of a crucified Jesus. c. As it is a renewal, and confirmation of the covenant between God and us, through Jesus Christ, renewing our engagements and obligations to be the Lord's forever. In the celebration of this ordinance, we have a special opportunity for this; it is a principal part of our work at this table. d. As it is a fit season for extraordinary thanksgiving and praise, blessing God for Jesus Christ, which thankfulness for Christ disposes and fits us for the reception of further grace, as the fruit and purchase of His death; and so is the means of our communion in His body and blood. Thus it is the cup of blessing and of thanksgiving that we there receive, which cup of blessing, upon such accounts as these, is our communion in the blood of Christ.

2. You will hereby the better perceive what is to be done on our part, in order to this communion.

a. Our faith must contemplate the authority of Christ, enacting it. We must act in obedience to an institution and appointment of Christ. It was a remarkable instance and act of His kingly office to enjoin this memorial of His dying love. And the season of its institution is the more observable, that is to say, in the close of His public ministry, of His prophetic office upon earth, and in His entrance upon the execution of the principal part of His priestly office, by being made a sacrifice; between both of these, and to render both effectual, our Lord interposed an act of His kingly office in the institution

of this ordinance. Accordingly it should be contemplated, and owned by us, in order to our communion with Him therein.

b. The love of Christ must especially be contemplated, and attended to, in this Supper, as expressed by His death and sufferings. Of this we have here the most lively representation, with the glorious effects of that love, which are not represented with such a beauty and luster by any other ordinance as by this. The constraining love of Christ in His whole undertaking is better discerned and tasted in this ordinance than as it is proposed in several parts in the Holy Scripture. Here we are called to the particular application of it, "He loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20; Rev. 1:5).

c. The sovereignty and the wisdom of God, in instituting these external signs and elements of bread and wine, must also be contemplated and attended to. They most fitly signify and represent the great things they are designed for, and yet without a divine institution, could have no relation to the thing signified.

How suitable is the plain matter of this sacrament to the holy author of it. We remember in this supper His body hanging on the cross, and therefore it was not fit [that] the sacrament of His body should be sumptuous and rich upon the table. Nevertheless by bread to strengthen, and wine to comfort, all benefits of a crucified Savior are fitly represented, and much better than they could have been by the choicest delicates.<sup>8</sup>

Pertaining to this communion of the body and blood of Christ, we must take heed to ourselves, not to rest in the external signs, but to discern the Lord's body, to apprehend the spiritual import and end of this divine institution. That by

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8. Delicates: delicacies.

faith we may receive Christ, and feed upon Him, so as to experience the communications of His grace, and receive fresh influences of His Spirit; that we may accept all the benefits of the New Covenant, which are here offered and sealed to us; and that we may devote, resign, and dedicate ourselves afresh to be the Lord's; to obey Him, and serve the purposes of His glory while we live, in hope of the blessed recompense which He has purchased and promised, and is gone to prepare, and which He will not fail to come again and bestow. Until which time, this ordinance is to continue in the church, to show forth the Lord's death until He come.

### **Use 1**

The first reflection I would make on this is upon the sacrilegious confidence of those men who deny to Christians the means of their communion in the blood of Christ; who rob them of one half of this sacrament, by denying the cup of the blessing to the laity. The cup is "the communion of the blood of Christ," says the apostle. "Drink ye all of it," says our Lord. And yet the Church of Rome will not suffer the people to taste it. But as one error makes way for another, they pretend by the new doctrine of concomitancy, the bread, or the little wafer (which is not broken either, according to the order of Christ, but put whole into the people's mouths by the hands of the priest), this wafer shall be enough for the people, and by the help of a strong imagination concerning the authority of their church, the very body, blood, and bones of Christ shall be contained under the form and appearance of bread.

One would wonder how anything can be plainer, both in this and the next chapter, and in the institution itself, as recorded by the evangelists, than the universal obligation upon Christians to partake of the cup, as well as the bread. And what authority can any man, or number of men, have to

alter such a constitution? May they not as well take away the bread from the people as the cup? They will grant that for a thousand years after Christ, it was the sense and practice of the Christian church, that the people should partake of the cup too; and for fourteen hundred years, it can be proved, that they did, even from the apostle's time down to that of Thomas Aquinas in the latter end of the thirteenth century. Justin Martyr, Cyprian, Nazianzen, Chrysostom, and all the most considerable writers of the ancient church, are express in their testimony for it. But what need we concern ourselves about the judgment of antiquity when there is a positive institution of Christ, and in a large account thereof by the apostle Paul, that he speaks not one word of the consecration of the bread, but uses diverse expressions to signify the excellency of the cup (1 Corinthians 11)?

“This is my blood,” says Christ, “my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:28). His sufferings, and the reality of death, are in a most lively manner set forth by the shedding of His blood. Not to insist upon His bloody sweat in the garden, you know when He was whipped, and scourged, and crowned with thorns, He then shed blood! Blood issued from His hands and feet, when He was nailed to the cross; and from His side, when He was pierced by the Roman soldiers; by the shedding of His blood, He lost His life; and without shedding of blood, there could be no remission. So that to deprive the people of the cup is to take away the most lively and the most essential representation of the sufferings and death of Christ.

The doctrine of concomitancy will not avail in this case; the partaking of the bread only is not sufficient whereby to remember His death, for the separation of His blood from His body was the means of His dying. This destroys the distinction between the two symbols, which yet are very different in

their names, in their properties, in their use, and in the time of receiving them. Besides, it is contrary to all the rules of language to say, "I drink," when I only eat. But there is worse in it still; for they seal up the fountain of Christ's blood from the people; they pour it back again, as it were, into His body, and shut up His wounds, as if His blood were not shed for any but the priests. God has appointed the double elements to increase the consolation of Christians. And we should not marvel, says one, that they who deny the certainty of grace, and the possibility of assurance, should deny the people the double elements. By their doctrine, they preach but a half comfort to souls, and by their practice, they administer but a half sacrament to the laity.

It is true, they tell us, that we read of this ordinance under the name of breaking of bread. We grant it; but they may as well conclude that when Joseph feasted and entertained his brethren, he gave them nothing to drink, because it is only said that they did eat with him [Gen. 43:16]. Can anyone doubt but when we pray for our daily bread in the Lord's prayer, that we ask what is necessary for the relief and satisfaction of our thirst, as well as hunger, in that petition?

Notwithstanding all that may be said against their practice of denying the cup to the people, we read in the history of the council of Trent, when communion in both kinds was proposed to those who were sent from France, in the reply made to that motion, they called the cup for the laity a "cup of poison"; among other anathemas in the council of Trent, there is one against all those that shall say that the church had not good reason to take away the cup from the people. And yet they assign no reason at all, when there is manifestly as much reason, for drinking of the cup, as for eating of the bread, the same authority requiring both. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?"

**[Use] 2**

With what humble thankfulness should we use this privilege, and obey this order of our Lord, to remember Him in this manner, since thereby we have communion in His body and blood.

The night before He was betrayed, He took bread, and took the cup; He instituted the feast, and bid us celebrate it in remembrance of Him. "You, My friends and followers," as if our Lord had said, "I am now about to leave you, for the hour is at hand, when I shall be apprehended, bound, and judged, condemned, and crucified; and then I shall rise again, and go to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God; ere long I shall be received out of your sight; you shall see Me no more on earth; you shall not eat and drink with Me as you have done; but let Me not be out of your mind, when I am gone; I have loved you, and will love you to the death; and tomorrow you shall see the proof of My love to you, and to the lost world, when I shall offer Myself a sacrifice for sin, and lay down My life for you. And will you forget Me? That you may not, I do institute and appoint this solemn memorial of My death, and leave it in charge upon you, and My whole church, to the end of the world, upon all My followers in all ages, to do it in remembrance of Me; as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup of blessing, that you show forth My death until I come." Accordingly, the first disciples of Christ did every Lord's day make it a part of their public worship, but as the zeal and fervor of Christians abated, the frequency of celebrating this feast did abate too.

**[Objection]**

But some will be ready to say, "The privilege is so great, I dare not adventure. It is the communion of the body and blood of Christ; I am not fit for so great an undertaking; my conscience

tells me I am utterly unworthy of so high a favor; my sins are so many, and my frailties so many, I dare, by no means, as yet, adventure to come.”

**[Answer]**

I answer:

1. That sense of our unworthiness and unfitness, which keeps us from the performance of a plain duty, is not true humility. It is not presumption, to do what we are required, and to come when we are invited, though we are unworthy to come. We are unworthy of food and clothing; will you therefore starve yourselves, or go naked? Remember you are invited, and your refusal thereupon may proceed from pride, if the sense of unworthiness hinders your obedience to the call of Christ. It is a bold thing, you think, for you to come; but is there no faulty boldness in your neglecting to come, when Christ has bid you remember Him this way? For this is not a privilege only, but at the same time it is a duty too; and if your sense of your unworthiness helps you to come humbly and better prepared, it is one of the best characters of a worthy receiver; but it ought not to keep you altogether from receiving.

2. You say you are unfit. It may be you say true. Will you continue so from year to year? Is it not a duty to fit and prepare yourselves, to repent of all sin, and give up yourselves to God in Christ, as your God and Savior, and then renew your covenant? Do you not know that the ignorant and the impenitent, who are unfit to come to the Lord's table, are unfit to die, unfit for heaven? And will you continue in such a state, wherein you are unfit to die? And yet [you] are uncertain to live an hour. Your unfitness is your sin, and will you turn it into an apology for your other sin? It is the duty of all real and genuine Christians

to come to this ordinance; and it is the duty of all to be such that they may come. Not to commemorate the death of Christ this way, as He has appointed it, is one sin; to live in the neglect of due preparation for it is another. Will your being unprepared excuse your not coming, when it is your duty to be such as may come? How can you think God will forgive one sin, because you commit another; how can you expect He should pardon your neglect of His table, when all that you can say is that you neglect to fit yourselves for it? Men will not do their duty in other things, and so are unfit for this. Therefore:

3. How is it that you are not as much afraid of disobeying this command of thus remembering the death of Christ as you are afraid of doing it unworthily? You are afraid you should offend God by coming; but ought you not to fear that you offend Him by staying away? Should not a total neglect be apprehended a fault, as well as an undue performance? You do well to fear unworthy receiving; oh, be but as fearful to continue unworthy and unfit to receive! This equal fear of caution on both sides would make you diligent and solicitous to fit and prepare yourselves. And this concerns those who have formerly been at the Lord's table but very often do tarry away, though they have time and opportunity, as being afraid to come, by reason of their own unworthiness.

4. Consider further, what those sins are that you charge yourselves with, as the ground of your unfitness. They are either of weakness, or willfulness; either such as can hardly be avoided by the care and watchfulness of good men, as sins of daily infirmity. These do not make you unfit for the Lord's table, for if they did, who at all would ever be fit? If a perfect sinless fitness were necessary, none could come aright. And by such a thought we make Christ a hard Master. But if they be sins of

willfulness, you are self-condemned, if you do not reform. And yet how many are there, concerning whom we may charitably judge, that they do not allow themselves in willful sins, that do yet tarry away from this table?

5. Let me ask you further, have you ever tried to fit and prepare yourselves as worthy receivers of the Lord's Supper? Have you endeavored, in the use of all God's appointed means, to obtain that knowledge, repentance, faith, and love, which should fit you for this ordinance? If you have never used the means that God has appointed; if you have never seriously, and in good earnest, set upon the work of preparation, how can you say that you never shall, or can be fitted for this privilege? What minister of Christ have you ever consulted about it? It may be you mistake the very notion of the Lord's Supper, and understand not the true nature and design of it. Have you set apart time to search your hearts, and examine your consciences, and repent of all sin, and give up yourselves to God in Christ, and beg the help of ministers and friends to that purpose?

6. Therefore let me ask you again, is not your unfitness from sloth and idleness, or the distracting hurry of worldly affairs, that you cannot be brought to spare so much time as is necessary for this work? How will you answer this at the great day? Will you then have the courage to tell the Lord Redeemer to His face what this pretense amounts to? Will you tell Him in that awful solemnity? "Lord! I would not have omitted the ordinance of the supper, but have remembered Thee, and Thy dying love, by breaking of bread; but, I was unfit for it, altogether unfit, because my mind was distracted with the cares of the world; I had so much of other matters all the week, from month to month, to take up my thoughts and time, that I had

no leisure for serious preparation." What self-condemning excuses will these prove at last?

7. Lastly, is there not yet something worse at the bottom, that is to say, that you are unwilling of that strictness and seriousness that you think such are obliged to as come to the Lord's table? Unwilling of that circumspect walking which such, of all others, should be exemplary in? Are you not afraid that if you come, you must abridge yourselves of some liberties that you now take? That you must be more constant in secret prayer; that you must set up daily family prayer in your houses; that you must spend more time in reading, be more careful of your company, and be more faithful and exact in your dealings, and do many things that now you neglect?

How dreadful is the import of such an excuse for not coming? Of such a ground for staying away. For it seems to lie in this, that men are resolved they will live at large, and not be bound up by the rules of the gospel; that is, they never mean to take upon them the yoke of Christ, or to live as His disciples; if they would speak it out, it must signify thus much: "You shall not be my Lord and Redeemer, I will not deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this world. Notwithstanding my baptism, whereby I have sworn fidelity to Christ, He shall not reign over me." This is practically, and in effect, their sense; for this command and order, to do this in remembrance of Christ, is as much a law of Christ as any in the Bible. And yet many refuse to obey this command, for fear that they should be obliged more strictly to obey all the others. How little do such professors consider how unbecoming it is to call themselves Christians; or that they are (antecedently by their baptism and Christian profession) bound to obey Christ in all these instances. And at the Lord's table we do but renew the obligation upon ourselves to do so.

We are bound to obey Christ as our Ruler, and to yield obedience to all the laws of Christ, whether we come to this table or not; though we are also bound to come, and to profess, and promise obedience there.

**[Counsel]**

There are other objections I may consider hereafter, and therefore shall now close with a few words of counsel.

1. Let those of us who have eaten of this bread, and drunk of this cup, and so have professedly had communion in the body and blood of Christ, let us examine whether we have really and truly had any fellowship with Him in this ordinance or not; whether we have only been partakers of the outward signs, and been present at such a feast of love without any spiritual nourishment to our souls. Without attending to this, the design of the institution is overlooked, and all the genuine advantages of it will be lost. Without this, we have but played the hypocrites, and acted a part, and shall pay dear for our solemn trifling, as having slighted the Redeemer's love, and made ourselves guilty of His body and blood.

If we have not labored to see the evil of sin, and to have our hatred of it increased; if we have not found our hearts set more against it, and our resolutions confirmed to forsake it; if we have not felt the attractive influence of the love of Christ to bring us to adore Him and magnify His condescension and love; if we have not had admiring thoughts of the blessed God, of the purity of His nature, the justice of His government, and all His excellent perfections, which are so highly honored in our redemption by the bloody sacrifice of Christ; if we have not been cordial and genuine in the dedication of ourselves to Him, and all we have, and are, to be at His disposal and order for the rest of our time; if we have not had our thoughts

raised up to heaven, to a risen glorified Redeemer on His throne, as triumphing over all the adversaries of our salvation, as able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him, as faithful to complete what He has begun, and to preserve what is committed to Him, and to give us the full purchase of His meritorious death in the heavenly kingdom.

And if we have not been melted under the sense of pardoning mercy to ourselves, and brought to better temper of mind, as to the forgiveness of others. If we have not had love to our fellow Christians more excited in us, to all that are members of the same body; though they err and mistake, though they differ from us, though they be angry with us, though they think hardly of us, and speak hardly against us; yet if we have not had our spirits brought to a temper, able to forgive them, to pray for them, and be ready to do them good, etc., we cannot say we have had communion with Christ in this ordinance. For such effects as these will follow upon it, or rather it is in these things, wherein a great part of our spiritual communion does consist.

2. If there have been anything of this kind, bless God for such a merciful season. For this is the real advantage and good of any such ordinance, when it rectifies our spirits, and betters our frame, and subdues our corruptions, and recovers us from our backslidings, and gives us anything more of the divine image and likeness, and makes us hate sin more, and love God and one another better. This is the real advantage of such seasons; these are gainful opportunities indeed, where these things are attained, where in any measure there are such consequences of approaching to the Lord's table.

3. Let us endeavor henceforward to walk worthy of such a privilege, and long for the repetition of it. Let us watch our

spirits this evening, and tomorrow, and the following week and month, that we may not presently lose the savor of these things by secular and common discourse, and vain converse. When we go away from the public worship, let us spend the remainder of the day in such offices and exercises of religion as may assist us to prosecute our great design, and may strengthen the vows of God, into which we have newly entered.

And let us show we like His fare, and are pleased with the entertainments of His house, by desiring more such opportunities, and by improving them whenever they return. "One thing have I desired of the LORD," says the psalmist, "that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life" (Ps. 27:4). By this means we should endeavor to become growing, thriving, fruitful, humble, self-denying, heavenly, exemplary Christians, walking worthy of our high and holy calling, purifying ourselves more and more from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; that our hearts may be more fixed for God and Christ, against all competitors, and under all discouragements. That Christ Jesus may have the more entire possession of our souls, and the service of our lives. That, His love being shed abroad in our hearts, nothing may ever be able to separate us from it. That whether we live or die, Christ may be all in all to us. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood...to him be glory," throughout all the churches, forever (Rev. 1:5). Amen.



## CHAPTER 5

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# *The Sin and Danger of Unworthy Receiving*

A DISCOURSE BEFORE THE LORD'S SUPPER

*For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.*

—1 CORINTHIANS 11:29

So deep and general is the corruption of mankind that it may truly be said of very many whose carriage and conversation is fair and unspotted that they are rather restrained by the fear of punishment than of guilt, of being sufferers rather than of being criminal. Such an error, it is true, is injurious to the dignity of the divine law, and to the honor and authority of God's government; nevertheless God does so far accommodate Himself to our state as to rule us by moral arguments that are proper to influence our hopes and fears; and therefore employs threatenings as well as promises, and punishes some as examples of severity to warn others from the like transgressions.

This method the apostle makes use of in this and the previous chapter, when he designed to reform the scandalous abuse of the Lord's Supper which these Corinthians were guilty of. After he had explained the nature of the institution, and opened the design and end of it, having represented it as the communion of the body and blood of Christ, he tells them what most manifestly follows from thence, that is to say, the greatness

of the sin, to eat this bread, and drink of that cup unworthily; that if they do it without self-examination, they are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; they offend against the Lord Redeemer who has appointed this sacred rite, and even against His body and blood, which are signified and represented by the bread and wine, as the memorial and sign of it.

This, to those that have any due regard to the authority and love of a dying Savior, one would think, should be argument enough; but for fear that it should not, besides the declaration of their sin, he declares the punishment of it in these words, that such “do eat and drink damnation to themselves.”

Wherein we have, first, the description of their punishment, who do unworthily partake of the Lord's Supper, that they “eat and drink damnation to themselves.” Secondly, the reason of that punishment, intimated in the nature and kind of their sin, that they discern not the Lord's body.

Before I consider the punishment of unworthy receivers, it will be proper to open a little the nature of their sin, mentioned in the latter part of the verse, “not discerning the Lord's body.” This may refer to the foregoing expression, of “being guilty of His body and blood”; and the one phrase will give light to the other. Such as receive unworthily are guilty of the body and blood of Christ because they do not discern and distinguish it aright; they do not think of it as they ought; they do not behave suitable to its excellent nature and use; and so they eat and drink judgment to themselves by not discerning the Lord's body; and thereby are criminal against the person of the Redeemer, as clothed with human nature, and as giving the memorials of His body and blood separated, to betoken His death and sufferings. For so we remember a crucified Savior in this ordinance; it is therefore no wonder if such a fault be severely punished.

That which we translate “discern,” it is well known, signifies to make a difference between one thing and another, as [in] Acts 15:19. So, “not to discern the Lord’s body” is not to difference and distinguish concerning it, to look no further than the outward sense, not to make a difference between common and sacramental bread, not to contemplate the body and blood of Christ, as signified by the sacramental elements; not to remember or consider His cruel sufferings which this should put us in mind of. This, be sure, is not to discern His body.

But few can be supposed so ignorant as not speculatively to discern and distinguish in this case. But practically to do so is a greater matter; it imports, to mind, to attend to, to esteem, to honor, to apply, to use the body, and blood of Christ, and the sign, and the memorial of it, according to its dignity and excellency; and thereupon to compose the outward and inward man, in partaking of this ordinance, as those that know we must do with Christ Himself, and that the body and blood of Jesus Christ is referred to by the bread and wine. Such a discerning of His body would help to compose us to serious reverence, would awaken suitable affections, would excite the exercise of repentance, faith, love, thankfulness, and joy answerable to the nature of this feast of love, upon the sacrifice of Christ. This would regulate the behavior of our bodies, and the temper of our spirits, the government of our thoughts and the motions of our affections, and make us worthy receivers. The neglect of this, the not thus discerning the Lord’s body, is the sin here mentioned, and thereby they are guilty of the body and blood of the Redeemer, i.e., they are profanely injurious to the very person of Christ; they treat His sacred body and precious blood unworthily, and with contempt. It is a guilt like theirs that abused and crucified the Lord Himself when He was upon earth; it is a sin against the body of Jesus Christ, against His humanity, which of all creatures that ever were upon earth,

or that are now in heaven, is the most sacred. The affront, contempt, and injury redounds to the blessed Redeemer as God incarnate, as having our nature now in heaven; it is an injury to the body of Christ, that body wherein He bore our sins upon the cross; wherein as a sacrifice for sin, He offered Himself to God; that body that was prepared for Him, and formed by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin; that was afterwards gloriously raised from the dead to a divine life, and is now in heaven, the wonder and admiration of the blessed angels, and raised to a state of glory there, as the pledge and earnest of our resurrection and bliss. The not discerning the Lord's body has such a guilt as this implied in it.

The punishment of this sin of unworthy receiving (expressed by not discerning the Lord's body), is here set forth by eating and drinking damnation to ourselves, or judgment to ourselves. That is, as sure as he eats and drinks, if he does it unworthily, so certain it is that judgment shall follow; he "eats and drinks judgment to himself." That addition, "to himself," may denote two things:

First, that the whole blame should be laid upon ourselves if such a divine institution, designed for the spiritual good and advantage of our souls, does prove to our detriment and damage. In such a case, it is we ourselves that are the sole cause of it.

Secondly, the expression may import, further, that such as receive unworthily, they only hurt and defile themselves, but not other men that commune with them. You may partake worthily, and to edification, while another, by unworthy receiving, that sits in the same pew, may eat and drink judgment and condemnation; but he eats and drinks judgment to himself only, not to you. "For every man shall bear his own burden: let every man prove his own work" (Gal. 6:4-5). It cannot be thought that our Lord was defiled by coming to the baptism of John, when

there was such a generation of vipers who came to it, as well as Christ; or that our Lord and the eleven apostles were defiled by the company of Judas at the Passover supper for the Lord's Supper was at the close of it; and for his being present at that also [we] may contend, though others think it probable that he went out before.<sup>1</sup>

But the presence of some unworthy persons is made an argument by many against their partaking of the Lord's Supper, in such or such a particular church, as if their presence would defile and infect them.

This therefore I shall consider as one objection, which several are apt to make against the performance of this duty, of frequent remembering the death of Christ at His table.

And then, secondly, consider the other objection, from this text, that is to say, from the danger of receiving unworthily, for fear that they should eat and drink damnation to themselves.

And thirdly, what many more are accustomed to plead, that the danger being so great, they dare not adventure, until they know that they are believers, or such as are invited; for, it is children's bread, and they dare not come until they are assured of their regeneration and adoption. I shall therefore inquire whether any ought to come to the Lord's Table until they have assurance, or while they lack it.

### **[Objection]**

It is objected by many that they do not commune because there are such and such admitted who ought not to come to the Table of the Lord, such as walk disorderly, who discredit

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1. Footnote in original: See Mr. Charnock, *Of the Lord's Supper*, 2nd Vol., p. 793, compared with Mr. Kettlewell, *Of the Lord's Supper*, 1687, p. 387, etc. The one for his being present, the other against it.

their profession, and are as bad as any of their neighbors and acquaintances. And the apostle says that "with such an one no not to eat" (1 Cor. 5:11), that we should "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11), that we should withdraw, and separate, and have no free familiarity with such (2 Thess. 3:6; 2 Tim. 3:5; 2 Cor. 6:17).

**[Answer] 1**

I answer, first, that the separation from wicked men required in such passages of Holy Scripture refers to our intimate converse and familiarity with such who live in notorious and scandalous sins, and do not testify their repentance; we must avoid their company for fear that we be infected; and there is much more danger of infection by familiarity with them in daily converse than by joining with them in religious duties. But we must be careful not to call those ungodly whom we cannot prove to be so; we should rather hope they are not, unless we can prove the contrary. What sins are there that even a good man, by the surprise of a temptation, may not commit, who yet mourns in secret, and truly repents? It may be you may have heard of the sins of many, of whose repentance you have not heard. And yet they might truly repent, and you might know it, if you would inquire. But where the mixture of the tares and the wheat is such that the one cannot be pulled up without the other, both must grow together until the harvest. Such a difference as God will make at the last day cannot now be made by us.

We may safer let the righteous and wicked go together, as if all were righteous, when we cannot prove the contrary; and we do not therein make a false judgment; we do not judge that it is certain that such and such are sincere, and truly godly, but that it is probable they may be so. And we may have a stronger confidence concerning the sincerity of some, while we have only probable hopes of others; indeed with such hopes there

may be some fear of their hypocrisy joined, when yet there is not sufficient evidence against such to bar them from the Lord's Table, much less to exclude them, after once they are admitted to such a privilege. A seemingly serious profession, if not contradicted by a contrary profession of words or actions, is the evidence of men's interest in church privileges, "in the forum of the church."<sup>23</sup> Charity "believeth all things, hopeth all things" (1 Cor. 13:7).

**[Answer] 2**

You ought first in charity to reprove the guilty persons, as you have opportunity, and to acquaint the pastors of the churches, that they may deal faithfully with them, in order to their repentance; and several by such means may be brought to give you satisfaction concerning their true repentance and amendment. But there are many who are so far from this that, on the contrary, they solicit and tempt men to sin, if they know they come to the Lord's Table, that they may find occasion to reproach religion; and others applaud and consent with such as do this, that they may shame religion by the irregularities and excesses of some that profess it. Such have a dreadful account to give to God. And so have they who come to the Lord's Table, and yet by their drunkenness, or unfaithfulness, their worldliness, or unrighteousness, or any disorderly walking, do give occasion to such an objection, and open the mouths of enemies to reflect dishonor, and reproach upon the profession of religion in general, and upon that particular church or congregation to which they are joined. Such have a double guilt to answer for, and woe be to them if they do not repent. Such as these we often warn not to come to the Lord's

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2. Latin: *in foro ecclesiae*.

3. Footnote in original: See Mr. Baxter's *Third Disput. of Right to Sacraments*.

Table until they give some good testimony of their repentance, and so far as they are known, they ought to be refused.

**[Answer] 3**

If you know of a purer communion, where there are none but saints, at least such as you are strongly confident to be so, rather go and join with them, and commune there, but do not live in the neglect and omission of this duty. For I am not pleading for any particular church, or society of Christians, but only speaking of the duty in general, of all sincere Christians, to join somewhere for the participation of this ordinance. If you are scrupulous as to the company admitted in some Christian assemblies, and know of others which you think are purer, where you believe you can regularly commune more to your edification, do it without delay. You are allowed by God (and at present by the laws of the land too) to choose your own pastor.

**[Answer] 4**

However, you ought to consider that it is impossible but some hypocrites and false professors will be admitted to the Lord's Table. Not only as pride, and covetousness, and envy, and some such sins are hard to be defined, so as to convince a particular person that in a prevailing degree he is guilty of these; not only as it is hard to determine what particular acts, now and then, of grosser sins are consistent with true grace; but because the tares and wheat are mixed together in the visible church, and all are not Israel that are of Israel. If we will commune with none but saints, there is no church on earth we can join with, without fear and doubting. So that if the errors and faults of the pastors, or of the people with whom we join in the worship of God, do defile us, and make us guilty, or

if our communion with them upon that account be a sin, we should join nowhere at all.

It is true, if the doctrine, ordinances, and worship of any church be so corrupted as that the substance of the worship is unlawful, separation is a duty; for when anything sinful is required of us as necessary to our communion, in such cases, separation is a Christian's duty.<sup>4</sup> But to keep from the ordinance, because some come unworthily to it, has no order or command of Christ to warrant it. Though He had many things against the seven Asian churches (Rev. 2:4), yet He did not call them to separate; but there are promises to them, if they keep themselves pure.

#### **[Answer] 5**

If it be unavoidable to commune with some such as are not sincere Christians, then to do so is not unlawful. Everyone is to examine himself; so says the apostle to these Corinthians, among whom there were so many unworthy communicants; and if they eat and drink unworthily, they did eat and drink judgment to themselves. Though the apostle speaks of the profanation of that ordinance by some, he does not bid others withdraw and separate upon that account. Christ has commanded you to examine yourself, and so eat; but it is not necessary [that] you should examine and know the fitness of all others. How would you know when to commune, if we may not do it until we know others be prepared as well as we? Great strictness and severity should be used in judging of ourselves and our own case; but we must use great charity, and tenderness, as to the case of others, and not conclude them hypocrites when we cannot tell but they truly repent. But if they do not, their presence cannot pollute me, if I endeavor to discharge

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4. Footnote in original: See Mr. Vines, *On the Lord's Supper*, Chap. 20.

my duty by personal, private reproof; and then if that is unsuccessful, with others, and afterwards by acquainting the pastors of the church, etc.

If I have the right to come to the Lord's Table, shall the coming of another that has none bar my right? Shall I sin in keeping from the ordinance because another sins in coming to it? Or because the church or the pastor sins in not excluding him? The power of the keys is not in my hand; I have no authority to cast out such a member. And though that particular pastor or church should be faulty in not doing it, it is not yet a sufficient ground of my separation (Rev. 2:14–15, 20). If I have a wedding garment, I will come to the marriage feast, though there should be others there that have none. Should I not offer my gift at the altar because my neighbor comes there with me, who should first go and be reconciled to his brother? I may relish and digest my food, though there is one who sits by me who has a weak stomach and a bad digestion. If I am duly prepared, it will not hurt me that another is not; while I partake not of other men's sins, surely I may join with them in the performance of necessary duties.

I say not that the wicked and the unregenerate ought to come; you often hear me declare the contrary: such are forbidden to come. But if they will come under a false profession and show of religion, after having been forewarned of their danger, and been faithfully told their duty, it is at their own peril, and they eat and drink judgment to themselves, and to nobody else; for, neither a minister of Christ nor a private Christian can deny communion with several persons who, if they would judge righteous judgment concerning themselves, ought to stay away, as having no right before God to come to the table of the Lord, as the case is with them at present.

In short, it is unlawful to commune with wicked men, if they be so bad, and their number so great, as that it is our duty to

forsake such a church; if heresy and impiety be justified by the majority, and severely damage faith and godliness, then that particular society is incapable of the ends of church communion, and so to join there would be sinful. But in cases of lesser irregularity, if we do not sin by the neglect of our duty, it will be no sin of ours to commune with that church, though unworthy persons be admitted. The sins of the pastor, and of particular delinquents, are not ours; much less may we refuse communion upon the account of other men's faults, when we have not done our duty in order to the remedy and cure of them.

### **Objection 2**

But others will say, I am truly afraid to venture; the danger of unworthy receiving is so very great that it makes me tremble to consider it. I have been many years affrighted with your text, that "he that eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks damnation to himself."

### **Answer 1**

The word which we translate "damnation," signifies only judgment, or punishment in general, and so it is used in several places. What judgment therefore is meant, the context must determine; and that speaks principally of temporal punishments; for such are mentioned as inflicted on the Corinthians for the profanation of this ordinance. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. 11:30). Besides, the reason that is assigned for these punishments, or judgments, was, "That we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). "For when we are judged," says the apostle; it is the same word; it may be as well rendered damned, as that in the text, damnation. "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with

the world." God did thus judge or punish the Corinthians in this world, that they might be reformed, and not perish eternally, so that he who eats and drinks unworthily may fear that his contempt and profanation of the ordinance be followed by some remarkable judgment of God; at least it was so in the apostles' time.

**[Answer] 2**

Consider, further, that the disorders committed by the Corinthians, and occasioned by their love feasts, that preceded the Lord's Supper, were such as were peculiar to those times, and are now abolished and diffused. Christians then feasted by themselves in their religious assemblies, in imitation of what the heathens did in their idol temples. The rich sent in their own provisions, and everyone contributed to this feast by bringing some portion; but there they banded into several parties as they came, without tarrying one for another, and feeding lovingly together; everyone fell to that portion of meat which he brought, as if they were at home, when it should have been divided in common, and the poor have had their share; "whereas," says the apostle, "some are hungry, and others intemperate, and drunken." This they are reprov'd for in verse 22: "What?" says he, "have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?" They made little or no difference between these love feasts and the Lord's Supper at the close of them; between these sacred symbols of our Lord's body and blood, and common food and drink. They were in the house and worship of God, just as in their own, and made no distinction between this and a common meal. No, it was worse, they turned this ordinance into a drunken club, or a riotous entertainment, making it an instrument and occasion of debauchery. This was eating and drinking unworthily indeed; and no wonder if God did so severely punish them for it. The apostle Jude reprov's

these love feasts (Jude 12). But there is no danger of such excesses at the Lord's Table now, or of eating and drinking unworthily in the same manner as the Corinthians did.

**[Answer] 3**

If we take damnation for eternal punishment, which unworthy receiving does without repentance expose to, yet consider that the wages of every sin is eternal death. And you have the same reason to be afraid of other sins, because you run the same hazard. The sacrifices of the wicked, God abhors; and the very prayers of the hypocrite are an abomination to Him. But:

**[Answer] 4**

Consider that by "eating and drinking his own damnation," the apostle does not mean that every such person shall certainly and inevitably be damned, but that without repentance it is a damning sin. Unworthy eating is so, and so is sinful abstaining too, without repentance. And why so much tenderness in the one case, and not in the other? No man needs be blamed for being unwilling to damn himself, but why should men be fearful of it in this instance, and not in others? Infidelity, disobedience, and impenitence will as certainly expose a man to damnation without the sacrament as with it. And they cannot fairly urge the fear of damnation against coming to it who are not restrained thereby from other sins as damning as this.

**[Answer] 5**

That therefore which the apostle's words will most properly infer and direct us to is this, that since we are required, in obedience to Christ, to do this in remembrance of Him, and yet such severe punishments are threatened to those that do it unworthily, the plain consequence is this, that we should not

omit it, because of the command; nor yet carelessly undertake it, because of the threatened judgment. But it will by no means excuse or plead for the total neglect and omission of it.

It is plain, the apostle never thought that the sin and danger of doing a duty amiss might be made an exception against the doing it at all; or that threatening damnation to eating and drinking unworthily should scare men from eating and drinking at all. He takes what care he can that the duty may be performed, and the error in doing it may be effectually prevented, but never makes the danger of the one a dispensation from the other. He tells them of the sin, to eat and drink unworthily, and of the punishment it makes them obnoxious to, but he does not therefore tell them, they may stay away from the sacrament for fear of committing the sin, or of incurring the danger, not even in that case where they were actually guilty and really punished.

**[Answer] 6**

You ought to consider that you will but increase your sin and aggravate your damnation by all the other duties of religion and other parts of divine worship if you continue impenitent. You are often told that you ought not to come to this table until you repent, and turn to God in Christ with all your heart, and give up yourselves entirely to be the Lord's, but if you do not resolve to do so, the same argument will hold for the neglect of prayer, and other parts of divine worship; all these will aggravate your sin, but the possibility of doing other services of religion amiss is not counted a sufficient reason for the not doing them.

After all such pretenses and excuses, there is too much reason to think that the most are afraid of coming to this ordinance, for fear that the preparing for it, and the consequent duties which they know are required, should interrupt

their sensual pleasures, or their inordinate prosecution of the world, and oblige them to leave their sins, which, as yet, they have no mind to part with. Such as these ought not to come indeed; they have other work first to do; they are first called to repentance and faith in Christ, and afterwards to the communion of His body and blood. They are called to understand and own their baptismal covenant by the answer of a good conscience, and then to renew it at the table of the Lord. This privilege belongs not to them, until they have truly repented, and forsaken sin, and yielded themselves to be the Lord's.

### **Objection 3**

But others are ready to say, I would come, and have had many a thought about it, but I doubt of my own sincerity, and the truth of my grace; I know it is children's bread, and I am not certain I am one of that number. And does not the apostle tell us that "he that doubteth is damned if he eat"? Now I doubt whether I am passed from death to life or not; may such a one as I venture to come, who have no assurance that I am in a state of grace? Are all those unworthy, and unfit to come, who come in any other state of soul than they think they may safely die in?

Several things may be said in answer to this:

#### **[Answer] 1**

Many mistake the nature of true faith and sincerity, and think, if they have not assurance of the love of God, that therefore they have no true faith. They make saving, justifying faith to consist in believing the special love of Christ to their souls, in believing that their sins are pardoned, and that they are in Christ. But this is a dangerous mistake, which one would wonder, under such clear light as we enjoy, should be so common.

For how unspeakable is the difference between the truth of grace and the knowledge of its being true; between a hearty consent to the terms of the covenant, and the resulting act of faith, so as to be able to say, "I know my interest in the covenant." Many a false professor may flatter himself that his faith is true when it is not; and many an upright Christian may doubt and question whether he be one or not. But the latter shall one day be ashamed of their fears, as the former of their hopes. The Lord knows who are His, when many that are His do not know it themselves. And if a minister of Christ will ask a few close-to-home questions of such doubting, trembling Christians, by which their hearty consent to the covenant may be judged of, their answers plainly show that they believe in Christ, and love Him above all the world, and regard no iniquity in their hearts, and yet will continue to doubt of their integrity, though the bent of their hearts and the endeavors of their lives do abundantly prove that they are sincere.

**[Answer] 2**

However, it may ordinarily be known whether your faith be of the right kind or not, and whether you are upright towards God or not. We are bid to examine, and search, and try, and prove ourselves concerning it, that we may find the mark and impress of God upon our souls, the fruits of the sanctifying Spirit there, and so have rejoicing in ourselves, and not in another. It is so far from being unlawful to collect comfort from the marks and signs of our sanctification, and to prove our union to Christ, and justification that way. That it is the very method of the gospel, to direct us to know our state towards God by thus looking inward, to find the image of Christ upon the soul, and by observing the fruits of the Spirit in a godly conversation.

Such doubting Christians would do well to consult some faithful minister of Christ, and represent the state of their

own case, what they feel, that so they may be told what it does signify, and be helped to judge of themselves.

It is granted that you know how it is with you better than any minister can do. For, as one well expresses it, "A patient knows better than any physician what he feels; but a physician when he hears it can tell from what cause it comes, and what is the nature of the disease, and what is like to come of it, and what is the proper method for a cure."<sup>5</sup>

There is a great deal of reason why you should expect and hope for the resolution of your doubts in such cases, by consulting some minister of Christ, especially him under whose ministry you have chosen to place yourselves, as the helper of your faith and joy.

### **[Answer] 3**

The penitent Christian, though he lacks assurance, is accepted of God, and has the right to this ordinance, whether he believes it or not. If you genuinely consent to the covenant of grace, and with a humble, penitent sense of your past sins, are willing and desirous to close with Christ on the terms of the gospel, that God shall be your God, and Christ your Redeemer and Lord, and the Holy Spirit your sanctifier and guide; if you are willing, heartily willing, to give up yourselves to be instructed, ruled, and saved by Him, this is the very heart of saving faith. And if this be your character, you are the members of Christ, and ought to come to the Lord's Table, for though your timorousness and present misgivings may make you suspend for a while, they cannot deprive you of your right to the ordinance, nor disoblige you from the duty of coming to it. For all such who genuinely consent to the covenant, they may, and

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5. Footnote in original: see Mr. Baxter.

ought to come to signify their consent, and to receive the seal of the covenant.

**[Answer] 4**

Every Christian ought to endeavor to know his state, for fear that they be distracted between the hopes of God's acceptance of them on the one hand, and the fears of coming unworthily on the other. Because they doubt of their worthiness, they fear to come, and because they have some good hope, they dare not stay away, for fear that they neglect their duty.

The proper remedy is to resolve genuinely to please God, and obey Him in this and all other instances, and then do this in remembrance of Christ, as what all His followers are obliged to do. It may be that ignorance of your state, from whence your doubts proceed, is owing to the neglect of self-examination, and the use of proper means to know yourself.

**[Answer] 5**

It may yet be advisable for some melancholy tempted persons, under some perplexing doubts, to stay away for a while, until they have competently overcome their fear, for fear that they should get more hurt than good, and be even swallowed up with desperation, should they come, while they use better means to be acquainted with themselves. It is better for them to do so than that all the hypocrites and impenitent persons in the congregation should be told it is their duty to come to the Lord's Table, if they can but make themselves uncertain whether they be impenitent or not.

**[Answer] 6**

However, he that, upon the best search and examination of himself, as to his heart and life, can say that it is true, I am not certain that my heart is sincere with God in His covenant, yet

I must say (and blessed be God that I can say it), that as far as I know my own heart, I think I do truly repent of all my past sins, and that I do genuinely consent to the covenant. I am not fully sure, but so far as I know my own heart, I do. Such a one may come to the Lord's Table, and find welcome.

And the truth is, if none should come but such as have full assurance and a certainty of their salvation, I think in most places there would be very few communicants. Very many of you that do come would stay away, and ought to do so, and I [myself] should sometimes be one of this number.

**[Answer] 7**

As to the apostle's expression, "He that doubteth is damned if he eat" (Rom. 14:23), in the original it is, "is self-condemned." But it is not meant of eating at the Lord's Table, but of eating meats, which he doubts whether it be lawful to eat of, when at the same time he knows it is lawful to forbear. In cases of such indifferent things, the safest course is to forbear, but in a case of duty, your doubting alone will not disoblige you, else men might give over any duty, without sin, if they are but blind or erroneous enough to doubt whether it be a duty. If you are a real, upright Christian, though a doubting one, your doubts will not make the neglect of this ordinance not to be a sin.

**[Answer] 8**

Be sure of this, he that endeavors not to know his state and to be prepared to come to this ordinance, he lives in continual sin. Let them consider it, who fright themselves with the danger of coming unworthily, but seldom think of the sin and danger of not coming at all. He that continues in his sin, and will adventure to eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, he shall be judged and punished, and so shall he that stays away, and

will not pay this part of homage and worship to Christ which He requires of all His followers, in remembrance of His dying love. He who is not fit company for Christ, and the faithful, at this feast of love, cannot be in a good and safe condition. His business is to repent, and to get ready.

**[Answer] 9**

Let weak Christians, who have some doubts remaining, consider that this ordinance is appointed for a help to weak faith. The seals of the covenant are for greater confirmation to us, that the heirs of the promise might have abundant consolation. In this sacrament God speaks more solemnly, more particularly, more affectionately to us, for the help of our faith. A sealed pardon is here offered to everyone by name. That which is spoken in general by the preaching of the Word is here particularly applied to individual persons. And usually the sincerely penitent get relief and comfort against their doubts, and jealousies, and fears by obedience to Christ in this ordinance. To allude to that expression, “[Christ] was known of them [his disciples] in breaking of bread” (Luke 24:30–31). I say allude to it, for I question whether that was sacramental bread; though some<sup>6</sup> plead strongly for it.

**[Answer] 10**

Lastly, if we have any good hope through grace notwithstanding some remaining doubts and fears, though we cannot come with assurance, we may come humbly and penitently. We may give up ourselves again to God in Christ as His servants, though we cannot say certainly that He is our Savior. We are sinners, and need a pardon; we are penitent sinners, and are desirous of one. If we do not know we are pardoned sinners, yet let us

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6. Footnote in original: Dr. Bury, and others.

come penitently, humbling ourselves before Him, under the sense of our vileness, as knowing we need a Savior to reconcile and justify us. Let us look upon Him as the Savior whom we have pierced, whom we have crucified, if we cannot look upon Him as ours in special covenant. Let us take shame to ourselves, and acknowledge the guilt of our sin, though we cannot apply the comfort of His salvation. You may come (says one<sup>7</sup>) with brokenness of heart for sin, when you cannot come with the joy and rejoicing of assured believers. You may hunger and thirst after righteousness, and have earnest, eager, fervent desires after Him, though you cannot, dare not, glory in Him as yours.

Let us therefore apply ourselves to Him as we can, though we cannot apply Him to ourselves as we would. Let us stir up the grace that is in us, do our best, use the weak faith we have, and say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24). I cannot say, it may be, with the apostle, that "the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20), but I can say with the same apostle, in another place, that "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:15). I cannot say as yet, "My beloved is mine," but I must say, I will say, that I am His. I resolve to be so—wholly, only, entirely, unreservedly, everlastingly His. "I am thine," says David, "I am thine, save me" (Ps. 119:94). It would be more comfortable if we could say, "Lord, Thou art mine. Thou hast accepted me in Thy Christ. Thou hast placed Thy image and love upon me, and adopted me into Thy family." But though I cannot say, "Thou art thus mine," yet this I can say, "I am Thine by my own choice. I am Thine by the resignation of myself, and all I have to Thee. I am Thine by entire devotedness to Thee, and

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7. Footnote in original: Dr. Manton.

sincere desire to please Thee. I am Thine, and if Thou dost cast me off, and reject me, and I perish forever, there shall one perish that was heartily resolved to be the Lord's, and this I hope, believe, and know, shall never be."

To conclude, therefore, you that lack assurance, who are filled with doubts and fears concerning your state, and therefore keep from the Lord's Table, you must endeavor to come in this manner. For my own part, I must profess (though I hope it is better with some stronger Christians), that this last mentioned particular is very often to me the support and stay of my soul. And thanks be to God, if in the sincerity of our hearts we can reach this. We may then expect to meet with welcome and consolation. But if we do not, though we should never have sensible consolation, and full assurance, and raised joys, at the table of the Lord—never while we live—yet the authority of Christ requiring us to do this in remembrance of Him should be enough to determine our practice against all the little cavils and objections that may be made against it. O let us not be lacking in our duty, and the God of love and grace, who is the Father of mercies, and our gracious Redeemer, of whose compassion we have had such large and dear experience, will never be lacking to those who diligently and sincerely seek him.

## CHAPTER 6

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# *Christ's Last Passover and Its Accomplishment*

## A DISCOURSE AFTER THE LORD'S SUPPER

*With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.*

—LUKE 22:15–18

“Greater love hath no man than this,” says our blessed Lord, “that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13), to part with that for another, which, of all things, is the dearest, and the most valuable to himself. In all ages of the Christian Church, there have been some ready to give this proof of their love to Him who spoke these words, by not loving their lives to the death, when they<sup>1</sup> stood in competition with their fidelity to Christ. And with how much the greater cheerfulness and alacrity, willingness and desire, they did it, by so much the more powerful and constraining was the principle of love. By this we may make some judgment, what manner of love it was wherewith the Lord Redeemer loved us, when He “hath given

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1. They: their lives.

himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Eph. 5:2). The voluntariness of His sacrifice argued the excellency of His incomparable love.

Though His death was necessary, with respect to the eternal purpose and appointment of heaven, for it was by the determinate counsel of God that the Messiah should suffer death; and though it were violent, with respect to the instrumentality of men in His crucifixion—they did it with wicked hands—yet with reference to Himself, His death was voluntary. He made a willing sacrifice of His own life; He laid it down; none else could have taken it from Him. He gave Himself [as] a ransom, He became poor, He made Himself of no reputation, He poured out His soul to death, it was not rent from Him. He was obedient to death, even the death of the cross. This gave an extraordinary value to His sufferings. Upon this depended the merit of His sacrifice, and the efficacy of His blood. And this is one endearing circumstance which heightens His love and calls for our thankful admiration.

He willingly offered Himself in the first council of peace about our redemption, and undertook to suffer for us and make satisfaction to divine justice. And after His incarnation, He always knew and frequently foretold His own sufferings and death. He reproves Peter, as if he acted the devil's part, when he would have dissuaded Him from it. Indeed, He most certainly desired this most bloody baptism: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished" (Luke 12:50). The night before His last sufferings, He makes His last will and testament, and leaves it with His disciples, giving His blood to drink in the sacrament, to show how willingly He would pour it out the next day upon the cross. And on this account He so earnestly desired to eat this Passover which the text speaks of, because it was the last before He should suffer death. And afterwards, even the same evening,

He goes out into the garden where He knew He should be betrayed, and so, in effect, He brings Himself to the door of the Tabernacle, to be offered to God [as] a sacrifice for us.

“With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” As if He had said, “The sufferings I have so often spoken of are now approaching. The hour is at hand when I shall be betrayed and crucified. This is the last Passover I shall ever keep with you before I am lifted up from the earth. And therefore I most earnestly desire it, because it is the last that will precede My death, whereby I shall put an end to these legal services which have all along referred to Me, and to the sacrifice and oblation I am to make for sin. Henceforth I will eat and drink no more of the Passover Supper, for My own sufferings and death is that which they signified and related to. I am the true Paschal Lamb. All the rites and observances about the killing and eating of it were but typical of my passion, and shall now be fulfilled.”

And here I shall consider:

1. The Passover which our Lord desired to eat of
2. His ardent desire to eat of this Passover, and the reason of it
3. The company with whom He desired to eat it: “with you”
4. The time when: “before I suffer”
5. The accomplishment of it in the kingdom of God; what we are to understand by the kingdom of God, and what by the fulfilling of it therein
6. His resolution and declaration, that He would eat and drink no more so, until it were accomplished

Lastly, some reflections of truth, and duty, as the application of the whole.

*1. Concerning the feast of Passover*

You have the institution of it beginning in Exodus 12, where we find that it was appointed by God as a memorial of the Israelites' slavery in Egypt, and their deliverance out of it. Former miracles having been unsuccessful upon Pharaoh, God intends to slay all the first-born of Egypt in one night; whereby, in part, the curse of God pronounced on Ham is executed on his posterity, that is to say, the Egyptians, in destroying all the first-born of both man and beast. The Israelites were ordered by Moses to slay a lamb on the fourteenth day of the first month, which answers to our March, and to sprinkle the posts of their doors with the blood of that, and to feed upon the flesh of it, in their several families. That very night the destroying angel strikes the first-born of every family, where this command of sprinkling the door posts with the blood of the lamb was not observed. On this, you know, they were delivered out of Egypt, the Egyptians not only giving leave, but desiring them to be gone. And this deliverance, being the foundation of the Jewish state, was to be perpetually observed by them in their generations, and to be an ordinance forever (Ex. 12:42).

The whole institution of the Paschal lamb is called by the name of the Passover, though it refers especially to the first lamb in Egypt, whose blood was sprinkled on the door posts of the Israelites' houses, when the destroying angel passed them by. And the reason of that name, Passover, is because of the angel's passing by their houses, and their consequent deliverance out of Egypt, passing out of the house of bondage into liberty. And nothing is more usual than to give to the cause the name of the effect. Upon which account Christ is called our righteousness, wisdom, resurrection, and life, etc. But the same name, Passover, is also given to those lambs which were slain every year afterwards, this feast being annually observed, in remembrance of that deliverance of theirs out of Egypt.

This, being a constant memorial of the first Passover, has the same name given it with that to which it related. And this also is common in Scripture, to give the name of the thing signified to the sign which represents it. So the Jews are said to kill the Passover, that is, the Paschal lamb, which was in remembrance of the angel's passing by their houses, and their consequent deliverance out of Egypt. Thus circumcision is called the covenant of God, and the rock in the wilderness is called Christ, and the seven candlesticks in Saint John's vision are the seven churches, that is, these are signified and represented by them.

It is therefore very absurd for the Romanists to insist upon these words, "This is my body," to prove that the substance of Christ's flesh and blood is in the sacrament. They may as well argue that the Paschal lamb that Christ did eat with His disciples was the same with that which was slain by the Israelites in Egypt, or that it was not an animal, because it is called a Passover, or that the Paschal lamb was transubstantiated into the flesh of Christ, because Christ is called our Passover, and sometimes called the Lamb of God, as well as the bread in the sacrament called His body, and the wine His blood.

Before I leave this head, I might mention the historical evidence that agrees to that of the Holy Scriptures, concerning the Israelites' Passover in Egypt, and the sprinkling of their door posts with the blood of the lamb in that memorable night of their deliverance. For the better understanding whereof, we may consider:

a. That the Jews, after the death of Moses and Joshua, were several times in subjection to the neighboring nations, and could not have had the confidence to keep up such a solemn memorial of this thing every year, if the matter of fact had not been known to the Egyptians, and their other neighbors around about, to be true; which yet the Jews continued to

observe every year, until their last general dispersion. And to this day they have something in imitation of it, wherever they are scattered upon the face of the earth. Besides this:

b. The tribe of Levi were set apart by God, and consecrated to Him in a solemn manner, instead of the first-born of the people of Israel that were preserved in Egypt, as you read, "And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine; because all the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be" (Num. 3:12-13), so that every Levite was a living memorial of that miracle.

c. Besides, the constant law enjoined upon the Jews and observed to this day, concerning the redemption of every first-born among them, and of unclean beasts (Num. 18:15).

d. The memory of the death of the first-born in Egypt, which gave occasion to the ceremony of the Passover, continued among the Egyptians even after the death of Christ. For Epiphanius relates that, "at the same time of the year, the night before the Israelites went out of Egypt, when the first-born in Egypt were slain, the Egyptians were accustomed to mark their houses, their trees, their sheep, etc., with red, by that, as by a kind of talisman, thinking to avoid some such mischief and calamity as their fathers experienced at that time, and which the Israelites escaped, by following the advice of Moses, to sprinkle the door posts of their houses with blood. Some such

custom as this continued in Egypt, even after the incarnation of Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

2. [*His ardent desire to eat of this Passover, and the reason of it*]

Having spoken thus much concerning the Jewish Passover, let me now consider our Lord's desire to eat of it. “With desire I have desired to eat this Passover before I suffer.” “With desire I have desired”—a usual Hebraism, to signify the earnestness and vehemence of His desire. The evangelist Luke has many instances of this, agreeable to other expressions in other places, “Surely blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thee” (Heb. 6:14). The zeal, and earnestness, and ardency of His desire is expressed by it, agreeable to that aforementioned place, which referred to His death and sacrifice, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished” (Luke 12:50). As if He could not live in ease, have no rest or quiet, until He was made a sacrifice. And that is the first and great reason of desiring this Passover:

a. Because this was to be the last before He suffered. Therefore He so earnestly desires it. The near approach of His sufferings did not at all abate His resolution and desire of suffering, but rather gave an edge to His affection. He was so far from being disheartened by the near prospect of His crucifixion that the nearer He comes to it, the more He desires it, and therefore desires to eat of this Passover which was to be His last, and then makes His last will, and institutes this supper the same evening, being desirous [that] everything should be dispatched that was necessary or fit to be done before He suffered.

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2. Footnote in original: Heres. 18. adverb. Nazarxos.

It was the last night of His life, and the night wherein He was to be betrayed, and foreknew He should be so. Other Passovers prefigured His death; this did both prefigure, and accompany it. For His death was now in a manner present. It was this that made Him long and desire to eat this Passover, though at the same time He had so near a prospect of His amazing sufferings in the garden that night, and on the cross the next day. Could we understand the agonies of His tormented mind that made Him complain that His soul was sorrowful, even to death, and pray with doubled and tripled importunity that the cup might pass from Him, we may then judge of His love in desiring to eat of this Passover, for this reason, because [it was] His last.

b. Another reason may be to give us an example of obedience, and therefore, being made under the law, He would exactly observe it, and so for our sakes fulfill all righteousness, as in many other instances, of subjection to His own creatures, of paying tribute to His own subjects, etc. And, to teach us humility, a little before this, He would wash the feet of His own disciples with those hands which, just after this Passover, had all power in heaven and earth solemnly given into them.

And not only as to the moral law, but He stooped down to the very fringes of the ceremonial law, as an example of obedience. And therefore the skin of His flesh was circumcised, and His holy mother purified; and He that was the true Passover would keep the typical one; and so, as one well expresses it, [He] did obediently stand under His own shadow.

c. One reason of His desire to eat of this Passover might be to put an end to the sacraments of the legal institution. And therefore after the eating of the Passover, He instituted the Lord's Supper, which succeeds in its room, which is a feast

upon the sacrifice of Christ, the true Lamb of God, the true Christian Passover, in remembrance of our deliverance by Him from sin and hell, from death and the devil. Those things therefore that were but types and shadows of Him must cease after His death, the truth and substance of them being now accomplished, as I shall show presently.

d. Another reason might be that He might have fellowship and communion with His disciples. And that leads to the consideration of the third thing:

*3. The company with whom He desires to eat this His last Passover, "with you"*

The Jews tell us, concerning the number of those that were to eat the Passover, that it was not to be under ten, for the whole lamb was to be eaten, nor above twenty, for fear that they should need two lambs. Therefore our Lord sent word to one of His disciples to prepare everything for that solemnity, that the house might be searched, if there were any leavened bread left in it, which they were accustomed to do very carefully in every corner, saying, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who hast sanctified us by Thy precepts." And then, throwing a little dust into the air, they used these words, or the like, "If there be any leavened bread in this house, let it be as this dust, cast into the air." But the principal reason of sending word beforehand might be because the persons in the family were to be numbered. And it is not improbable but there were more men than the apostles and our Lord who were present at the eating of this Passover, and it may be some women too. For:

It is probable that the man and his family in whose house it was did eat of the Passover with Christ and His apostles. Secondly, the expressions of the evangelist are very considerable,

concerning him that should betray Him. There is a threefold gradation. He says, first, in the general, "One of you shall betray me." And afterwards He comes nearer, and says, "One of the twelve," or, "of my apostles" (often so called), so that at the eating of this Passover there seemed to have been more present than the twelve apostles. And afterwards He particularizes the person, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish" (Matt. 26:23). Thirdly, we read that the virgin Mary, and two or three other women, did usually accompany Him, and were then at Jerusalem to eat the Passover, for, the next day, the virgin Mary was standing by the cross when our Lord was crucified. And it being the Jewish custom for the relations to join together at the Passover supper, it is not unlikely that she did eat the Passover with Christ. And it being in the house of one of His disciples, she might tarry there that night, while He went out from thence, about eleven or twelve o'clock at night into the garden, where He was betrayed and taken; and she, hearing of His being taken, might go to the High Priest's hall, and be at the cross the next morning at nine o'clock.

"With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." "With you," you, My disciples and friends, with whom I shall never eat another Passover. Notwithstanding the prospect of His approaching sufferings and death, He did not decline, but earnestly desired communion and fellowship with them in such an ordinance.

When He gave them the cup, it is observable He bids them divide it among themselves. The Scripture says not that He gave the elements into every one of their particular hands, much less into their mouth, without their touching the bread or cup, with their own hands; except we will admit that Christ changed the posture He was in, and always used at meals (and the Scripture says not He did), how could He reach it to so many as eleven persons in the same posture?

4. *Let us consider the time when, "before I suffer"*

There is a great controversy about the time of this Passover. It was certainly upon Thursday night, He being crucified on the Friday in the forenoon, though He did not give up His spirit until three in the afternoon. But the question will be whether it was at the same time that the Jews kept their Passover, or a day sooner. And if it was a day sooner, how could the Paschal lamb be killed which was to be brought to the Temple, and be killed by the priests, between the two evenings of the fourteenth day, the first whereof began when the sun began to decline, or as soon as mid-day was past; the other evening was after sunset. Some learned men think it is plain that the time when our Lord did eat this Passover with His disciples was the day before the generality of the Jews kept theirs, from John 18:28 and 19:14.

For the better understanding of this, you must know that the time for the observation of the Jewish festivals was regulated by the appearance of the new moon. They had not almanacs in those days, as we have now, to tell us beforehand when will be a new moon.<sup>3</sup> But (if we may believe the Jewish writers) about the time when they expected a new moon, they sent men to watch for it on the top of some hill, or high place; and he who could first discover a new moon was to tell the priest, and he to blow the trumpet, to give the people notice, that there was a new moon. But, in case of cloudy weather, if in three days' time from their first expectation, no man could see a new moon, they did then venture (but not before), to blow the trumpet without seeing it, which must needs cause a very great uncertainty, and the same moon be sooner seen at one place than at another, and the Passover kept accordingly.

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3. Footnote in original: Dr. Wallis, *The Christian Sabbath, in Answer to Mr. Bampfild*, page 13.

So that sometimes there was a mistake of one day, or more. Now it has been proved, out of Epiphanius, and others, that there was a contention and tumult among the Jews at this very Passover, concerning the time or the day wherein it was to be observed, and that the senate had appointed a day too late, and had not determined according to the true phases or appearance of the moon. It is manifest [that] our Savior kept the Passover on one day, and the generality of the Jews on another (perhaps He, about a fortnight before, might see a new moon a day sooner than they did).<sup>4</sup> And therefore we may suppose our Lord, and the more pious Jews, did not approve of that order of the senate, but followed the true appearance of the moon, confirmed by sufficient and assured witnesses, the Passover being to be kept on the fifteenth day from the appearance of the new moon.

But you will say still, "How could that lamb be brought to the Temple, and killed there, if it were not on the same day the Jewish Passover was generally observed?" To which it is answered that either the master of the family might be permitted on that day to kill the lamb (not all the lambs to be eaten by the Paschal societies were to be killed by the priests at the Temple and their blood poured out upon or at the foot of the altar, but some of them instead of all), or that as to this and other feasts whose time depended upon this determination, that it was usual, in doubtful cases, to permit the feast to be solemnized for two days together. Many instances can be brought of this out of the writings and practices of the Jews, and it is probable it was so now. It is certain it was the night before He suffered, that He did thus eat the Passover, and the day wherein Israel went out of Egypt. And it is a tradition among

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4. Footnote in original: Dr. Cudworth's *Notion of the Lord's Supper*, pages 50, 70, etc.

the Jews, says Grotius, that then Israel should be delivered and redeemed in the days of the Messiah, even on the same day, wherein they were delivered out of the house of bondage in Egypt. Thus admirably did the wisdom of God concur, to make the antitype agree with the type, as will appear more distinctly under the next head.

*5. The accomplishment of this Jewish Passover in the kingdom of God* “For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” Which denotes it should be accomplished very shortly in that kingdom. But “until” will not argue, as if He should have afterwards eaten of it again. That will not follow, any more than that Michal, Saul’s daughter, had a child after her death, because it is said, “[She] had no child unto the day of her death” (2 Sam. 6:23).

- a. What is meant by the kingdom of God?
- b. What by the fulfilling of the Passover therein?
- c. And how, or wherein it was then accomplished and fulfilled?

a. What are we to understand by the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven? Sometimes the expression is used for the kingdom of glory. “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3). Sometimes for His providential government, “His kingdom ruleth over all” (Ps. 103:19). Sometimes for the execution of judgment on the nation of the Jews, “Some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come” (Mark 9:1). But most usually it is taken for the kingdom of grace, in general, the Messiah’s kingdom, with what belongs thereto. The outward means of salvation are sometimes so called (Matt. 21:43); “If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the

kingdom of God is come unto you” (Matt. 12:28). The internal renovation of the soul is also so expressed, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation...the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20–21). The essentials of Christianity are also expressed by this phrase, “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 14:17). But the church-state, or the evangelical dispensation by the Messiah, is most commonly understood, as when the kingdom of God is said to be at hand, by the preaching of Christ and His apostles. And no greater prophet than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven, or the least minister of the New Testament, who preaches the accomplishment of those things which the Baptist saw but the beginning of is greater than John the Baptist, for he died before the sacrifice of Christ. So in this text, our Lord says that He will eat no more of the Passover, and drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until it be accomplished in the Kingdom of God; that is, until what was represented in the figure and type of the Jewish Passover was really fulfilled by the Messiah’s offering Himself [as] a sacrifice upon the cross. Which sacrifice and death of Christ was supposed, and anticipated in the Lord’s Supper, as the first institution of this new kingdom, of gospel dispensation, “My body, which is broken for you.” And this brings me to consider:

b. The fulfilling of this Passover in the kingdom of God, or the accomplishment of the legal Passover, when Christ, “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), was sacrificed for us. And here we may consider in the general:

- i. That something more than the history was intended
- ii. That these things did refer to the Messiah

iii. That the faithful under the Old Testament did so regard them

i. It is certain that somewhat more than the history was designed. All the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Mosaic institution were but “a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (Col. 2:17). He is so even of the Jewish Passover, for the Jews can never assign any pertinent and solid reason of the Passover rites, if there were no reference to the Messiah. What need of the choice and separation of a lamb in that manner? What virtue could there be in the killing of one, and the sprinkling their door posts with his blood? What influence could that have on their deliverance out of Egypt? Could not God distinguish the houses of the Israelites from those of the Egyptians without this? No reason can well be assigned of such rites and orders, but by the doctrine of the New Testament. These things are thereby discovered to be excellent emblems of the great mystery of our Lord’s death.

ii. The whole design therefore of this Passover feast had an aspect upon the Messiah, and does admirably represent the death and sufferings of Christ, the Lamb of God, sacrificed for us, by whose blood we have a spiritual deliverance from sin and Satan, as by the blood of the Paschal lamb they had a deliverance from the destroying angel, and afterwards a deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Even the history of the institution of this Passover shows a manifest reference to Jesus Christ. For we read concerning the Paschal lamb, “Neither shall ye break a bone thereof” (Ex. 12:46). And this is said to be fulfilled in Christ the antitype, as if pronounced immediately of Him, when the soldiers found Him dead, “they brake not his legs.” And it follows, “These things were done, that

the Scripture should be fulfilled, 'A bone of him shall not be broken'" (John 19).

iii. The faithful under the Old Testament did so regard these things, and therefore Moses, who esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt," and therefore did know Him, is said to have "through faith...kept the Passover" (Heb. 11:26, 28). In which chapter the apostle speaks all along of faith in the Mediator, and not of faith in God simply. But:

c. Let us consider more particularly how these things, with relation to the Jewish Passover, were accomplished by Christ, as the Lamb of God to take away sin. And that will appear if we consider four things:

- i. The person of Christ as our Passover, or Paschal lamb
- ii. His sufferings and sacrifice
- iii. The fruits and benefits of them to us
- iv. The way and manner of our participation of these benefits

i. The person of Christ, who is the true Paschal lamb. I shall not stay to consider the resemblance of His character to a lamb, for meekness, for patience, for submission, and obedience—"He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not his mouth" (Isa. 53:7). Nor, that the Paschal lamb was to be without blemish, sound and entire, without bruise or maim. Thus holy was our Lord in His conception, and birth, and in all the actions of His life, "A lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19). "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26). Nor how the lamb was set apart and chosen for three days, and

killed the fourth, answered by Christ's being set apart to His prophetic office, wherein He manifested Himself for about three years, before He offered Himself [as] a sacrifice in the fourth year. Those that write concerning the types are large upon this subject.

ii. We may consider His passion, and sufferings, the fulfilling of it as to His death, and the time of it. The Paschal lamb was to be roasted with fire, which might not only put them in mind of the hardships they endured in the brick kilns of Egypt, but prefigure the sufferings of Christ, as crucified and pressed, when, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws" (Ps. 22:15). The time also of His suffering agreed with the time of the Jewish Passover, about the ninth hour, or three o'clock in the afternoon, the usual time that the Passover was to be killed.

iii. As to the fruits and effects of His sacrifice, there is a further accomplishment of the type, for the destroying angel is diverted from the Israelites' houses. The blood of a lamb could not merit or procure this, but as it represented the blood of the Messiah, whereby the wrath of God is quenched, and we delivered from Satan the great destroyer. And as this was the earnest of their deliverance from their bondage in Egypt, by the death of Christ we are set free from a much worse slavery.

iv. Consider the manner how we partake of the benefit and fruits of Christ's sacrifice. Our hearts must be sprinkled with the blood of Christ, as the Israelites were to sprinkle the blood of the lamb on the door post of their houses. They were to feed upon the flesh of the Paschal lamb; we are, in a spiritual sense, to do so with reference to Christ (John 6:53). They were to eat it with sour sauce, with bitter, or wild herbs; repentance for sin

must be joined with faith in a Savior. Unleavened bread was to be thrown out of the house; and you know how the apostle applies this to those who are called to the feast, even that feast upon the sacrifice of Christ at His own table: "Neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity, and truth" (1 Cor. 5:7-8).

It was remarkable as to the first Passover [that] it was to be eaten in haste, with their loins girt, shoes on their feet, and a staff in their hand, as pilgrims and strangers here, who are hastening to a better country, which God has promised, and which their Canaan may mind us of, and make this also applicable to our case, which will bring me to the sixth and last thing.

*6. Sixthly and lastly, the resolution and declaration of Christ to eat and drink no more of this Passover until it be accomplished*

Some think that the 18th verse, "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come," is misplaced, and ought to come in after the institution of the Lord's Supper, as it is placed by the evangelists, Matthew and Mark. Chrysostom thinks it refers to His eating and drinking with His disciples after His resurrection in this world, that He would not more eat and drink until He had suffered death and was risen again, and then, to manifest the truth of His being risen, He did condescend to satisfy and convince them in that manner.<sup>5</sup> But there is little ground for that interpretation.

It is not improbable but our Lord may allude here to the custom of the High Priest, who, coming out of the Holy of Holies, did keep a feast of joy with his friends. For if he were a wicked man, say the Jews, he died in the place; if a good man, he came safe, and then he rejoiced with his friends, and kept

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5. Footnote in original: Section 3. *Homil. in Matthaum.*

a feast, where they were accustomed to drink new wine. To this custom our Lord may allude in this expression, thereby telling His disciples that He should not sink in the performance of what He undertook in the great offering that He was to make to God His Father but come off with success, and then they should rejoice and feast together; He would drink new wine with them in the kingdom of His Father.<sup>6</sup>

Some think the evangelist Luke, as to Christ's drinking new wine, refers to the Lord's Supper that was to follow. And as he recites the words, they are more intelligible than as they are mentioned by Saint Matthew or Mark. He annexes them to the Passover cup, though the others recite this passage after the cup in the Lord's Supper, but the words might have been spoken by Christ before. And it is easier to transpose the words in Matthew and Mark to the unmentioned occasion, which was immediately before the Lord's Supper, than to transpose the whole 19th and 20th verses in Luke before the 17th verse, which would also make it a tautology.

By the kingdom of God, all the evangelists seem to mean the gospel dispensation, which was to commence in the Lord's Supper, as the first of that sort. For the baptism of John, and of the disciples of Christ, before His death, was different from baptism since the New Testament baptism (Acts 19:4–5). The Lord's Supper by anticipation did signify and show forth the Lord's death—"This is my body, which is broken for you" (1 Cor. 11:24). He supposed it broken, and Himself sacrificed, and the Passover fulfilled, Jesus Christ being the Lamb of God typified, and pre-signified by the Paschal lamb, until His sacrifice of Himself. And so to put a period to the former economy, on which the gospel dispensation did ensue.

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6. Footnote in original: Dr. Alix.

The term new (“until I drink it new”), may be accounted for, in that some of the evangelists say, “that day, I’ll drink new,” though it were the same hour, because it refers to a different period and dispensation, that is to say, the ceasing of the Mosaic, and the beginning of the evangelical one. In the like sense, the same word is used in other places, as Zechariah 14:6–7. And that which answers to the word “new” is that it is opposed to the old dispensation, that it serves divine purposes by a new institution, and so is made new; and it declares that the new gospel dispensation, to which it is appropriate, is now beginning, or to commence. “I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come,” or, “in the kingdom of God,” i.e., in the Lord’s Supper, which is “My gospel institution,” and the beginning of the peculiar kingdom of God, as dispensed “after My actual death and sufferings.”

No question but the sense is very safe, to consider it with reference to the heavenly glory, as it is usually understood, when all the blessings of this Passover shall be fully accomplished in the heavenly Canaan.

Neither is it strange or unusual for the same ancient type, or figure, to have respect to several objects, and to have several degrees of accomplishment. This of the Paschal lamb might not only have relation to the angel’s passing by the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, and their passage out of bondage into liberty, by the deliverance that followed, but to the absolution and deliverance of believers by the blood of Christ, and to the deliverance of Christ Himself out of the grave, and from a state of humiliation to that of glory, and to the passage of the church militant upon earth, to a state of triumph in heaven.<sup>7</sup>

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7. Footnote in original: *Les OEUVRES Posthumes de Mr. Claude*, Tom. 2.1.4. cap.9. traite de J. Christ.

The blessedness of heaven is frequently set off by this metaphor of eating and drinking. And at the Lord's Table, which was instituted at the close of the Passover feast, the thoughts of heaven are proper. We meet at this table, as those who hope to sit down with all the children of the kingdom, at the last great supper of the Lamb.

This ordinance is a lively resemblance of the heavenly feast, and should assist our meditations on it. Our Lord does here speak to us such kind of language. "Ere long we shall feast together in heaven," what is now done in emblem shall be then done in reality. You have here the earnest, pledge, and assurance of it.

This table is a preparatory entertainment for the eternal supper. It is some foretaste to stay our longings, and yet excite our desires after the heavenly feast above.<sup>8</sup> Here we break our fast (as I may say) but are made thereby very hungry, until that great supper come. Here we have but a pre-libation, a little short antepast of some rare things to come. Yet seeing it is an earnest of those things, it creates in a holy soul a wonderful contentment, both from its own sweetness, and the hopes wherewith it feeds us. It nourishes in us most delicious longings. It makes the soul even swell with comfortable expectations. And we receive it not only as a remembrance of what was done, but as a pledge of what shall be. We taste not only what He is to our souls at present, but what He shall be forever.

If it be a privilege to be admitted to sit at His table, and to have His covenant sealed to me by outward ordinance, and His special love by His Spirit to my heart, all the life and comfort of these is that they declare and assure me of more and better comforts hereafter. Their use is darkly to signify and seal higher mercies. When I shall drink with Christ of the

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8. Footnote in original: Bishop Patrick, *Mensa Mistica*, cap. 18.

fruit of the vine renewed, how pleasant a feast will that be? Oh the difference, as one has well expressed it, between the Last Supper of Christ on earth, and the marriage supper of the Lamb at the great day!<sup>9</sup> Here is an upper room accompanied with twelve poor, selected men, feeding on no curious dainties, but a Paschal lamb, with sour herbs, and a Judas at His table, ready to betray Him. But then His room will be the glorious heavens; His attendants, all the host of angels and saints; no Judas, nor unfurnished guest comes there; but the humble believers must sit down by Him, and the feast will be their mutual loving and rejoicing.

You know, nevertheless, that when the Israelites were got out of Egypt, and delivered by the blood of the Lamb, and had a promise of Canaan, they had yet a wilderness to pass through, many enemies to encounter, and difficulties to overcome before they entered into Canaan, though God protected, and maintained, and supplied them in the wilderness all that while. So is it with us Christians, though we recover our spiritual liberty by faith in the blood of Jesus, and are made a peculiar people to God, a nation of kings and priests to the most High, and are marching towards the heavenly Canaan, and have the promise of it, we have yet a wilderness to pass through. We have adversaries on all sides to resist. We need a pillar of cloud, and of fire to direct us, and manna from heaven to supply us. And this we shall have from time to time, until we come to Canaan, and then our Lord will eat and drink with us after a better manner. We shall have new wine in His kingdom. He is gone to prepare a feast for us, to make ready the great supper of the Lamb, for all the children of the kingdom.

After He was sacrificed as the Lamb of God, He tarried forty days upon the earth, from His resurrection until He

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9. Footnote in original: Mr. Baxter.

ascended into heaven, as the Jews after their Passover in Egypt wandered forty years in the wilderness before they entered into Canaan. But all believers, after a few years of difficulties and trials in this world, with the presence of God to conduct and guide them, shall at last sit down forever with Christ, to reap the full harvest of His sufferings, to receive the complete deliverance which He has procured, to enjoy all the blessed fruits of His death, all the purchase of His redeeming blood. This He will come again to bestow upon those who believe, expect, and prepare for it.

**[Application]**

Some inferences of truth, and duty, may be collected, as the application of what has been said.

1. That believers under the Old Testament and under the New have the same object of faith. They did eat the same spiritual meat, and drink the same spiritual drink. Their sacraments and ours have different signs, but in substance were the same, theirs having relation to Christ, the Messiah, as well as ours. Accordingly we read of circumcision, and the Passover, in a spiritual sense under the gospel, and that which answers to baptism and the Lord's Supper with us, even they, under the Old Testament, had (1 Cor. 10:2–3). They were under the covenant of grace, though not so clear a dispensation of it as we. They were to be saved by faith in a Mediator, as well as we. The gospel was preached to them, as well as to us.

2. Did Christ desire fellowship with His disciples, friends, and followers in the Passover? What shall we think of those that despise such institutions, and look upon themselves as above such ordinances? As if they had a nearer and better way of communion with God and Christ than this! Any remissness

and indifference as to these things, neglect and carelessness in preparation for them, is likewise a degree of contempt that deserves to be reprov'd.

3. Was Christ so desirous to eat His last Passover before He suffered for us because of His willingness to suffer? What ingratitude does this imply in our backwardness, and cowardice, when we are called to suffer for Him?

4. Did our Lord desire to eat this Passover because it was the last, and consequently was willing to be a sacrifice for us? What an argument [of] His endearing love does this afford us! And how should it inflame ours to Him! It was not from ignorance of what He was to suffer. He fully knew what He had undertaken. He perfectly understood what His baptism of blood did signify. And yet He earnestly desired it, and was straitened until it was accomplished. He knew the burden of sin that He was to expiate, as a sin offering, when “[He] bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24), as a sacrifice to divine justice for us. He knew the bitterness of that cup which He was to drink of beforehand, and yet for our sakes He desired it. What thankfulness do we owe for such inestimable love!

He was willing to submit to such difficult terms to bring about our reconciliation to God. He was willing to be obedient to death, even the death of the cross, to turn away the divine displeasure from us, and to restore us to the divine favor and image. He was willing to be a sacrifice for sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God through faith in Him. He was willing to bear the curse, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon us. He was willing to be our Paschal lamb, or be slain and sacrificed for us, that by the sprinkling of His blood we might be delivered from sin and hell, that by feeding on Him as our Passover we might be partakers of spiritual and

eternal life. And even in the midst of His agony in the garden, notwithstanding the struggling of His human nature against the bitterness of the cup, which made Him pray for the passing of it away, yet, as Mediator, He was willing, and therefore adds, "not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42), "Father, glorify thy name" (John 12:28).

O matchless and incomprehensible love! How should our souls be ravished with the contemplation of it! How hard and insensible are our hearts, if they feel no constraining virtue in the consideration of such love, if we do not sacrifice our lusts in requital of His being a willing sacrifice for us! Shall not the love of Christ, which bubbles up in every drop of His blood, and made Him willing and resolved to shed it on our account, make us hate that sin, which He died to atone for, and to destroy? Can we consider Him, groaning, sweating, bleeding, dying for sin, and yet retain an affection to it? And rush into it through the wounds, and blood, and agony, and death of our Redeemer? Shall that ever be sweet to us which put so much vinegar and gall into His cup?

**[Counsel and direction]**

Let me add a few words for counsel and direction.

1. Did Christ earnestly desire to eat this Passover, and have communion with His disciples therein? How earnestly should we desire to have communion with Him in that ordinance that succeeded to it, which was instituted by Christ Himself the same evening, in the close of the Paschal supper! Is not a spiritual communion with Him, now [that] He is in glory, as desirable as His bodily presence was, when in a state of humiliation? Is it not the spirit and temper of all the disciples of Christ, in every age of the church, to value and to desire such near approaches to Him? How did the believing Jews prepare

themselves for such a solemnity as the Passover? How did David's heart pant, and faint, and long for communion with God in the services of the temple? "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple" (Ps. 27:4).

The Israelites were to eat the Passover in haste, with greediness of desire, "not slowly in the heart, not sluggishly in the mouth."<sup>10</sup> And is it not a shame to us to have no appetite for such a feast? Is it not for lack of such desires of communion with Christ that we meet with so little satisfaction when we come? "Let him that is athirst come" (Rev. 22:17), and such shall be filled, when others shall be sent empty away. But as for the hungry souls, they shall not be sent empty away from the Lord's Table.

We may likewise heighten our desires and appetites when we come to this table by considering, for ought we know, this may be the last communion with Christ in such an ordinance that we shall ever enjoy, before it be fully accomplished in heaven.

2. Let us endeavor to imitate Christ as our Passover, both in His readiness to suffer, and in His character and qualification, as the spotless Lamb of God, in meekness and patience, and submission, etc. Without this we can never prove our interest in Him.

3. Let us thankfully contemplate this Lamb of God, as desiring to be sacrificed for us. Let us seriously and often consider the voluntariness of His death and sacrifice, the fruits of His suffering, the merit of His cross. How acceptable His sacrifice

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10. Latin: *non lento corde, non languido ore.*

was to God, how beneficial to us! What a deliverance we have by it, what a bondage we are saved from, what a glorious liberty He has purchased, what a complete salvation we expect, when all shall be fulfilled in heaven! These are proper thoughts for those of us, this evening, who have feasted this day on the sacrifice of Christ. Every one of us in particular, not only in public, but in secret, should bless God for Jesus Christ, admiring the matchless grace and love of the Redeemer, in being thus a willing sacrifice for us, and calling us to feast upon it, having instituted this ordinance on purpose, for that very end.

4. Lastly, live in the daily exercise of faith on the blood of Christ, as the Lamb of God sacrificed for us. It was the sprinkling of the blood of the Paschal lamb that was the mark of the Israelites' deliverance. So the shedding of the blood of Christ, with particular application by faith, is as necessary for us. Without it we cannot escape the stroke of the destroying angel. Without it, the blood of the Son of God will call for vengeance, and His very sacrifice and sufferings plead against us.

We should every day, by fresh acts of faith, apply this blood for our encouragement, and consolation, as the purchase of our peace with God, and as that whereby we have peace with conscience. All the blessings we receive are owing to this blood. All the services we perform must be accepted through the sprinkling of this blood, and our faith in it. Let us therefore continually apply and plead it. The virtue of it is still the same as when it was at first shed. We need not doubt but it is as acceptable to God now, and of as sweet smelling a savor to Him as ever. Therefore the life that we live in the flesh should be by the faith of the Son of God, having daily recourse to His blood for pardon, and cleansing, and strengthening virtue. The Lord teach us this great mystery of practical godliness!



## CHAPTER 7

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### *The Feast of Christ's Love*

A DISCOURSE BEFORE THE LORD'S SUPPER

*He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.*

—SONG OF SOLOMON 2:4

I shall not need to spend time to prove this book to be canonical and of divine authority. It was never questioned to belong to the Jewish canon, though some other of the writings of Solomon have been doubted of. The whole is an allegorical description of the mysterious union between Christ and His church as represented under the persons of a bridegroom and bride, which metaphor is pursued in several other places of Scripture, and alluded to by Christ and His apostles in the New Testament. The 45th Psalm is in some sort an epitome and abridgment of this Song of Solomon, and that by all interpreters, even the Jews themselves, is acknowledged to speak of the Messiah.

In this chapter, Christ and the church seem to strive [concerning] who shall surpass each other in their tributes and commendations. In the two first verses Christ speaks. In the following you have the voice of the church, or the language of sincere Christians. They praise, and magnify, and extol the Lord Christ in the fourth verse for His bounty

and magnificence in making such rich provisions to feast and entertain them. She had said before, in the third verse, that “[She] sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to [her] taste” (Song 2:3), and thereupon adds this commendation of His rich provisions, “He brought me to the banqueting house, etc.” Where she describes:

1. The place or the means of such a spiritual feast, “the banqueting house”
2. The welcome she met with there, “His banner over me was love”

1. Under the first expression is represented the excellent provision which our Lord makes to entertain the souls of believers. “He led me to the house of wine,” the place where the master of the house was accustomed to entertain his friends, where the wine is drunk, or the entertainment made, for so the word signifies. Some understand it of the places where Christians assemble, and meet together, to worship Christ, and receive the communications of His grace, the places where the ordinances of the gospel are dispensed. But there is more than the places of such communication here meant, that is to say, all the special means and instruments of blessing to the souls of believers. It may comprehend the Holy Scriptures, the ministers of the Word, the sacraments, the public assemblies for worship, and all the institutions of Christ. But among them all, none more fitly or exactly answering to the allegory than the Holy Supper of the Lord, the great feast on the sacrifice of Christ, where we hope to be entertained tomorrow.

2. The welcome she met with, “His banner over me was love” (Song 2:4)—“His standard towards me, by the lifting up whereof I was invited, and drawn to come over to His side,

to yield to Him, to give up myself to Him.” The love of a crucified Savior is displayed like a banner, to invite and draw souls to Christ. Therefore it is promised, “I will lift up mine hand to the gentiles, and set up my standard to the people” (Isa. 49:22). Christ, the captain of our salvation, lifted up upon a cross, displays a banner of love to all the world, to invite them to come to Him. And the motto of His banner is nothing but this: dying love victorious! Or: the crucified Jesus, loving us to the death, and by His love conquering our hearts, and constraining us to be His, to love Him, and live to Him, and even die for Him.

We may observe:

1. That our Lord has His banquet and feast whereunto He leads and where He entertains the souls of His followers
2. That the display of Christ's free and glorious love is of all things the most proper to invite and attract the souls of men

*1. That Christ has His banquet and feast to which He leads and where He entertains the souls of His followers*

Under this metaphor of a feast, or banquet, all the spiritual blessings of the gospel state are often represented.

Thus when we read of the invitation to come to the marriage feast of the king's son (Matthew 22), all the graces and comforts of the Spirit are meant—forgiveness of sin, the promise, and the hope of eternal life. These are the provisions of this feast, which in the Word and sacraments we partake of. “In this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make to all people a feast of fat things...of wines on the lees well refined” (Isa. 25:6). It is a promise concerning the days of the gospel. In

this mountain, in Mount Zion, in the church, God will make a feast for all people, for the Gentiles, as well as the Jews.

It is literally true of Mount Zion at Jerusalem (in which sense it must be understood in the next verse). This was the first place (this Mount Zion) whence the Christian law was to be given out, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. There the Holy Spirit fell upon the apostles at Pentecost, and there the apostles began their preaching after the descent of the Holy Ghost with wonderful success. So Psalm 36:8, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." The like in Proverbs 9:2, where wisdom is said to have killed her beasts, and mingled her wine, and furnished her table. The revelation of the gospel, etc., all kinds of gifts and graces and comforts, distributed by the ordinances of the gospel, are to be understood. Especially that part of our spiritual provision, which is said to be meat indeed, and drink indeed. I mean, the crucified body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His blood shed for the remission of sins. That institution, therefore, has the very name of the table of the Lord: "Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils" (1 Cor. 10:21). It is called a feast on the sacrifice of Christ (1 Cor. 5:7-8). Of which I shall have occasion to speak afterward, there being all things there that are necessary to a feast. And a feast for all people, for the Gentiles, whom the Jews despised, and counted as dogs, and who were vile and miserable in themselves, without God, and Christ, and under gross idolatry. This feast is for us Gentiles. Which I shall first particularly explain, and prove, and then apply.

a. In this spiritual feast, or banquet, are the choicest provisions that can be, for the nourishment of our souls. There is spiritual food for the satisfaction of spiritual hunger, where we may eat

and be satisfied, and find that which is sweeter than honey, the love of Christ better than wine (Ps. 19:10; Song 1:2); wine, that is said to cheer and delight the heart (Eccl. 10:19), to lift a man above sad and melancholy thoughts, to make a man forget his affliction and misery. "Give...wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more" (Prov. 31:6-7). It may much more be said so, of this sacramental wine, exhibiting the love of Christ to the soul. And though wine be put for all manner of delicacies (Isa. 25:6), yet the love of Christ is better than wine (Song 1:4). His blood is drink indeed, and His flesh is meat indeed (John 6:55). Far beyond manna, which yet is called angel's food. He is manna for food, the best bread; and He is wine for drink.

And the blessedness of the heavenly state, whereof this feast is the earnest, is set forth by the pleasures of eating and drinking. "That you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Luke 22:30). Oh the satisfaction and delight that holy souls experience in tasting of those provisions when they come with that due preparedness which they ought! All the delights of this world are not to be compared with one hour's enjoyment of Christ in this ordinance. One hour, one half-hour of communion with the Father, and the Son, by the Spirit, in such a duty, is more delightful than all the pleasures of the palate and taste. It is a nobler, a purer, a sweeter, a better kind of content and satisfaction that we here meet with. I may appeal to the experience of serious Christians for the truth of this.

b. At a feast there are all sorts of provision, not only the choicest and the best, but there is variety. It is a feast of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And it is suitable to every condition, to every relation, to every necessity. Grace for grace, out of His fullness, that is, all manner of supplies of grace (John 1:16). Forgiveness of sin, to take away our fear of

hell, and the assurance of eternal life, to answer our desires of happiness. And therefore it is answerable to the exigencies of our case. For what can we need but it may be received from Christ, who of God is made to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption? His precious blood can wash away the stains of our blackest guilt, and His perfect righteousness be the covering of our naked souls, by meriting and procuring our pardon, by purchasing and applying the Spirit of holiness, light, strength, stability, comfort. Whatever we need we may receive from Him, among the provisions of the gospel, in this spiritual feast.

We may apply to the heavenly nourishment of this table what the Jews say of their manna in the wilderness, which was sent down by God from heaven to them. It contained, they tell us, all the tastes of what any man desired or longed for. It was suited to every palate, and to every constitution, that none could fail of being fed, and pleased, though they were of never so different tempers.<sup>1</sup> It is called the bread of heaven (Ex. 16:4), and the taste of it is said to be like wafers made of honey (v. 31). And yet in Numbers 11:8 the taste of it is said to be “as the taste of fresh oil.” Now, how can all these be true? How can they all agree? That this manna should be like bread, and like honey, and like oil too? The Jews answer that the young men tasted in it bread, the old men honey, and the infants oil. We may accommodate this to the divine food of the Lord's Table, which is suitable to every complexion of mind and temper of spirit. The infant Christians are there cherished, and encouraged, they having the oil of joy and gladness poured upon them. The young men have strength and power by this bread of life, to overcome the wicked one. The more aged, the more exercised Christians, they find such relish in it

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1. Footnote in original: Bp. Patrick's *Christian Sacrifice*.

that they can say, "Thy commandments are sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb...and in keeping of them there is great reward" (Ps. 19:10–11), being a little earnest, and pledge, and foretaste of the joys of the heavenly feast. For therefore, manna in the wilderness had the taste of honey, say the Jews, that it might be an earnest and representation of the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, to which they were now going. In a word, young and old, weak and strong, Christians of all sizes, and different stations, may receive nourishment, refreshment, and advantage by this heavenly food of the table of the Lord. There is great variety at this feast to suit everyone's palate and temper.

c. At a feast, as there is rarity and variety, so plenty and abundance, that none need go away hungry or empty, complaining or discontented. Here are riches, unsearchable riches of the grace of Christ. We have here all things given us richly to enjoy. And the sanctifying gifts and graces of the Spirit are said to be shed on us richly, or abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Savior (Titus 3:6). There is a fountain of grace that will not have the less for us by supplying the needs of others.

d. There is a mirth and cheerfulness at this feast, which is another concomitant of a banquet. "A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry" (Eccl. 10:19). When prodigal sinners first return, their father has mirth and music to entertain them. "And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:24). And shall not the reconciliation between God and our souls, through Christ, when it is solemnly professed and avowed at the table of the Lord, be accompanied with joy and mirth? The Jews were not to afflict their souls in any of their feasts, religious

or common. "Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast" (Deut. 16:14). We are not called to the house of mourning. You may eat this bread with joy, and drink this wine with a merry heart, in hopes of God's acceptance of you, and your sacrifice (Eccl. 9:7).

Our Redeemer seems to speak to those who are disconsolate at His table, and if He sees us sad and melancholy, to use some such language: "What! Do you not know where you are? Do you not understand what I have done to you, and for you? What I have done upon the cross, and what at the table?"

Oh, did we understand it better, and consider it more, what He has done and suffered, purchased and promised, we should come to this feast with a gladsome, merry heart! All the music and melody that the feasts of sensual men are attended with would be nothing to it. Therefore take heed of mistaking the nature of this ordinance so as to come like mourners tomorrow to a funeral—it is to no such solemnity—but to a feast, you are invited to a royal feast, and therefore your hearts and lips should be full of the high praises of God, and thankful admiration of Christ, and His redeeming love and grace. "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer" (Isa. 56:7).

e. At a feast there is good company. Now there is no such company in all the world as is to be found at Christ's Table. "While the King sitteth at this table" (Song 1:12)—Christ Himself is there present, and the Father also, for in this ordinance especially we have fellowship with the Father, and the Son, through the Spirit. A communion with Them, supposes the presence of Father, and Son, and Spirit. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16). We are invited guests by Christ, and treated as His friends. We are entertained with

kindness, and familiarity, which is an honor we ought to value. In His own house we are treated, and have the same fare, with the best of His friends who are invited with us. We sit down with Him, at His own table, in the best company that we can desire. Haman expresses it as an honor that the queen let none come to the banquet but himself. "And tomorrow," says he, "am I invited unto her also with the king" (Esth. 5:12). If the Father, and the Son, and Holy Spirit, and the children of God that are His special favorites and heirs of the heavenly inheritance, if these are good company, you may have it at the table.

f. At a feast there is welcome, expressed and given by the master of the feast. Such an expression we have of it, "Thou preparest a table before me...thou anointest my head with oil" (Ps. 23:5), or with aromatic ointments, formerly used at great feasts, as a token of respect, and kindness. "You bid me to a feast, and bid me welcome," alluding to the custom of the eastern people, and of the Jews particularly, who expressed the hearty welcome they gave their guests, by pouring some precious ointment on their heads (Ps. 92:10; Luke 7:38). A very usual festival solemnity.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, when you come tomorrow to this feast, you must think, and believe, that Christ speaks to you, when you behold the symbols of His body and blood. For you are not to consider the broken bread, and the wine poured out, as dumb signs. No, they speak very distinctly to all the communicants. Therefore come with a cheerful wedding garment, hearing the voice of your Redeemer, as if Christ should say to you that you were welcome to His table, and that He is pleased that you accept His invitation. "Come, My brethren," as if He should say, for so He calls us, when He ascended to His Father

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2. Footnote in original: See Bp. Patrick's *Christian Sacrifice*, p. 100.

(John 20:17). "Go and tell My brethren that I ascend to My Father, and their Father, to My God, and their God." "Come, My brethren," does He say, "I sent and commissioned My ministers to call you to My house, solemnly and earnestly to invite you to My table. You did well that you are come. I take it kindly that you did not reject My invitation. I am glad you are come to remember My love, and to show yourselves My friends. I have no other design in sending for you but to make you more sensible of My love, and to give you fresh tokens of it, to repeat the pledge and assurance of My dying kindness. Do not despise the entertainment I here give you, though you see only bread and wine. Open the eyes of your minds, and let your faith discern that this bread is My body, My crucified body, My body broken for you. And this wine poured out is My blood, My blood shed for you. Oh, see how I loved you! See what My love to you brought Me to undergo! Consider how I was used for your sakes, to procure your peace, and to purchase your reconciliation. I have nothing to desire of you, but that you would continue in My love, and then I promise you the love of My Father, and that your sins shall be forgiven. They shall not be remembered against you. You shall not come into condemnation, and all your needs shall be supplied. Nothing you can need but I have purchased, nothing you can lack but I will give. Until I have fitted you for My presence above, until you come to be with Me in the heavenly state, you shall receive it all from time to time. Come, take the pledge and the assurance of this by doing this in remembrance of Me."

"Come therefore," says Christ, "Take and eat. Eat, O friends! Drink abundantly, O beloved! Take, eat this morsel! As little and inconsiderable as it seems to be, it cost My life. I give it to you as a token of My love, and of My Father's love. Take it, and remember both. I say the same for the cup of blessing. Drink it in remembrance of Me. Come pledge Me. This is wine of

My own making, when I trod the wine-press of My Father's wrath alone. This will strengthen and revive your fainting spirit. This will cure the ulcers of your heart. This will give you boldness, and courage, to enter into the presence of your Father," etc. Thus does Christ give welcome to His prepared guests.

g. And lastly, this is a peculiar sort of feast, that is to say, a feast upon a sacrifice, a feast that betokens a covenant, and reconciliation between God and such as are invited guests at this table. I often take occasion to mention this, because I judge it the true notion of the Lord's Supper, and the sense of the apostle. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast...with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:7-8), which is spoken of the feast from which the Corinthian church, by the authority of Christ, was to bar and seclude the disorderly person, even the Lord's Supper.

It is well known that sacrifices were accustomed to be attended with a feast. The peace offering, under the law, was to be brought on the top of the burnt offerings. No burnt offerings were without some peace offerings, and having offered them to the Lord, they were to eat their part cheerfully among their friends. For then they had, as it were, one dish sent them from God's Table. One part of the offering, that is to say, God's, was consumed upon the altar. Another part, the priests had, by God's appointment. And a third, the offerers had to feast upon. Christ's offering up Himself upon the cross is the great sacrifice. This banquet at the table of the Lord is a feast on that sacrifice. "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Ps. 50:5).

The offering a sacrifice was a covenant rite, whereby God and His people became one. Upon which account salt was used in sacrifices by God's own direction (Lev. 2:13). All nations looked on salt as a token of love, a pledge of friendship, a

symbol of peace.<sup>3</sup> And feasting on a sacrifice was a rite of the same nature with sacrificing, it being but the complement, the close, the finishing of the sacrifice. In this sense some understand those words, "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" (Ps. 50:16), namely, eating the signs and symbols of the covenants partaking of those sacrificial banquets, which were a token of God's covenant. Thus when the covenant was renewed between God and the children of Israel, Moses and Aaron, and the seventy nobles of the children of Israel, went up to God, and saw His glory on the mount, and after their burnt offerings and peace offerings were sacrificed, they did eat and drink (Ex. 24:11). The eating of the Passover was such a covenant solemnity, and therefore no stranger was to eat of it (Exodus 12). It did not belong to those who did not belong to that covenant which God had made with His peculiar people, the children of Israel.

This evangelical feast at the Lord's Table is of the like nature and signification. Besides the analogy and resemblance between these, the words of institution do sufficiently prove it. For speaking of the cup, or the wine in the cup, our Lord said, "This is my blood of the New Covenant." It is the representation of that blood which is the seal of the New Covenant, as circumcision is called the "covenant of circumcision" because it was the token and seal of the covenant between God and Abraham (Acts 7:8).

Eating and drinking together was always reckoned some token of friendship and accord, especially when there is a solemn feast on purpose to express and signify this agreement,

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3. Footnote in original: See Dr. Hammond on Mark 9:50. And P. Fagius on Lev. 2. And more largely in Dr. Cudworth's *Notion of the Lord's Supper*. Bishop Patrick's *Christian Sacrifice*, and Dr. Pelling on *The Sacrament*, chaps. 1, 2, 3.

and when it follows after disagreement and variance, it amounts to a covenant, or league, which the parties enter into, to be henceforward friends. "Let us make a covenant with thee" (Gen. 26:28–31). And then it follows, "He made them a feast, and they did eat and drink." But in the present case, there is yet more, for it was a more sacred way of covenanting when they feasted upon part of the sacrifice that was made to God, of which I shall speak more presently. And usually it was accompanied with an oath in the presence of God.

Now at the Lord's Table, do we not profess our owning the New Covenant, made between God and us? And do we not there renew our baptismal covenant? Do we not accept of Christ, and all the blessings of the covenant of grace? Do we not resign ourselves, and all we have, to be His, according to the tenor and terms of it? Do we not receive the pledge, and assurance of His love to us and engage our faith, that we will be His servants? Binding ourselves to all the duties of the covenant, as God does oblige Himself to bestow all the blessings of it?

*2. [That the display of Christ's free and glorious love is of all things the most proper to invite and attract the souls of men]*

Having thus explained somewhat of this banquet, or feast, I might consider the reasons of its appointment, and the excellent purposes it serves for. Besides the known, express, and principal one, of being a memorial of Christ's love, that we may remember Him crucified for us, there may be other considerations, partly with respect to God and Christ, partly with relation to the souls of believers.

a. To represent the royalty and magnificence of God, and the transcendent riches and glory of the grace of Christ. Accordingly we read that princes and potentates, and great men,

upon such accounts, were accustomed to make sumptuous entertainments, "He made a feast unto all his princes and his servants... He showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty" (Esth. 1:3-4).

Partly with respect to us. First, to encourage us in the difficult services we may meet with, to animate and embolden us to hold on our way, and work, of doing and suffering the will of God in obedience to Christ. The burden of affliction would be much more heavy, and our spirits more likely to faint, were it not for some refreshment, quickening, and comfort, now and then, in such ordinances of the gospel. But the pledge of the love of God, the everlasting love of Christ, the earnest of heaven, and the hopes of it—that we should sin, and suffer, and sorrow no more—makes our outward afflictions tolerable. For if God be reconciled to us, and pleased with us, if the Redeemer shine upon us, and say He is ours, if His love be shed abroad in our hearts, and ours kept alive to Him, we can bear anything, or lose anything, and not despond. Besides, the solemn dedication of ourselves and all we have to Christ, which we there make, helps to awe our hearts, and check our impatient murmurs, when by any severe dispensation of providence He does but take us at our word. For He can only take that which we resigned to Him before, and when He does, He tries whether we were hypocrites or sincere in our resignation.

b. It may be considered that at this feast we have the nearest fellowship and sweetest communion with God and Christ of almost any ordinance of the gospel. And the continuance of such a blessed intercourse between God and our souls was another ground of His appointing it, which will appear more plainly, by considering another end of it, that is to say, to ratify and confirm the covenant between God and us. This is one special design of thus eating and drinking in His presence,

to confirm our covenant. It was very usual, especially in the eastern parts of the world, to ratify contracts and covenants by eating and drinking together. Thus in the fore-mentioned instance, Abimelech and Isaac celebrated such a covenant feast (Gen. 26:30) as a token of friendship between them. Laban's eating with Jacob on a heap of stones was a covenant rite (Gen. 31:46). The Israelites' eating of the Gibeonites' victuals was the contracting a league with them (Josh. 9:14). When David speaks of his friend's treachery (in words very applicable to Judas, Ps. 41:9), he says, "Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Ps. 41:9). He meant one who had entered into covenant with him by a feast (as you find that Abner did, 2 Sam. 3:20). Therefore, instead of a friend, it is otherwise rendered in the margin of our Bible, "The man of my peace," or "the man that was at peace with me." Hence the Hebrew word which signifies a covenant is derived from a root which signifies "to eat." And hence we read of an idol among the Shechemites, which was called Berith (or the God of a covenant), because the people of that place were accustomed, when they made covenants, to eat and drink with their confederates in the house of that god of theirs, as you find they did when they entered into a league with Gaal, and made him their head in opposition to Abimelech (Judg. 9:27).

Human writers afford many instances of this nature, how people were accustomed anciently to make and ratify covenants between nation and nation, between party and party, and between man and wife, sometimes by eating bread, sometimes by drinking wine, and frequently by partaking of both together, which shows that it was the general custom of mankind to contract and covenant with one another by the visible rites of feasting and banqueting together. The old heathen had many religious feasts before their idols, whereby

they covenanted with those imaginary deities. The Israelites are charged with idolatry for complying with such pagan rites (Ex. 32:6; 1 Cor. 10:7). When the people made an altar to the golden calf, they brought their peace offerings, and celebrated a religious banquet upon the remainders thereof. "The people sat down to eat and to drink" (to feast together before the golden calf) "and rose up to play." This they did in imitation of the Egyptians, among whom they had lived so long. So by the persuasion of the Moabites, they joined themselves to Baal Peor, entered into communion with that heathen deity that was worshiped on Mount Peor, by eating the sacrifices of the dead, or such things as were offered in the memory of the dead (Num. 25:3; Ps. 106:28).<sup>4</sup>

And the apostle calls the eating of the heathen sacrifices a "fellowship with devils" (1 Cor. 10:20). There were some in the apostles' time [who] did eat of those idol sacrifices (1 Cor. 8:7), to prevent which a canon was made at the council of Jerusalem that Christians should "abstain from meats offered unto idols" (Acts 15:29), because by sitting at meat in the idol's temple, they made themselves "partakers of...the table of devils." And the apostle shows the inconsistency of this with the participation of the Lord's Table, because this is a sacrificial banquet, proper and peculiar to us Christians, as the idol feasts were sacrificial banquets proper to the pagans, and the Mosaical ones to the Jews (1 Corinthians 10). As Jews and heathens were accustomed to feed upon a sacrificed beast, we Christians do feed upon a sacrificed Redeemer, by eating and drinking in commemoration of His death and sacrifice, and thereby renewing our covenant with Him as His avowed, sworn servants and disciples.

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4. Footnote in original: Selden, *De Diis Syris. Syntagm.*, 1. cap. 5.

c. Another design of this feast may be to wean us from the vanities of this world by tasting these spiritual provisions and therein [tasting] how gracious the Lord is. That by eating of this bread, and drinking of this wine, we may hunger and thirst no more after sensual delights; that we may not care to feed on husks when we can eat of this bread in our Father's house.

d. That our thoughts of the heavenly glory, and our desires after it, and progressive fitness for it, may be excited and promoted. And no institution of the gospel is so proper for this, or so well adapted for this purpose, as were easy to show, and your own meditations can sufficiently enlarge.

### **Use 1**

Has the blessed God His feast and banquet to entertain such wretched creatures as we? Let us sit down, and admire His adorable condescension, that the Lord of glory should make a feast for such beggars, such worms, such vile sinners as we! That we should be called to the privileges of children, to sit down at His table—we that deserve not the crumbs with the dogs under the table—that He does not only richly feast us, but stoops to treat us in our own way, in a manner so sensible, and easy, and plain! That we may see, and taste to our fuller satisfaction that He is gracious! That the outward signs and symbols are so plain, and obvious, when the great things signified, and represented, are fit to employ the deepest meditation, and surpass all that our most comprehensive thoughts can reach!

### **Use 2**

Does God make such a feast? Then let Him never invite, but be you willing and ready to come. Take heed how you slight

the invitation and call of God. It is a dangerous thing, I grant, to come unprepared, and unready. And so is it to tarry away, and to refuse obedience to the command of our dying Lord, who, "the same night in which he was betrayed," instituted this feast, and calls us to do it "in remembrance of [Him]" (1 Cor. 11:23–24). They that come without a wedding garment are said to be unworthy, and to eat and drink unworthily. And they that refuse to come to the gospel feast upon Christ's invitation are said to be unworthy too (Matt. 22:8). You little mend the case if, when you hear of the danger of coming unworthily, you will not come at all. For that impenitence and unbelief that makes unworthy communicants will not excuse your neglect of the duty. You must repent and believe in Christ, and so come prepared. "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself" (1 Cor. 11:29). It is certain he is guilty of a sin that, without repentance, will damn him. And he is in danger of some calamity, sickness, or sudden death, such as was inflicted on the faulty Corinthians. But he does not so eat and drink damnation as that such a sin is unpardonable, and shall certainly be followed with hell. For it is not the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is never repented of. If the fear of damnation have influence in the one case, it should have in the other, because to neglect this duty is a sin, as well as to come unprepared. We ought to do neither.

You therefore who are to come, look to it that you come worthily, for fear that you be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, for fear that you be guilty of the murder of Christ, and of self-murder at once, by eating and drinking your own damnation. Ignorant persons, scandalous persons, hypocrites, and false pretenders to religion, such as intrude rashly, and come impenitently, with the habitual love of sin, without true repentance, all who come ignorantly, or hypocritically, who cannot discern the Lord's body, or come with a design to

cover some secret lust, let these beware! For they come, as it were, with a knife in their hand, to kill the Redeemer in His own house, to stab Him at His own table, and crucify Him afresh. They are guilty of His body and blood, which instead of pleading on their behalf for mercy, will cry against them for vengeance.

**[Advice and direction]**

You will hereupon, I doubt not, be glad of a little advice, and direction, that you may come worthily, and be duly prepared, that you may avoid so great a hazard. And because you have many good books on this subject that will assist you in this matter, I shall only put you in mind of a few things, as:

1. That you take convenient time for solemn and serious preparation. They especially should do so who have never come until now, and they who for some considerable time have neglected it, with whom several months have passed since they have been at the Lord's Table—either through their own neglect, which they must repent of, or for lack of opportunity. God expected and required solemn preparation for the Passover feast (Ex. 19:10). He does so for this feast, upon Christ our Passover, sacrificed for us. Therefore take some time to consider what you are about to undertake. Beg of God a prepared heart, and by reading, meditation, and prayer, endeavor to bring your spirits into a suitable frame for such solemn work. "He brought me to the banqueting house"—Christ Himself, by His Spirit, must lead His own guests to His own table. He must awaken and excite all those graces that are to be exercised in this feast. Therefore beg a prepared heart, and do what you can by other means to endeavor it.

2. Renew your repentance for all the sins of your life. Do not come with filthy hearts and hands to the table of the Lord, no more than you would in filthy rags to a great man's table. "Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness" (James 1:21). "Purge out therefore the old leaven...the leaven of malice and wickedness" (1 Cor. 5:6, 8), of ignorance, or envy, and wickedness of every sort, that you may come with humbled hearts, and so with a thankful, receptive frame, consenting to all the claims and purposes of this ordinance.

3. Therefore examine yourselves afresh that you may thus come. Review the state of your souls. See how it has been and is with you, as to heart and life, state and frame. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat" (1 Cor. 11:28). Examine yourselves about your knowledge, and your faith, to understand the meaning and the mystery of this table, that you may firmly assent to, and heartily believe, what is represented and exhibited here, and have right apprehensions of those doctrines that explain this ordinance, as concerning our state of apostasy, concerning the method of our recovery by Christ, and our faith in Him as teacher, Savior, and Lord in all His offices. The like might be said concerning repentance, or godly sorrow for sin, hatred of it, and hearty forsaking of it. Whether you can penitently, believingly, seal back your part of the covenant (when God sets the broad seal of heaven to His part), when He says, "[I] will be their God," and "I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:33-34). Or, as if He said, "I will, with My Christ, freely give you all things. This I promise, this I seal to every one of you, I here deliver it as My act and deed." Now can you seal back your part of the covenant? "Lord, I will be Thine. Henceforth I desire and resolve to be entirely Thine, Thy sealed fountain, Thy sealed garden." I engage henceforward to be the Lord's. This I deliver as my act and deed.

In a word, examine yourselves. Do you believe the gospel of Christ to be true, and heartily consent to the doctrines of it? Do you resolve to be governed by Christ as your Lord, and consent to the terms of His gospel? Do you take Him for your only Savior, and look for all your acceptance with God, and hope of pardon, and life, only for His sake, and upon His account? Do you consider the vow you made in baptism, of fidelity to Christ, and resolve to be true to it? Do you here seriously renew it, and will you now again promise faithfulness to Him to your life's end? Do you value His favor and grace above all things? And come to remember His dying love, and receive the communications of the purchased Spirit, with this desire, design, and hope, that you may love Him and obey Him better, and that you may live in love and charity towards your brethren, and all mankind, etc.?

Look to the inward part of the ordinance, and labor to appropriate and apply Christ to yourselves. Here is a covenant confirmed by sacrifice, by blood, by the precious blood of Christ. I am called, O my soul, to feast upon it. This blood was shed to reconcile me to God. I will drink of it in token of such a reconciliation made, as a testimony that I have received the atonement made by that blood. "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you" (1 Cor. 11:24), says Christ, "my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20), and drink of it, all of you. Apply it to yourselves, everyone to his own soul, saying, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me."

4. Endeavor to fix your purposes and resolutions of faithful adherence to Christ, whatever it cost you. Tell Him that you distrust yourselves, and are afraid of temptation. Tell Him in prayer, you are almost ashamed to come to His table, you are such vile unworthy sinners, and are afraid you shall not keep the covenant that now again you desire to renew. But bewail

yourselves, as sensible of your sins and weary of them. Tell Him that you hate them, and resolve against them, or else you dare not have the face to ask forgiveness, and receive the seal of it. Therefore resign yourselves into His hands. Beg that the Holy Spirit would take possession of you, that you may not backslide, and wander as you have done. Tell Him that you renounce all confederacy with His enemies. You would gladly be more steadfast in the way of the Lord. It is the desire of your souls that you may not violate this covenant, but having sworn that you may perform it, to keep His righteous judgments. And that you hope you are ready, through His grace strengthening you, to do and suffer anything for Him.

Therefore penitently and humbly offer up yourselves to be His forever, saying, "Lord, I present Thee with what thou hast so dearly bought. And here, without reserve, I give up myself to be Thine. Oh, do not reject a broken and contrite heart that desires to be employed and used as may best please and serve Thee! Lord! I am nothing, I have nothing, I can do nothing, I deserve nothing, I desire nothing but to love Thee better, to be more filled with Thy grace, to partake more of Thy image, to be enabled to honor Thee now, and enjoy Thee forever. Grant me this, Lord, and do with me what Thou wilt. Accept the sacrifice I make of myself to Thee, of soul and body, of all I have, without any exception or reserve, to Thy holy will and pleasure. Amen."

Lastly, after all this, remember that thanksgiving and joy is a principal part of our work at this table. Let our souls, and all that is within us, then praise the Lord, giving thanks to the Father of mercies, for this unspeakable gift, blessing the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for all the riches of His grace in Him. The very name of this sacrament, "the Eucharist," imports this, that thanksgiving is our principal work. He

took the bread, and He took the cup, and He gave thanks, say the evangelists, indifferently of the one, and of the other, blessing, and giving of thanks, being the same. This food is hallowed by thanksgiving, and if ever the high praises of God should be in our mouths, it ought to be so upon this occasion. Praising God for parting with His only Son, not sparing Him, that we might be spared. Thanking our Lord Redeemer for leaving the right hand of His Father, and the glory of heaven, to come and tabernacle among us, and take our nature, and die for us. "Lord Jesus! Who are we? What am I, that Thou shouldst part with the glory of heaven, and part with Thy own life, upon the accursed tree, for such a wretch as I am? Was I dearer to Thee, than Thy own heart-blood, that Thou didst freely shed it upon the cross for me? How amazing is Thy love! How do I rejoice in it! With what thankfulness do I remember it! How am I ashamed of myself, that I love Thee no more! Oh, that I might feel the constraints of Thy endearing love to warm and quicken my cold and dead heart, that so I might speak Thy praise! And let heaven and earth, and angels and men, forever extol Thy matchless grace, and love, which passes knowledge, but calls for everlasting thanksgiving."

With such a frame as this, let us endeavor to come, and we shall find that His banner over us will be love.



## CHAPTER 8

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### *Christ's Cure of a Disciple's Weak Faith*

#### A DISCOURSE AFTER THE LORD'S SUPPER

*Then saith he unto Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.*

—JOHN 20:27–28

A strange and surprising spectacle, to see an apostle of our Lord act like an infidel, an unbeliever! To behold one of the Twelve that was to spread the faith of Christ throughout the universe to lack that faith which he was to persuade others to! To hear the great article of the resurrection, one of the most deeply fundamental articles of the Christian religion, to be obstinately denied by those lips that were to publish the gospel of Christ! And this as the sum of it, that He is risen from the dead. What more likely to scandalize the weak, to stagger the faith of many not yet confirmed disciples, and to hinder the belief of Christ's being risen, than such an example of incredulity in one of His apostles?

But the permission of such falls, and the raising a revenue of glory to the Redeemer by them, is one of the secrets of predestination, that will be eternally adored. This is sufficiently manifest in this very passage, relating to the apostle, Thomas,

whose infidelity, as one of the ancients observes, has proved as serviceable to Christianity as the faith of the other apostles. His incredulity strengthens our faith in the resurrection of our Savior, as it gave occasion to His appearing another time for the cure of his unbelief. And because, after so much obstinacy and pertinacious doubt, he at last yields and acknowledges the truth of Christ's resurrection, and makes a glorious confession of his faith. Whereas, if only a few credulous men, men of an easy and hasty faith, had assured us of it, their testimony had been more liable to suspicion.

The wisdom of God has recorded the faults and miscarriages of the apostles for our instruction and use. These suns enlighten us, not only by the luster of their good examples, when they shine in grace and holiness, but even by their eclipses too. Their cowardice, their rashness, their presumption, their unbelief, is of use to be considered. Our heavenly physician extracts some of the best medicines out of the most deadly poison, to caution, and warn, and instruct, and edify us by the miscarriages and faults of David, of Peter, of Thomas, and the like.

Let us therefore view this passage, and consider what reflections may be made upon it. And the whole may be comprehended under these four heads:

1. The incredulity of this apostle; he could not believe without seeing, and feeling, and having the testimony of sense, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (v. 25)
2. The condescension and kindness of Christ in appearing to him another time, and granting it (vv. 26–27)

3. The cure of his unbelief, and the excellent confession of faith which thereupon he makes, "And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God" (v. 28)

4. The useful admonition which our Savior gives us concerning faith, that though Thomas, having seen Him, had believed, yet rather, "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (v. 29)

*1. Concerning the incredulity of this apostle*

The evangelist gives us an account that on the first day of the week, towards evening, our Lord being risen from the dead early in the morning, when the disciples were met together, and had shut the door for fear of the Jews (v. 19), He suddenly presents Himself among them, saying, "Peace be unto you" (v. 21). He assures them of His being risen from the dead, imparts to them the Holy Ghost, and gives them a charge and commission to act as apostles in remitting or retaining sins. But Thomas, whose Greek name was Didymus, both signifying twins, was not present at this assembly. But as soon as the other disciples met him, they tell him they had seen the Lord, that Mary Magdalene had seen Him, that Peter had seen Him, and the two disciples going to Emmaus, and then all the ten, and had full assurance that He was risen. This makes little impression in order to his believing it, for no eyes will serve him but his own. Though faith comes by hearing, he professes he would not believe except he saw, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe."

O suspicious, incredulous man! Who will be the loser, if you will not believe? But wherefore do you doubt? How is it that so many eyes and tongues are not as credible as your own eyes and hands! Shall the world be proselyted to the faith of Christ upon the testimony of these witnesses, and will not you

assent? Did not your Lord foretell His own death and resurrection? Did you not hear Him declare that He must be crucified, and that afterwards on the third day He would rise again? Is there anything we attest concerning His resurrection but what was promised and foretold? Why may not we be credited in our report of a matter of fact, whereof we have so plain and full an evidence? What ground is there to disbelieve so many eye witnesses? If there had been none but the women who saw Him, yet having themselves seen Him, their testimony in that case might have been credited, but here are ten disciples that say, "We have seen the Lord" (v. 25). Had they been ten strangers, there were little reason to reject the testimony of ten persons to one point which they had the testimony of sense to assure them of. But here are ten of your companions, and brethren, and apostles, of whose capacity, and probity, and faithfulness, you cannot doubt. And they all agree in this testimony, "We have seen the Lord." Shall every word be established in the mouth of two or three witnesses, as says Moses, and will you not believe, when the number is so much greater? No, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails...I will not believe."

In this unreasonable distrust and sullen unbelief, he continues for a whole week, obstinately professing that, without such an unreasonable condescension of Christ to convince his very senses, he will not acknowledge His being risen. It is strange that one of the Twelve, an apostle of our Lord, after three years' conversation in His family, should be so incredulous as to believe nothing but what he saw, and that he should refuse to believe on such ample testimony, especially when it was an article that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, and David believed concerning the Messiah, whom they never saw.

It is the more surprising too in this apostle because he had not only been eminently called by Christ, and long conversed with Him, been brought up in His company, and

was one of His house, but on a former occasion this apostle had declared more zeal than the rest of them. When they hesitated concerning the proposal Christ made, of His going into Judea to raise Lazarus, upon the account of the hatred of the Jews against Him, "Then said Thomas...unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:16). Though some think he spoke this with another air, and in another sense, than is commonly thought. As if he would say, "Since we cannot persuade Him, let us even go and perish, if it must be so. Perish we must, and there's an end."

But, to take the words of this apostle in the most charitable sense, he professes his zeal for his master beyond his fellows, and a commendable forwardness to suffer with Him. But now the death of Christ seems to have swallowed up his faith and courage. Now he will not believe except he can see, nor then neither, unless he can "put [his] finger into the print of the nails," which was a bold prescribing to God, and contained a great deal of absurdity, and of mischievous consequence in it. For it intimates, as if we were not obliged to believe Christ is risen, and alive, nor any such matter of fact, upon the testimony of others, unless we ourselves may touch and see, and have the evidence of our own sense. Whereas, how then could Thomas himself believe the Scriptures of the Old Testament? How could he be satisfied that there was such a man as Moses, or David, or of the truth of any of those things related concerning the ancestors of the Jews in Egypt, the wilderness, or Canaan, which he himself did not see?

This is further aggravated by considering the nature and import of this article which he refuses to believe, not only as that which was foretold concerning the Messiah by the Scriptures of the Old Testament, but as the basis and foundation of our religion, as that wherein the glory of Christ is principally concerned, as that which removes the ignominy of His

cross. And therefore the Jews, who set themselves to oppose the belief of His resurrection, were thereby, in some respects, more injurious to Christ than by their crucifixion of Him. For they do what they can to deprive Him of that new life He had when He was risen, and they kill Him a second time. This therefore aggravates the fault of Thomas, that by his unbelief he subscribes to the false accusations of the Jews. He takes their part and joins with them. He disowns, condemns, and denies that which heaven and earth, angels and men, had testified and published, and borne witness to, even the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

Before I proceed to his cure, and recovery, let us consider what instructions may be learned from the incredulity of this apostle. As:

a. That faith is no such easy matter as some persuade themselves. Unbelief is strangely rooted in the hearts of men, and very difficultly cured. "I will not believe, except I see; nay, I will not believe my eyes, unless I touch, and 'put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side.'" Our first parents sinned by unbelief. Adam fell by incredulity, and has left the fatal impression of that poison upon all his posterity. But where is Eve? Where is the apple, and serpent, in this case? There needs no other Eve to tempt to the sin of unbelief than the sin of our own flesh, and any kind of temptation is enough to draw us to it. The devil does not tell Thomas, as he did our first parents, "Ye shall be as gods.... Ye shall not die" (Gen. 3:4-5), but rather on the contrary, "You shall be as beasts, you shall die, and never rise more." For if Christ be not risen, we in vain expect to rise, His resurrection being the cause and pattern of ours.

Now under this temptation, this holy apostle fell. And if he who had true love to Christ, and was a true disciple, was

yet so incredulous, it is less strange that the greatest part of the world, as to divine things, are so unbelieving, when the corruptions, and passions, and evil inclinations of men have such a power and influence upon their minds. There needs therefore the exercise of a mighty power to produce faith in the heart, and accordingly we read of the exceeding greatness of that mighty power which raised Christ from the dead, employed toward them that believe (Eph. 1:19–20).

It is observable that nothing but the presence of Christ Himself could cure the unbelief of this apostle. Until then, the testimony of Mary Magdalene, and all that Peter and John could say, all the discourses of the other apostles, had no effect. And so it is still that without the presence and power of Christ to accompany the ministry of the Word, they who are unbelievers will continue in their unbelief. But a few plain words, accompanied with the power and efficacy of the Spirit of Christ, shall make the most obstinate unbeliever fall down on his face and cry out with this apostle, “My Lord and my God.”

b. In that his unbelief is attributed to his absence from the other disciples when they assembled together, we may learn to value the assemblies of Christians, in hopes of the presence of Christ, and the manifestation of Himself. It is true, it is said that the two disciples returning from Emmaus to Jerusalem found the Eleven gathered together (Luke 24:33). How then, if Thomas were absent, are they called Eleven after the death of Judas and before the choice of Matthias? I answer, when the Eleven are mentioned, we must not suppose it exactly meant of the number of the apostles then present, but of the present number of the apostles.<sup>1</sup> By his absence from them, he not only missed the good news that Mary brought of the resurrection of

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1. Footnote in original: Dr. Lightfoot.

Christ, but he lost the comfortable sight of Christ Himself, and so was left in doubts and unbelief, which they were delivered from. The apostle cautions against “forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is” (Heb. 10:25).<sup>2</sup> Not only that which is total, which is the fruit and evidence of absolute apostasy, but that which is partial only, in the lack of diligence and conscientious care in a constant attendance on Christian assemblies, according as the rule and their institution do require, whether it proceed from fear of suffering, or from spiritual sloth, with the occasions and affairs of this life, which come in competition. This is the first way, for the most part, whereby “an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12) does evidence itself to others. Forsaking of church assemblies is usually an entrance into apostasy.

Believe it, Christians, you cannot but be losers by your absence from the public assemblies, especially on the Lord's Day, as this was, when the disciples met together, and Christ was with them. And if Thomas had not come among them the next Lord's Day, he might have continued longer in his incredulity. He had met with the presence of Christ, if he had not forsaken the assemblies of the other disciples. You must not expect to have the same presence of Christ in solitude, or alone, as in the public assemblies, where His special presence is promised, and usually found. They who pretend, for the better enjoyment of the divine presence, to retire into deserts, or hermitages, to monasteries and cloisters, they greatly mistake and deceive themselves. For instead of retiring out of the world, they retire out of the church, and forsake the company of the saints. They quit the presence of Christ, and lose the opportunities of beholding the wonders of His grace, and of receiving the influences of His presence and Spirit.

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2. Footnote in original: See Dr. Owen on *Hebrews*, Chap. 10, Vers. 25.

Therefore do not discontinue your attendance on public worship, when you have opportunity. Do not say, "We can read as good a sermon at home, or pray as well at home." If you absent from the house of God, you must not think that Christ will follow you to your own houses, while you refuse to visit Him in His. If you are not with your brethren, when they assemble together, you will not find such manifestations of Christ to you as others experience. You displease Him by imitating the example of Thomas, and may expect to be assaulted and staggered by temptations to infidelity, and all other sins, which only the presence of Christ and His grace can cure. For where two or three are met together in the name of Christ, He has promised to be with them. It is in the assemblies of His people that He manifests Himself. It is there He makes known the power of His death, and the glory of His resurrection. It is there He dispenses the gifts and graces of His Spirit, and they that absent themselves out of choice are voluntarily deprived of these blessings.

Suppose you should spend your time on the Lord's Day at home in prayer, reading, and meditation, yet there is little reason to expect God should accept you therein, while it signifies a neglect, if not a contempt, of public worship, which is more for His honor, and is expressly required by the institution of such assemblies and apostolic practice agreeable thereunto. You cannot reasonably hope for such effusions of the divine grace and Spirit in a secret corner as in the congregation of the faithful. There is room and time enough for private devotions, without the neglect of the public worship. And God has promised to be present in Christian assemblies, and His institutions are never without a blessing when there are subjects capable of receiving it. You should therefore be glad of an opportunity and call to meet your brethren in the house of God.

c. I observe further that what we have found of the presence and manifestation of Christ, we may communicate for the sake of the conviction of others and the assistance of their faith. All the disciples endeavored to persuade Thomas of Christ's resurrection. They all told him, "We have seen the Lord." And no doubt they urged him, with all the circumstances of it, to convince him of the unreasonableness of his obstinacy, who would not believe except he could see. "How unreasonable was it," might they tell him, "that Christ should appear again upon his account, merely to comply with his curiosity? And if He should appear again, how unlikely it was that he should be privileged more than they, who had only a bare sight of Him. Why should he have more? Why should he be permitted to thrust his hand into our Lord's side, and his fingers into the print of the nails? He might expect rather that He would say to him, as to Mary, 'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended'" (John 20:17). And so, if He should appear, and be seen of him, he might still continue an infidel.

This kind office they did for him. Thus doubtless did they endeavor to convince him, though without success they tell him what they have seen. And they that have any sight of Christ, or experience of His presence, as they cannot but be willing to impart it to others, so they may and ought to do it in furtherance of their conviction. Only let us take heed that such communications be done with all possible wisdom and humility.

d. That it is unreasonable, and provoking, to refuse to believe the truth of anything merely because we have not the testimony of sense to confirm it. This was the apostle's fault, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails...I will not believe." This is to make terms with the blessed God, to limit the Holy One

of Israel, and unreasonably to expect that what is the object of faith should come under the view of sense.

e. I may observe further that Saint Peter was one of these witnesses that had seen the Lord, and yet Thomas neither hearkens to him nor regards what he says more than what the other apostles said. What little ground is there to think, then, that he had any supremacy above the rest of the apostles, and that he was the prince of them? If he were so, why did he not do his office? Why did he not show his authority? Here is a fair occasion for him to make use of the authority of his keys, to stop the mouth of this unbeliever who says he will not believe unless he see. Why does not Saint Peter define and determine the matter that was questioned, doubted, and denied by Thomas? There is nothing of all this, however proper the occasion might have been.

f. In that this incredulity of the apostle was overruled to so much good, for the further confirmation of the great doctrine of Christ's resurrection, let us admire the divine wisdom and goodness in the government of the world, who, though He cannot be the author of sin, does yet overrule it to His own glory. He has done so in many eminent examples, and He did so in this!

Hereby the honor of Christ is the more advanced by his open confession of Him afterwards, as Lord and God. And the truth of His being risen is the better confirmed, and so the faith of others assisted by his fall. It was well for the apostle, and it was well for us, that he did not believe presently. He was afterwards brought to the most admirable exercise, and declaration of his faith in Christ, not only of His being risen, but of His being the eternal Son of God, and of His happy interest in him,

and relation to him, as his Lord, and his God. And we have a greater evidence thereby of the truth of Christ's resurrection.

Doubtless this fall of Thomas was also a motive to his greater diligence in the service of Christ, and zeal for His glory, as it was with the Apostle Paul, and Peter, and others.

g. Let us not rashly judge of men by a single act. Thomas had true faith—notwithstanding this fit of doubting and unbelief—which revived upon the sight and presence of Christ within a few days. Many that in a fit of temptation, we may think, have no truth or grace, yet if we stay awhile, do soon discover it. Some special ordinance or providence brings them to themselves, and suddenly shows the reality of that which did not appear, but the contrary corruption.

2. [*The condescension and kindness of Christ in appearing to him another time and granting it (vv. 26–27)*]

Having thus considered the unbelief of this apostle, let us now observe the compassion, condescension, and kindness of Christ, to this incredulous apostle. Eight days after, the disciples being together, and “Thomas with them: then came Jesus...and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you” (v. 26), and [He] says to Thomas, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing” (v. 27).

What injustice, if our Savior had left him to his own obstinate incredulity? Whom could he have blamed but himself, if he had continued in his unbelief? But our Lord came and showed him His hands, and feet, and bids him do what he desired for his conviction. How mercifully does He pity us in our errors and infirmities! With what tenderness and compassion does He reclaim us! And this when He was risen from the dead, after He was declared to be the Son of God with power,

when He was to receive the recompense and reward of His death and suffering, when His state of humiliation was over. And yet how low does He stoop for the sake of this apostle? When so unreasonable a thing too was demanded as the condition of his believing? But such is the admirable bounty and condescension of Christ that He will not refuse him, even this: "Since you will not believe otherwise, O My apostle, I consent. Behold My wounds! Behold the print of the nails! And if the sight of them be not enough to cure your infidelity, come, reach hither your hand, thrust your finger into My side. I care not what I do, or how low I stoop, rather than not convince and heal you. If the evidence of one sense is not enough, I will yield further, and let you have more."

Our Lord might have convinced Thomas by the powerful influence of His Spirit, without all this, but He condescends thus far for our sakes that we, and others, might have a clearer evidence and proof of His resurrection, and likewise of His divinity. For His fixing upon Thomas in this assembly, and speaking to him such words, does plainly manifest that He knew his heart and understood what discourse he had had, and what objections he had made, and what was the inward sense of his soul, which He could not have done without His being omniscient. Little did this apostle think his Lord had heard him, or believe that He knew his sin. But, "Reach hither," says Christ, "behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side." He condescends to grant that which it was the apostle's fault to ask.

We see, by these words, our risen Lord retained the marks of the wounds, the prints of the nails and spear in His body, after the resurrection, to manifest with greater certainty the truth of it. It is likely He preserved them at His ascension too, as the evidence of His past sufferings, and the ensigns of His victory. And let us not imagine, if He retains them in heaven,

to the admiration of angels, and the joy of the redeemed, that it will be any disparagement to the beauty and splendor of His glorious body, but rather contribute to it in the day of His appearing, when "every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him" (Rev 1:7).

*3. Let us consider the faith of Thomas hereupon*

He answered and said, "My Lord and my God." He not only believes with the heart but confesses with the mouth. He owns both the divinity of Christ and His dominion, and that with an appropriating faith, "My Lord and my God." There is a great sense in these few words, for:

a. Here is an evidence of the truth of his repentance, of his love, and of his zeal. The very sight of Christ, and the print of the nails, and the mark of His wounds, shames him for his sin, and makes him sensible of his incredulity. "Behold," as if Christ said, "the print of the nails. Think what I have suffered for you, for the expiation of your sin. Think how I have loved you, to die for you, and will you not believe that I am risen?" This awakened his repentance, and made him abruptly cry out, "My Lord and my God." Two words sometimes are more significant than a hundred, and express the desires of the heart more than a large discourse.

The kindness and condescension of his Lord overcame him, and by these words he proves the cure of his infidelity. Before, he would not believe Christ to be alive; now, he confesses Him to be God. Before, he reckoned Him under the power of death; now he acknowledges Him as the Lord and Prince of life. Before, he believed less than any of the other apostles; now he confesses more than all of them.

"My Lord and my God.' Thou art the anointed of God, the King, the Head of the Church, the expected, promised

Messiah. If Thy death had staggered my faith, Thy resurrection has established it. 'My Lord and my God.' I adore Thy compassion, and condescension, that Thou wouldst appear to me who so justly forfeited such a favor. I implore Thy grace, I beg Thy pardon, I now genuinely acknowledge, own, and avow Thee for my Savior, 'My Lord and my God.'"

Though he professed his unbelief in larger words, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger," etc., yet this expression of his repentance is equally significant. He only stammers out two or three words, "My Lord and my God," but such as prove his conversion, and his cure, as the voice of the patient will sometimes discover the cure of a disease in the head. When the heart is full, the expressions are many times short and abrupt. The groans, desires, and inward affections of the soul are unutterable. He had much more to say, but he could not bring it out. His penitent shame on the one hand, and his zeal and admiration on the other, stopped his mouth. But the little he does say is much to the purpose. He calls Him Lord and God, which upon the resurrection of Christ, every tongue was to confess.

The truth of his repentance, love, and zeal he afterwards more abundantly proved by labor, and diligence, and traveling up and down the world to spread the gospel into Parthia, and afterwards among the Medes and Persians, passing through the Asian Ethiopia, says Chrysostom, and, at last, came to India, persuading them to renounce their idolatry, and receive the faith of Christ. Some remainders of this there are in some parts of India to this day.<sup>3</sup> And at last [he] was thrust through with lances, by the command of an Indian king.

If we may believe the account of some of the Jesuits and other missionaries of the Roman Church into China and those

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3. Footnote in original: See Dr. Cave's *Life of St. Thomas*.

parts, they do ascribe the preaching of the Gospel there to this apostle, and his followers.<sup>4</sup> And the Chaldee books concerning the Indian Christianity, cultivated by his means, are mentioned to this purpose, and preserved to this day by an archbishop of Granganour, or Della Serra, and translated into Latin by a Jesuit. One of those books is a breviary, wherein are these words, "By the means of Saint Thomas, the errors of the idolatry of the Indians were scattered. By the means of Saint Thomas, the Chinese, and the Ethiopians were converted to the truth. By the means of Saint Thomas, they obtained the virtue of baptism, and the adoption of sons, and kept the faith which they promised to God. By means of Saint Thomas, the beams of the knowledge of life enlightened all India, and the kingdom of heaven entered into China." And then there follows an antiphon, which says, "The Indians, the Chinese, the Persians, and other Islanders, those of Syria, Armenia, Grecia, and Romania, in commemoration of Saint Thomas, do offer their adoration unto Thy most Holy Name, O great God."

b. Let us consider the reality of his faith, in this short confession of it. For, upon these words, "My Lord and my God," our Savior owns, in the next verse, the truth of his faith. "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed" (v. 29), though a more ample and abundant blessing be pronounced on such as did also believe, without that help of sight and sense.

But here is an excellent faith, and all the essential parts of it, comprehended in this expression, "My Lord and my God":

- i. An assent to this truth, that Jesus is the Christ, the true Messiah, who had risen again as He foretold

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4. Footnote in original: *Relationa della Cina del P. A. Se nedo*, 12s. Parte Prima, cap. 31.

ii. An acknowledgment that this Jesus is the Lord and God, that absolute supremacy, power, and dominion belong to Him, that He is true God

iii. An appropriation of Him to himself, as his Lord and his God, which, following upon the former two, contain the essentials of true faith

iv. In this expression, we have an evidence of the two natures of Christ, the reality of His human nature and the truth of His divine

The reality of His human nature: the method our Lord uses to prove His resurrection to this apostle does suppose He was true man, partaker of human nature, that His body was of such a kind that our senses might judge of it, for else He would not have bid Thomas behold Him, and reach hither his hand.

This may easily be improved to overthrow the popish fancy of transubstantiation, that the body and blood of Christ are in the Lord's Supper, under the accidents of bread and wine. For at that rate Thomas might have still objected that what he saw and touched was not the body of Christ, but the accidents of it, and that he was not obliged to believe on the testimony of his senses, that the body of Christ was present. But his obligation so to believe is implied in our Savior's words, "Reach hither thy hand...and be not faithless, but believing." And on the same testimony of sense, we are bound to believe that it is bread after consecration, and not flesh; that it is wine, and not blood.

The truth of His Godhead is also evident, that He is really and truly God. This title, "My God," as well as "My Lord," is very observable, because it has the article before the word, "God." And it is commonly granted by the adversaries of the deity of Christ that wherever the word God is used with the article before it, it there imports the true and eternal God. So is the

expression here, which our English translation does not reach; for it may rather be read, "The Lord mine, the God mine."

"My Lord and my God." From His office as Lord and Christ, He rises to His divine nature and the dignity of His essence. Thomas had reason to own Him to be Christ the Lord by His resurrection, and other things which he had observed before. And from that dignity he owns Him to be true God, worthy of the highest homage and adoration.

Had it been otherwise, the apostle would not have given the title of God to Jesus Christ, nor would He have received it. For the greater any person is, the greater danger there is of giving him such titles as belong not to him, as to give to one that is next to the King the title of King. Especially to ascribe divinity and Godhead to a creature. What can be more provoking to Him who is jealous of His honor—"And my glory will I not give to another" (Isa. 42:8)?

It cannot well be supposed that Thomas, who was brought up into the Jewish religion, could be ignorant of the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead. He must needs know what Moses and the prophets teach concerning it—"Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD" (Deut. 6:4).<sup>5</sup> This was one of the sentences written on the fringes of their garments, and quoted by Christ, as a known thing (Mark 12:29).

Neither can it be imagined that our Savior would have permitted such a thing without rebuking him, if He had not been true God, as well as real man. But so this apostle does acknowledge Him, and so must we. And every office of Christ, as our prophet, priest, and king, does suppose and require that

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5. Footnote in original: See Placei disput: in loc. Tom. 3. 4to.

He is true God, as well as true man, or He could not discharge those offices to any saving purpose for us.<sup>6</sup>

4. [*The useful admonition which our Savior gives us concerning faith, that though Thomas, having seen Him, had believed, yet rather "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (v. 29)*]

Let us then imitate the faith of this apostle in contemplating the death and resurrection of Christ, that we also may say as he did, "My Lord and my God." And that will include both a claim of interest and special propriety in Him, and imply the dedication of ourselves to His use and service. The one of these will follow upon the other. When God says, "I am thy God" (Isa. 41:10), we cannot but answer that we are His servants, and resolve to be so. And if we are His, and devoted to Him, we may infer that He is ours, for the covenant is mutual.

But if we cannot, as sometimes we cannot, so clearly and comfortably say, "my God," we may yet humbly and resolvedly say, "My Lord," that is, "I am Thy servant. I am devoted to Thy fear. I am resigned and given up to Thee. I have chosen Thee for my portion, and I have dedicated and devoted myself forever to be Thine, etc." The more serious we are in this, the more likely are we to come to this claim, and appropriation, and special interest in God and Christ as ours. And until we arrive to some degree of this, we are strangers to the most comfortable part of the Christian life, for this is a great ground of our confidence, and a mainspring of our joy—"My beloved is mine, and I am his" (Song 2:16), "who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). This attracts our love, this wins our hearts, and fills us with joy unutterable, and full of glory.

If Christ, by the presence of His Spirit, would visit our souls, we should then be able to use such language of faith. If

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6. Footnote in original: Dr. Manton, on Colossians 1.19, p. 202.

He will visit us, as He did the disciples, when Thomas was with them, His presence and power can produce such a faith. And if He please, He can enter, and do this, though the doors be barred, and shut never so close. For He can open them, as He did the heart of Lydia. Though they be of stone or iron, He can break, He can soften, He can make them hearts of flesh. Let us beg He would so visit us, by His Spirit!

Though we have not the privilege to touch Him on earth as this apostle, yet we may behold Him, as the holy martyr Stephen [did], in heaven. We may contemplate Him by faith, as at "the right hand of God" (1 Peter 3:22), and so we may behold the print of His nails, and thrust our hand into His wounded side, and hear His voice, indeed taste, as well as touch, His very body and blood, and feed upon Him. We have some of us so done this day. And after such a sight, and such a taste, shall we not cry out, "'My Lord and my God!' O my Lord, what have I done? O my God, what shall I do? O my Lord, my dear Lord Jesus! Who am I, that Thou hast loved me so as to die for me, so as to give Thyself [as] a sacrifice for me? O my God, what shall I render to Thee? How shall I express my gratitude? What shall I do to honor Thee? O my Lord, Thou hast redeemed me at a costly price. O my God, give me of the spirit of grace, to renew Thy image, subdue my lusts, and assist my obedience. 'My Lord and my God!' The King of saints, the Prince of Peace, the First-begotten from the dead, the First-born of every creature, the First-fruits of them that sleep, the true and only Potentate, the great Emmanuel, God-with-us, true God, and true Man, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee?' (Ps. 73:25), etc."

Let us labor after such a faith, and beg it of the God of all grace, and never desist, until in the use of that, and other means, we are brought to use such language too.

**[Consider]**

Lastly, as to you, my brethren, who have been at the table of the Lord, consider: what have you been doing? Your great business has been, or should have been, this day, solemnly to renew the covenant between God and you, in such appropriating language of faith as these words of Thomas. For Christ and all His benefits are offered to you by the distribution of the elements: "Behold Me. I am yours. Accept Me. Take Me," says Christ. You, by receiving them, say, "Lord, I am Thine. Accept me. Possess me for Thy own." The Lord's Supper is the New Testament or Covenant in the blood of Christ. You there ratify the baptismal covenant. He says, "I am yours," and you say, you are His. This inward, personal covenanting between Christ and you is the great thing to be minded, and this amounts to the same with "My Lord and my God," acknowledging His right, by the one expression, and professing your own interest, by the other.

This was virtually done in our baptism; this was actually done at our first turning to God, when we entered into covenant to be the Lord's; and this we professedly repeat, and publicly renew, every time we come to this table. We have this day acknowledged Him to be our Lord. We have entered into a solemn league of subjection and fidelity to Him. We have taken on us a solemn bond and obligation of duty and service. And if we are unfaithful, every communion will come in against us, as so many oaths that we have broken. For by feasting on this sacrifice this day, we have again sworn at the altar, we have said it in our hearts, "My Lord and my God," and we have professed it by our actions. We have played the hypocrites, and acted the part of children, and fools, if we did not mean it. And if we do not stand to it while we live, we are rebels, and add perjury to our rebellion, by violating our bond, covenant, and oath. And if we do so, we have imprecated a curse upon ourselves, even

all the curses of a broken covenant, and so have sworn to our own condemnation.

You therefore who have this day avouched the Lord for your God, and have said to Christ, "My Lord and my God," remember that He is both, and do not expect He should be your God, your portion, your happiness, your heaven, if He be not your Lord. Do not think He will be your Jesus, your ransom to save you from hell, if He be not your Lord to govern your heart and life. He is the author of eternal salvation only to those that obey Him, an everlasting Savior to them only to whom He is a Lord. Do not expect that the saying, "Lord, Lord," either now, or hereafter, will be enough, if you be a worker of iniquity, and do not what He commands you—if His interest in you and authority over you will not prevail more than the entreaty of a friend, or than the gain of a little money, or the allurements of a little pleasure, or the enticement of a lust, or the temptation of a devil.

But if you sincerely and genuinely take Him for your Lord, He will then be your God, and all blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, are comprised in that. You are then His jewels, His treasure, His portion, His inheritance, His peculiar people, if He be your God. Oh, how dear, how valuable, how precious are the relations, privileges, and blessings, that this contains! What need you fear? What can you lack? What can you ask more? What can dismay, afflict, or trouble such a soul? "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?" (Ps. 42:11), may you say, if you can say with David in another place, "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance" (Ps. 16:5). Or if you can say with Thomas here, "My Lord and my God." All things then are yours—His Spirit, His providence, His attributes, His promises; life, death, things present, things to come; grace here, heaven hereafter; all things yours, if you be Christ's, and He be your Lord, and your God.

Blessed then are you, though you have not seen Him with your bodily eyes, or thrust your hand into His wounded side, or felt the print of the nails in His crucified body. Yet having now, by hearing, believed on Him, and loved Him, you shall see Him hereafter in glory, and triumph, and be forever with Him, to behold His glory, and to partake of it. Amen.



**PART 2**

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**Questions about Salvation,  
Assurance, and the Lord's Supper**



## CHAPTER 9

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### *How Much Assurance Is Necessary to Come to the Table?*

*But let a man examine himself,  
and so let him eat of that bread.*

—1 CORINTHIANS 11:28

In this verse you have it plainly supposed that it is a Christian's duty to partake of the Lord's Supper. The manner of the performance is regulated, but the substance of the duty is presupposed, that is to say, to do this in remembrance of Christ. He ought to eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, and show forth the Lord's death this way; only take heed not to rush hastily, without previous self-examination.

That solemn preparation is necessary to the right performance of this duty, may be argued from the instance given of one special part of that preparation, the due examination of ourselves. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread." It is a Christian's duty to partake of this solemn ordinance; he must not do it rashly and unpreparedly; and it is one special part of necessary preparation, to examine himself.

#### **Question**

But some will be ready to say, "I have examined myself, and endeavored to know the true state of my soul, but I cannot

come to a determination whether I have sacramental graces in truth and am partaker of life from the spirit of Christ or not; and consequently, how is it my duty to come to this ordinance for spiritual nourishment? After all my examination, I cannot positively conclude that I am in a state of grace; at least, I have many doubts and fears; I have no certainty, no assurance of my good estate towards God. May I nevertheless come? Is it my duty, while I have so many doubts and difficulties unresolved, and am so far from full assurance and joy?" This I shall endeavor to answer, by considering how far assurance is necessary to our worthy receiving. You will have my thoughts of it in the following particulars.

### Answers

*1. First, that in the diligent use of God's appointed means it may ordinarily be known whether you have truly repented of your sins and do genuinely believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; and so, whether you are sincere in your Christian profession, or not*

By self-reflection, and comparing yourselves with the Word of God, endeavoring to prove yourselves, and making use of the assistance of books, and ministers, with prayer to God, to enable you to discern the true state of your case, you may ordinarily come to the knowledge of yourselves, and your spiritual condition. I speak not of the grossly ignorant, or of such as live at that rate of licentiousness that they cannot but know they are impenitent, or may easily know it on a little reflection, but of such as doubt, and have some reason for it.

*2. Secondly, he that endeavors not to know the true state of his soul, that with a prepared heart he may join with his brethren and fellow Christians at the table of the Lord, lives in continual sin*

He that will not endeavor to come worthily, and accordingly examine himself, that he may be disposed, and fitted for this

ordinance, he continues to disobey an order of Christ. It is not enough to say you have no assurance, or are afraid to come without it; that will not excuse you from sin. Many keep off, on such pretenses, for fear that they should eat and drink unworthily, and so sin, but consider not the sin and danger, on the other hand, of staying away, upon such grounds as will not excuse them before God. Consider therefore what is the faulty cause of your ignorance of yourselves, and of your true state towards God. Is it not sloth and carelessness, negligence and remissness, earthly cares, or the hurry of worldly business? And if the doubts of your sincerity arise from a faulty cause, you must not plead those doubts as a sufficient excuse for not coming to the Lord's Table.

There is a faulty carelessness in some good Christians, that they do not observe and record the working of God's Spirit upon their hearts, and so the time of His love is not taken notice of, nor remembered. To allude to what God says to Ephraim, "When Israel was a child...I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms, but they knew not that I healed them" (Hos. 11:1, 3). You must reflect, inquire, and consider what God has wrought in you, and done for you, whether you have been brought, humbly to acknowledge your sin with shame and sorrow, and self-abhorrence, seeing your need of Christ, and His grace, have been persuaded thankfully to take hold of the covenant, to accept the offered mercy of the gospel, and yield yourselves to be the Lord's. We lose much of our comfort, for lack of bringing our doubts to a determination; and this through laziness, sloth, and carelessness. It is true, the lack of assurance will not argue a man under the power of unbelief, but it shows the weakness of faith; and we ought diligently to clear it up, whether we are in the faith, and whether Christ be in us, or not; and whether with all our hearts we love Him, which, for the most part, may be known, as well

as our love and affection to persons and things, in other cases. If we reflect and remind ourselves, we may ordinarily know that we love.

“Are you not willing that Christ should be your Savior, and bring you to heaven, in God’s appointed way? Do you not make religion your great business in this world? Is not your being accepted of God, in Christ, your great concern? Is there anything in all the world your hearts are set more upon, than that you may be saved by Jesus Christ, and not be found hypocrites at last? Would you not account the certainty and assurance of this a greater privilege than to be owner of all the riches and treasures of the earth? Is it not your heaviest burden, that you fear you shall fall short of heaven? And you dread nothing more than to be mistaken about your interest in the special love of God? Whence have you these apprehensions, these desires, this choice? Can the devil ever persuade you this is from corrupt nature, or, that you do not love God, when you would give all the world to be assured of His love? You abhor everything that you think will displease Him; there is nothing He requires, but by His grace, you are willing to comply with; you would gladly love, and serve, and enjoy Him better; there is nothing would better please or more rejoice you than to please Him more, and to be more conformed to His image, be filled with His Spirit, and live to glorify Him more in the world; there is no lust that you would indulge, but desire to mortify; and you are accordingly diligent in the use of Christ’s appointed means, to subdue corruption; it is your trouble and your complaint that you are not more dead to sin and the world; you feel the remainders of ignorance, pride, selfishness, carnality, unbelief, deadness, dullness, etc. You groan under them, as a continual burden; and would rather be rid of them than of any outward affliction whatsoever. Does not all this argue true love to God and holiness, true love to

Christ, and hatred of sin? And can you not infer from hence what He has done for you, and wrought in your souls? Oh, bear not false witness against yourselves! But labor, by such reflections, to know your state, that you may come to the table of the Lord, with joy and praise.”

*3. Thirdly, as it is ordinarily some sin that keeps a man unresolved and in the dark (which does not excuse him from the duty) so for a man to mistake his true state, and doubt and question his integrity towards God (if he be sincere), even that doubt is his sin*

He ought to endeavor to know himself and make a right judgment, and then come to receive the seal of the covenant. His mistake in judging of his own cause is faulty, and will not excuse him from the obligation of judging more truly and justly of himself. Upright Christians are obliged to judge of themselves according to truth what really they are, and so to receive what belongs to them, as the children of God, and members of Christ, within the bond of the everlasting covenant.

*4. Fourthly, it is a common and dangerous mistake (by which many are deceived) to place the nature of saving, justifying faith in the assurance of God's love; and the knowledge and persuasion that we are pardoned, and justified, and accepted of God*

Whereas, many truly believe, and have genuine faith, and shall inherit eternal life, who yet doubt and fear, and dare not say all this; and others may be persuaded that is their case, who did never yet believe in Christ with all their hearts. The one shall be ashamed of their fears, as the other of their hopes.

To place faith in a mere assent to the doctrine of the gospel is one extreme; to place it in assurance of my good estate towards God, that's another. There is a blessedness pronounced to such as mourn, and are poor in spirit, and hunger and thirst after righteousness; they may do so without

assurance. The unbelief that condemns is not the not believing we are already justified; therefore the faith which saves men is not the believing that we are justified. He that believes he is justified and pardoned must be so before he can believe it. "By him all that believe are justified" (Acts 13:39). "We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified" (Gal. 2:16). Assurance follows faith: "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13).

All that hear the gospel preached are commanded to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, but all are not commanded or obliged to believe their sins are already pardoned, and that they are in a justified state; then many would be commanded to believe what is not yet true. And to believe my sins are forgiven, that they may be forgiven, is very absurd; and yet, if faith be necessary to justification, this will follow. To believe I shall certainly be saved is not justifying faith. I must be so justified before I can believe it, or be assured of it. The Scripture makes a plain difference between these two. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13); that is, have it in the seed, and root, in the earnest, and beginning of it. They might have said, "We do this already! If faith consist in believing, I am pardoned, and shall be saved." And many that have had assurance have lost it, as well as many who have true faith may not have reached assurance. I say, many have lost assurance who have not lost their faith, unless a man may be a believer and no believer several times in a year. There are several states, ages, and ranks of believers; some whereof are yet short of assurance. And must not the child be allowed to be a child before he can speak for himself and say he is one? How many of the children of God must we then turn out of doors, whom He receives and loves?

Some of the first reformers who fell into this mistake were eminent for faith, and holiness, and joy; and by what they found in themselves (speaking what they felt) they described faith by such a full persuasion of the love of God as many real Christians have not attained; by such assurance and joy of faith, as they themselves experienced; but the Lord knows who are His, when many of them do not know it themselves. It is the reality and the sincerity of our faith that is necessary to salvation, not the certain knowledge of that sincerity.

I dare not come, says one and another, to the table of the Lord, because I cannot believe. I have not true and saving faith. "I cannot believe"; but I would ask such, "What is it you cannot believe? Do you not believe the witness given by Christ, in the Holy Scriptures, to be true? Do you not believe Him to be the true Messiah, the only Savior of sinners? That He has ability and willingness to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him? That He is constituted and empowered, by office, to do this, as the Christ of God? Do you not believe, from your hearts, that He is able to reconcile you to God? That His blood can cleanse from all sin? That you are lost and undone without Him? That if ever you are reconciled, pardoned, and saved, it must be by Him? Do you not desire this above all things? Are you not willing to take Him as your Savior and Lord in all His offices, to be taught by His Word, to be guided by His Spirit, to be governed by His law, to depend on His righteousness, sacrifice, and intercession, for all your hopes of acceptance with God? Do you not look for all your supplies of grace and strength to conquer temptation, and perform every duty from His Spirit, as the purchase of His blood? Do you not believe all the promises He has made shall be fulfilled? And desire nothing more than that you may have a share and interest in the blessings of the New Covenant, purchased and promised by Christ? And from your very souls, are willing to be His, upon

any terms, so that there is no sin but you would be free from, rather than keep; and accordingly are faithful and constant in following after holiness?"

You cannot deny this; and yet, after all, you will say, you have no faith, because no assurance. Does not all this argue true faith? You lack the knowledge of your true state; but you do not lack true faith in Christ. Therefore you ought to come to the table. Rather, though you have not conquered all your doubts about the great truths of the gospel, and the life to come, and the mediation of Christ, if yet you have such a prevailing persuasion of those truths as brings you to consent to the covenant of grace, to take God for your God, and Christ for your only Savior, and the Holy Ghost for your sanctifier and guide, His law for your rule, His promise for your security, and the heavenly glory for your rest and happiness, resolving, by the grace of God, to forsake all that stands in competition, you are true believers, and ought to come, to eat of the children's bread.

*5. Fifthly, there is a vast difference, as to the Lord's Supper, between the case of a hypocrite who does not know himself to be one, and the case of a sincere, real Christian who does not know himself to be sincere*

You must not imagine these two cases to be alike. The one has true grace, though he discerns it not, and consequently has a right to the blessings of the covenant, and is bound to know and discern his title, and so come and partake of the privileges that belong to his state. But suppose another professor comes to the Lord's Table, who has no true repentance or faith, and so his heart [is] not right with God, but he is under the reign, power, and dominion of sin. He has, as yet, no right to the blessings of the covenant, but is bound to know his true state, that he may be brought to repentance. It is a greater sin for him to demand and take what does not belong to him, than to tarry away for a while, for the sake of his recovery and preparation.

For if such a one comes, he hypocritically professes that repentance, faith, and devotedness to God which he has nothing of, but is secretly an enemy to God and holiness. He comes and claims the children's bread, with a lie in his mouth and heart, against the Holy Ghost; and he takes the name of God in vain. There is a great difference, in this case, from that of a doubting Christian, who truly believes and cannot say he is assured of it.

There is a further difference in point of comfort. For a real Christian, though he come with many doubts and fears, yet there are some secret testimonies of the love of God. There is some influence of the Holy Spirit to bear up his hope, which is much better than all the groundless joys of hypocrites in a false persuasion of the goodness of their state.

The penitent, upright believer who lacks assurance has a right to the ordinance, and is accepted with God, though he cannot affirm it, or say that he genuinely believes in Christ, and loves God with all his heart, yet he hopes it is true; he is willing to be the Lord's on His own terms. It is the favor of God in Christ that he values, and seeks above all things. This he aims at. Nothing else will content him. He would rejoice in it, more than in any earthly prosperity, if he could attain more certain knowledge of it. Is not such a one accepted of God? And supposing a competency of knowledge about the nature of the sacrament (to understand His work, and to discern the Lord's body), he has a right to come. Though his timorous misgivings may keep him off awhile, yet they cannot deprive him of his right, or disoblige him from his duty, to show forth the Lord's death this way. He does truly consent to the covenant, and should come to signify that consent, and receive the seal of the covenant.

And remember this, that the covenant of grace is mutual between God and you, so that, from your consent to be the

Lord's, you may infer that He is your God. Your choice of Him is an evidence of your interest in Him by a covenant relation. The relation is mutual, equally, and at once, on both sides; therefore, as soon, and as long, as you can, say, "Lord, I am Thine, and I desire to abide, continue Thy servant; I would not depart from Thee." As soon and as long as you find within you such a disposition of heart, you may be assured that God is your God, and will be your God forever, and guide unto death.

*6. Sixthly, there is a true discerning of our faith and repentance which is short of assurance, upon which we may act, though we are not fully certain*

There is true love to Christ that is short of delighting and rejoicing love, even desiring and mourning love. Though there be not the witness and seal of the Holy Spirit to give joy, there may be so much knowledge of our good estate attained in a way of duty, as to prevent trouble and terror of mind; even a good hope, through grace, short of certainty, and full of persuasion.

And, if a man may not act upon some good hopes, though he have not an assured certain judgment concerning his state, a great deal of God's service in the Christian church would be laid aside. For instance, he only that is penitent should profess himself penitent. Only he that truly desires Christ and His grace should say he does desire it. Only they that have received saving grace should give God thanks for having received it. And yet, if none should confess sin, and profess repentance, but such as knew certainly, and with assurance, that they are truly penitent; and if none should beg grace, with a profession that they desire it, until they have assurance of the truth of those desires; if none should give thanks to God for redemption, effectual calling, justification, adoption, and sanctification, but such as have full assurance, that they have received all these; there would be little confession, prayer,

and thanksgiving in the Christian world. Is it unlawful to say, I believe, while there is a mixture of unbelief? We must let alone a great part of our religion, if we may not act upon hope, short of assurance. And if all doubting, trembling Christians should be debarred the Lord's Table until they have certainty and assurance, there would not only be very few to partake of it, but we should exclude some of the fittest, the most acceptable, and most welcome guests at this feast of love. Therefore we may have many fears and misgivings, yet if conscience, enlightened by the Word of God, do not positively condemn us (though upon self-examination, it does not clearly and fully absolve us), we may come in hope.

*7. Seventhly, though you have not yet attained assurance of the love of God, and of your reconciled, justified state, yet, by waiting on God, in the use of His holy ordinances, you may expect and hope to attain it*

You may and ought to wait for the communications of His grace and love in the use of all His appointed means. And it is one end and use of the Lord's Supper, to strengthen weak faith, and to help doubting Christians. You have there a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith. The blood of Christ is there represented as shed for the remission of your sins. The benefits of redemption are offered to you in particular, and you are called to apply them to yourself, as if your names were mentioned. You are there called to profess your acceptance of Christ, and the offered salvation of the gospel; and to surrender, and give back yourselves entirely to be the Lord's. This feast was not appointed only for those who are the most perfect Christians and highest in grace, but for the relief and supply of your spiritual needs. You come there not only to be thankful for what grace you have received, but to receive more. What would you think if one should tell you, you must not eat, until your hunger be first satisfied; or not come to

the fire, until you are first warm; or not take medicine, until you have recovered your health? The seals of the covenant are appointed for our greater confirmation, that the heirs of the promise might have more abundant consolation and joy; and, in this ordinance, our Savior speaks more solemnly, more particularly, and more stirringly to us, for the help of our faith, than by the ministry of the Word. What is spoken in general, by the preaching of the Word, is here particularly applied to individual persons; to support weak and doubting Christians, as well as to confirm the joy of their stronger brethren. You may as well neglect hearing the Word and pray and hope for faith, as expect assurance and neglect the Lord's Table. The primitive Christians, who walked in the fear of God, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, continued in the practice of breaking the holy bread (partaking of this ordinance), and so could eat their common meat with gladness of heart, praising God. It may be you will find, as Jesus made Himself known to the two disciples, in breaking of bread (to allude to that expression, for I think it not meant of sacramental bread), so you may find, by waiting on God in this ordinance, your doubts scattered, your jealousies removed, your difficulties cleared, your objections answered, and the goodness of your state, which before was doubtful, made manifest and evident, to the joy of your souls.

Therefore refuse not to pay homage to your crucified Savior by partaking of this ordinance, believing that you shall not do it in vain. It may be, ever you are aware, your souls shall be as the chariots of Aminadab. You cannot tell but your attendance on this institution shall be the happy means which God will make use of to scatter and cure your doubts. And, by your neglect of this ordinance, you not only take the most likely course to increase and continue your doubts and fears, but are in danger to lose that seriousness of spirit, and sense of

religion, which you now have, by denying yourself those helps by which it is preserved and maintained in other Christians.

*8. Eighthly, consider that after self-examination you may sometimes find one grace more evident than another*

A Christian can say sometimes more hopefully, that he lives by faith; sometimes that he has true repentance, and godly sorrow for sin; sometimes he can say more concerning the truth of his love to Christ; sometimes concerning his hunger and thirst after Christ, and the spirituality and earnestness of his desires; and if you can discover truth and integrity of heart, as to any of these, you may so far take comfort. But especially, as to faith and love, the two radical graces, which do influence and strengthen all others; and by which you may make the best judgment of yourself.

And a difference you must allow, for different times and seasons. Though it may be, you cannot now say so much concerning this or the other particular grace, yet, at such a time, upon serious reflection, you could say a great deal to the glory of God, and to your own consolation. You think that it is much better now with others than with you; but it may be the last month, at the last sacrament, you could say truly, concerning your communion with God, and the evidence of His love, and the expression of your own, and the exercise of other graces, a great deal more than any of those Christians and brethren whom you apprehend to be so much above and before you.

Remember how at such a time, according to such a Scripture character of an upright Christian, your hearts could bear witness, and God did bear witness, by His Spirit, that you are not hypocrites. Did you not record it? Did you not promise to remember it, and improve it? Call to mind what has passed between God and your souls, as to such things: and, if there be no notable declining to the world and the flesh, or commission

of gross sins, or willful carelessness or remissness (which must be particularly repented of, and reformed, in order to pardon, and peace), you may take comfort in former evidences, and experience. If a father has forgiven a child that had offended him, and told him so, must he be every day telling him again and again, that he has forgiven him, or he won't believe it? If God has comfortably resolved your doubts, though some time since, you may be encouraged by it; for you have not always the same opportunity or help, outward or inward, to discern aright the state of your soul; not always the same clearness of mind, or assistance of God's Spirit, to determine and resolve the great question. It is unreasonable, on every turn, to expect a new answer from God, as if He had given you none before.

*9. Ninthly, as to the apostle's expression, which is frequently objected in this case*

“He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). You ought to consider that the word we render “doubting” is “discerning,”<sup>1</sup> making a difference between clean, and unclean meats. It is not meant of eating at the Lord's Table, but of eating those meats which were forbidden by the law of Moses to the Jews, or such as had been offered to idols, and afterward sold in the market, meats to be eaten at an ordinary table, concerning which, one who believed the obligation of the law of Moses thought to be unclean. He was persuaded of the unlawfulness of eating, but he knows he may lawfully forbear. This is quite another matter than the case of an ordinary doubting conscience, where a man only doubts on one side of an action. It is there but reasonable to choose that side, where he has no doubt, rather than the other, where he

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1. Greek: *diakrinomenos*.

suspects he may transgress some law of God, though he be not certain. While the doubts last, until a man be better informed (supposing he be mistaken), he should forbear acting against his present opinion, and judgment. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," i.e., whatever a man does, without being persuaded of the lawfulness of it, though it be not a sin in itself, it is so to him, who does it against his conscience. But as to matter of plain duty, such as, doing this in remembrance of Christ, and showing forth His death, by coming to His table, it is otherwise. The doubt will not excuse him in the neglect of his duty. His doubt is double, whether he be not bound, by the command of Christ, to commune; and on the other side, he doubts whether, by some other law of God, he ought not, as yet, to forbear, as not thinking himself duly qualified. In such a case, what should a man do, but endeavor to sit, prepare, and qualify himself, as soon, and as well as he can, that he may not continue to offend God, by the neglect of obedience to an order of Christ. And can such a one say he is as certain he is not qualified to come as he is certain, in the general, that it is his duty to come?

As to the expression, "He that doubteth is damned if he eat," the meaning is, he is self-condemned, his conscience condemns him, for he knows it is lawful to forbear, and he believes it to be unlawful to eat. If he does eat, he acts against his own judgment, and so is self-condemned. As to matter of duty, an erring conscience, be sure, will not cancel the obligation of the law of God. If we doubt concerning that which God has made our duty, our doubt will not excuse us from sin, for God has bound us to know our duty and do it. Whatever our opinion and persuasion be, the obligation to obey the command of God remains. Our doubting whether it be our duty does not make it cease to be so.

However, some melancholy persons, under great conflict and temptations, may suspend and stay away for a while, for fear that they should run into despair, on the apprehension of having eaten and drank their own damnation. They ought not to cherish such doubts and fears, but endeavor to overcome them, and ask advice and counsel, and use all other fit means concerning it, that, being better acquainted with themselves, they may come with peace and comfort. If your hearts consent to be the Lord's, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, you ought to come, and declare that consent with your fellow Christians.

*10. Tenthly, consider that there is a scrupulous conscience which, though resolved and satisfied in the main concerning duty, when it comes to act, is perplexed and hindered by unaccountable fears*

Though there be no just, rational Scripture grounds of fear or doubt, yet a person of weak parts, little knowledge, and of a timorous disposition, is easily disquieted with general jealousies and fears, as to himself, and his state towards God. He fears (though he cannot tell particularly from the Holy Scriptures why) that he is not qualified, that he shall receive unworthily if he comes, and eat and drink judgment to himself. Ask why he thinks so, he has only some conjectural suspicions, some uncertain surmises of his own condition, arising from some mistaken notions of the qualifications and preparation necessary to a worthy communicant. These general, unscriptural doubts, jealousies, and fears, if countenanced and indulged, will increase, and, like circles in the water, continue and beget one another. But a good man would not deal with his neighbor after this manner, as with himself. He would not, he ought not, to judge hardly of a neighbor, by general rumors of accusation, or every idle objection and imaginary supposition that may be made to his prejudice, if, when particularly inquired

into, solid and positive proof is lacking. You must not judge hardly of yourselves, any more than favorably, but according to the Word of God, the rule of judgment.

*11. Lastly, if you have not assurance, yet if your hearts accuse you not of hypocrisy, and double dealing, [you may come]*

If you can say, "As far as I know my own heart and life, I think I do sincerely consent to the covenant of grace, and am really changed as to my principles and ends; I am genuinely willing, without reserve, to be the Lord's," you may come, to renew and seal your covenant. Can you say, "I believe the gospel to be true; I am willing to have Christ for my Savior and Lord, and absolutely to resign myself to Him; to be ruled by His laws, and saved by His righteousness; my imperfections I bewail, my corruptions I strive against, and endeavor to mortify; and, as far as I know myself, am willing to part with every known sin; I am not certain I am a true believer, but I would gladly be delivered, by Christ, from the dominion of sin, as well as the condemnation of it"? Now, where the case is thus, what should be a bar to your coming to the Lord's Table? Such a sense of sin, and striving against it, and desire to be rid of it, is your very fitness. And in this, as well as other cases, we may act according to the best of our judgment, notwithstanding some considerable doubts.

Christians, you may come with humility and reverence, paying homage to a crucified Savior, having found your sins, and being humbled and penitent, judging and condemning yourselves for them, though you have not so clearly discovered your graces as to be able to rejoice. You may come with broken and contrite hearts, as penitent sinners, if you cannot come with assurance that you are pardoned sinners. You may come, sensible of your need of Christ, if you cannot come with the clear knowledge of your interest in Him. Come with the

humility and contrition of returning penitents, though you cannot come with the joy of faith, as assured believers. Come with hunger and thirst after Christ and His righteousness, though you dare not yet say, "my beloved is mine, and I am His." Come humbly, and apply yourselves to Him as you can, if you cannot apply Him to yourselves as you would. Honor Him as your Lord, when you cannot appropriate Him to yourself as your Savior. Own His propriety in you, though you are not assured of your interest in Him. Come, and say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24). If you cannot triumphantly say, "He loved me, and died for me," you cannot, with certainty say, "He is mine," but you can say it, with sincerity, that you desire to be His. You resolve to be so, and accordingly give up yourselves to Him. "Lord, help me; Lord, save me; Lord, strengthen me; Lord, deliver me, for I am Thine," as the psalmist frequently speaks. You may use such language: "Lord, I am Thine, devoted, dedicated, resigned, willing to be Thine," though I cannot say, with present joy and comfort (what that truly infers), that He is mine. You can say, "Lord, if I am rejected, refused, cast off, and left to perish, there shall one perish, who did heartily and genuinely desire to be the Lord's," but you may be certain that such shall never perish, if they follow on to know the Lord, and seek Him.

Let me therefore bring this home to doubting, trembling Christians, who are afraid to tarry away from the Lord's Table, and yet, for lack of assurance, are doubtful whether they should come or not. You have examined yourselves and found out your sins, so as to be humbled for them. You are among such as hunger and thirst. You cannot deny it. And is not blessedness promised to such (Matt. 5:6)? You are in the number of such as are weary and heavy laden for sin; and is there not rest promised to the souls of such (Matt. 11:29)? The blessings of the covenant have been offered to you; you consent to the

terms on which they are proposed, and desire to trust in Christ, to do all this for you, which He has promised. Why should not you come, and seal this at the Lord's Table, and profess this to be the sense of your hearts? Is all this no evidence of faith? You may have true genuine faith, though you do not know certainly that it is true. If sin be a burden, and you are weary of it, and would gladly have it more subdued, and you long for more conformity to Christ, that the same spirit may be in you that was in Him; if you long to have the love of Christ rule and reign more in your souls; if it be thus, you may come in hope, and plead His Word, and pray for His grace, and devote and give up yourselves to be the Lord's. You may do this acceptably at His table, without a certain persuasion and assured knowledge that you are passed from death to life, and made an heir of heaven. Though you have some fears of hypocrisy, you dare not say, but you have some hopes that you are sincere; and a mixture of some fear with your hope should not discourage you. Doubts concerning the truth of your faith are very consistent with the reality of it; the shaking of a tree will not argue it is not a tree, or not alive.

Our Lord has told you He is willing to be your Savior. I tell you again that He is willing to be yours, in all His offices, as prophet, priest, and king. He has done and suffered enough (one would think) to testify His willingness, to declare His love, and express His kindness and good will. Can you think of His bloody death and sufferings, and question His willingness to receive, and pardon, and save sinners? Now, dare you deny that you are willing to be His? To forsake all competitors and rivals and accept Him for your only Savior? If you are heartily willing, you are accepted, you are united to Christ, and interested in Him, and will you not lift up your heads in hope? Will you still cherish unscriptural, unreasonable doubts, that have no foundation in the Word of God? Will you continue to doubt

of His love, though you cannot deny the evidence of it? Do you not love Him so, that you can part with all in this world to be assured of His love? And the lack of this knowledge and assurance is the daily burden of your hearts, and the matter of your continual complaint? If He should ask you as He did Peter this evening, or tomorrow morning, "Soul, lovest thou Me?" what answer could you make but this: "Lord, I cannot say, Thou lovest me (Oh, that I could!), but, as far as I know my own heart, I do love Thee, I desire to love Thee, I would gladly love Thee! I approve, esteem, and judge those to be the happiest souls that love Thee most, and live in Thy love. Oh, what would I not give, or do, or part with, if I might be one of them!"

### [Reflections]

The reflections I would make on what has been said will concern two sorts of persons of a very different character.

1. First, I would caution some not to abuse or mis-improve this discourse by emboldening themselves to come to the Lord's Table in their hypocrisy, and under the reigning power of sin. Let them not think that it is enough if they can but make themselves uncertain whether they are hypocrites or not. There are some who have no assurance of their salvation; and it is impossible they should; their state will not admit it. They are under the dominion of sin, and live in the impurities of the flesh, and under the prevailing power of an earthly mind, destitute of love to God, and strangers to faith in Christ, and yet will adventure to come frequently to the table of the Lord. It is a terrible passage, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself" (temporal judgments and calamity in many cases, spiritual in others, and, without repentance, eternal), which frightens some from

communing at all, which it should not; but does not deter others from coming unworthily, which it should.

There are diverse such, who through sloth and negligence, and inconsideration, for lack of inquiring into their true state, are ready to flatter themselves from some little things (as transient affections in the public duties of religion, etc.) that their state is good, but they do not allow themselves leisure to think what they are. And with many, the hurry of their earthly business will hardly permit them to retire for self-examination; and yet they will come, they will do as others; and, without further search, take it for granted that they may and ought to come to the table of the Lord. Sometimes they have checks of conscience, and if they think of dying, are afraid; and well they may; there is reason for it. Such professors should take heed of abusing what has been said to others who need it. They like to hear that many who have doubts and fears concerning their state may yet come to the Lord's Table; it is good news to them, for they have sometimes doubts, and no assurance (nor will their present state allow it), and yet they will adventure. Oh, beware how you misapply and mis-improve, to your own destruction, what has been said for the encouragement and support of sincere Christians under doubts, and misgivings, weakness, and temptations.

Let such consider the guilt they contract, and the unspeakable hazard they run, by professing to belong to Christ's family, and so partaking of His supper, as living members of His body, while they are secret enemies to Christ, in heart and life, and hate to be reformed. Such are guilty of His body and blood; they join with the murderers of Jesus, whose death they pretend to show forth. His very blood will cry for vengeance against their hypocrisy, and sink them under more dreadful and intolerable wrath. They of all others eat and drink their own damnation, who thus willfully profane the ordinance and

take the name of God in vain by pretending love to Christ (to serve some little secular turn, and be thought better than they are), while they live in secret allowed wickedness, in stated enmity and rebellion against Him.

I may say of the worthy or unworthy receiver as Solomon did of Adonijah, "If he will show himself a worthy man, there shall not an hair of him fall to the earth: but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall die" (1 Kings 1:52). If you come to the Lord's Table humbly and penitently, in obedience to Christ, in such a manner, and for such holy ends, as He has appointed, you shall meet with welcome, you shall be feasted with the fat things of His house, you shall partake of the treasures of His grace, and receive of His fullness. But, if you come without sorrow for sin, and without resolution against it; if you come impenitent, and unreformed, without desires, and purposes, and endeavors, to forsake sin, and subdue corruption, and be devoted to God, etc., you increase your guilt, you harden your hearts the more, you receive a curse instead of a blessing, and will be more under the power and in the possession of the devil. And you shall die for it, unless sovereign grace does timely prevent it, by your repentance and conversion. I cannot speak with too much terror to such. But:

2. Secondly, there be others, humble and sincere, weary and heavy laden, contrite and broken in heart, who have many doubts, and yet much love, who fear and tremble if they come, and yet fear to tarry away. There are many such who need this encouragement. They have the call of Christ, to remember His dying love; their duty is plain; they ought to make an adventure of faith, as Peter (when unlikely to take any fish) yet, at Christ's command, let down the net with astonishing success. Or, as the disciples said to the blind man, "Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee" (Mark 10:49). Let faith in the authority of

Christ bring you to remember His death this way. If you obey the precept, you do not know the success as to comfort.

Is there no encouragement in the invitation, "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17)? "Are not sensible, weary, thirsty sinners invited? Therefore, Lord, I will not exclude myself; I am one of them, surely there may be mercy for me, among the rest, however unworthy and vile I am." The invitation is not to such as are worthy, but thirsty. We come to Him that we may partake of His grace, and receive more of the spirit of holiness, according as we need it.

And here I would not forget the case of those who are in doubts, because they have had a religious education, and by the restraining grace of God, and the precepts instilled into them by their parents and ministers, they have lived unblameably in the world, as to their outward conversation. They are afraid all their religion is the fruit of education only, and not of special grace; and they are further doubtful concerning themselves, for lack of feeling those pangs of sorrow and bitter repentance which they hear, and read others have had, in their conversion to God, who have been reclaimed from a profligate life. They apprehend, on that account, that they may be still strangers to the great change, by regeneration and the new birth. On the one hand, I wish they would look to it, that it be not really the truth of their case that they have indeed proceeded no further than a good education may carry a man—which too many, I fear, do rest in. Yet others there are who have had a religious education and, by God's blessing on it, have had early experience of the distinguishing grace of God. They cannot say precisely when they were born again, but can discover the effects of it in heart and life. These should not be discouraged on that account, nor for lack of those terrors which the repentance and conversion of some

is accompanied with. Early converts who seek the Lord and serve Him from their youth commonly escape such terrors; we find not that it is true of all.

If the spirit of Christ has wrought such a change in your judgment, choice, affections, conscience, and life, as will make up the character of those that are sanctified, you should not be uneasy and perplexed for lack of knowing when this change was first made; you may know a man is alive, though you know not when or where he was born. And what if you cannot say those things concerning the time, manner, antecedents, and concomitants of your conversion from sin to God that others, it may be, can say, who had great and presumptuous sins, scandalous and notorious abominations to repent of, which God never suffered you to fall into! Such are not sufficiently sensible of the blessing of a good education, and what a mercy it is to be saved from such terrors. It may be, some of the best Christians in all this nation are of this sort, who may sometimes fear they have gone no further than education (without the saving grace of God) may lead them. But if you can prove your sanctification by the real, genuine fruits of it, and that there is such a change of heart and life wrought, it matters not that you know not the exact time. You are certain, corrupt nature could never incline you to love God, and be devoted to Him; to hate sin and watch against it; and to take heaven for your portion, and Christ for your Savior; this change must be from the divine Spirit, however early, gradual, and insensible it seems to have been effected. If you find the image of God upon your souls, and the real fruits of the Spirit in heart and life (though you never were acquainted with the throws, and pangs, and terrors, that introduce or accompany the conversion of others), you have reason to be thankful, and not be discouraged on that account.

Your great business now should be to walk circumspectly, and to live more a life of faith and love; and as your faith in Christ, and love to God, and care to please Him does increase, comfort, and peace, and joy will ordinarily follow. "The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17), not by assurance. Without faith it is impossible to please God, not without assurance. You ought to observe God's influence by His Holy Spirit upon your souls, and be much in prayer, and in acts of dependence and resignation, and labor to know yourselves better, to record what God does for you, and how you act towards Him, and what progress you make in practical godliness, and inward religion, by comparing yourselves with yourselves, at different times.

Be thankful that you have good hope, through grace, and resolve to follow on to know the Lord, and to know yourselves better. Though it be our duty to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, and to use means in expectation of success, it is not at all strange that but few do attain to certainty and full assurance. There must be more than a little grace to make it clear and discernible, and it is grace in exercise that is best discerned. There must be a good understanding of spiritual things, and of the tenor of the covenant of grace; some good acquaintance with our own hearts, and with the wiles of the devil; and some cure of that confusion and disorder of thought which most complain of. There must be diligence, resolution, and patience, in the trial of ourselves, with earnest prayer to heaven. There must be upright walking, a pure conscience, and great fear of sin, etc. Such things as these being necessary, in an ordinary way, is it any wonder that few, very few, attain it? When grace is so weak, where it is true, and knowledge of ourselves so little, and most are so backward to self-examination, or so little skilled in it, and so little acquainted with Satan's temptations, and their minds so confused, and their thoughts so ungoverned, and their consciences have so

little tenderness, and are so often wounded by willful sin, no wonder if the generality of Christians have not assurance, even of such as are sincere, and accepted of God.

There are many things to be known and understood, concerning the nature and application of the promises of the gospel, which every real Christian has not attained. And besides the discerning of their own state and condition to be such, as that they may apply the promises to themselves, there must be the influence of the Holy Spirit, or there will be no comfort. You must therefore continually beg the light and influence of the Holy Spirit, which is promised to believers, that they may know the things freely given them of God. The Holy Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit, that we are the children of God. "Lord! I have endeavored to search my heart, and examine my ways, according to Thy command. I have some good hope, but am not certain. Oh, enlighten me to discern, and understand the truth of my case. Let me know, by experience, the meaning of that Scripture, 'After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession'" (Eph. 1:13-14). This earnest, this seal (for distinction, and for certainty) God gives to believers. It is by the Holy Spirit we know the things freely given us of God. By His witness with our spirits, we have confidence towards God. We discern His work upon our own souls, and are enabled to judge concerning the great change He has made, and with comfort to conclude, we are passed from death to life. The testimony of the divine Spirit, added to that of the conscience, enables us to cry, "Abba Father," and fills us with peace and joy in believing. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 John 5:10). He has that in him to which the promises are made; he has the seal of sanctification, by which he is distinguished from unbelievers; but the

Holy Spirit must discover and witness this, or we shall not feel anything of joy. It is, in part, because we do not understand, or value, or pray for this influence of the Holy Spirit as we ought, that so few have assurance.

**[Questions]**

And now, for the close of this discourse, let me ask you a few serious questions, which in many books you may find more largely insisted on.

First, how stand you affected to sin, deliberate sin, against God? Do you not dread and fear it more than formerly? Are you not more ashamed of it, of the baseness, iniquity, and dissingenuity of it, as against the holiness, against the grace and love of God? Would it not be a harder matter to draw you to a deliberate sin against God than heretofore? Or to persuade you to omit a known duty, such as closet prayer?

Secondly, what is your judgment and opinion concerning God, and Christ, and holiness, concerning the Holy Scriptures, and the gospel way of salvation by faith in Christ? Is it not more your desire, and choice, to have your portion, in both worlds, with those that believe on Christ, and follow Him as their only Savior? Being resolved, let atheists and infidels talk as they please, and venture as they will? Are you not endeavoring with some success to be more established in the great foundation truths of Christianity?

Thirdly, do you not find some growth, progress, and improvement in holiness, by being more confirmed and established in the truth of the principles of Christian religion? And do you not desire and endeavor, more to know and do the will of God? To please, and serve, and obey Him better? Is it not your

comfort and pleasure to honor God, and be kept from sin, to worship and adore Him, and have communion with Him? To be found in the way of your duty, and to keep an undefiled conscience? And is it not your grief, on the contrary, when, by temptation, you neglect your duty to God and fall into sin?

Fourthly, as to the church of Christ, and the interest and honor of God in the world, are you not rejoiced when you hear that real godliness is anywhere promoted? That the oppressed, or defiled churches of Christ are delivered and reformed? That truth and holiness, pure worship, and holy conversation does prevail and spread, and get ground, in any part of the world, or of the nation? That open wickedness is suppressed, and the mouth of iniquity stopped, etc.? And, on the contrary, do you not mourn for other men's sins, as well as your own, and for God's dishonor, by national provocations, and public crimes? And are ready to give what assistance you can to promote reformation?

Fifthly, how are you affected toward such as are truly serious and religious, though of different sentiments in several things from you? Do you love the holy image of God wherever you can discern it? Can you heartily embrace all that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity? But for such as defy God, and dishonor Christ and the gospel, and live in open rebellion against Him, do you not, from your very hearts, dislike such? You would not live or die with them. You have made another choice, as to your portion, way, and end.

Sixthly, can you bear to have your consciences searched? Are you content to have your closest lusts discovered, your most beloved sins struck at, by the ministry of the Word? So that there is no iniquity but you would know, and hate, and part

with? And are most of all desirous to mortify and overcome the sin which you did once most love, and that did, or does most easily beset you; but it is your daily burden that your victory is so imperfect, and your daily care is to watch against it?

Lastly, is it not the desire, purpose, and resolutions of your souls, though you have not assurance (and supposing you never had it, and never should), that yet, by the help of God, you will be true to your baptismal covenant, to be faithful followers of Christ, as long as you live; to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world, seeking glory, and honor, and immortality by Jesus Christ, in hopes of eternal life; depending on no other Savior; looking for acceptance with God no other way, but only by the merit, blood, sacrifice, and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ? This you genuinely resolve and purpose, and accordingly (notwithstanding your doubts and fears) you have held on for some time in such a course; and, by the grace of God, do intend still to hold on, whether you have assurance or not.

To such of you, my brethren, who can truly say this is your case, that all, or anything considerable of this, is a true and real part of your character, I may say, that peace and comfort belongs to you. The breathings of faith argue the reality of it, as much as the loudest voice. To be able to creep is as true an evidence of life as to be able to run. You may lift up your head with hope, and avouch the Lord to be your God. You may come to the Lord's Table with cheerfulness and thanksgiving. I do, in the name of my great Master, invite you. I doubt not, but He will bid you welcome.

Oh, let us all join in begging His gracious presence! That He would meet us here, and in every part of the city and country where this holy feast, on the sacrifice of Christ, shall be celebrated tomorrow!

Oh, that He would display the banner of His love towards us, and seal His covenant promises with all the sweetness and joy of His salvation unto our souls! Oh, that He would speak by His Holy Spirit to our spirits with such a powerful voice as shall make us hear, and feel it, that it is His own, saying, "Son, or daughter, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you. I am your God. I have loved you with an everlasting love. I have accepted you for Mine. I have blotted out all your numerous, heinous transgressions, and will remember them no more. I entered into covenant with you, and you became Mine. And I am not ashamed to be called your God. I will never, never, never, leave you nor forsake you, but guide you by My counsel, and afterwards receive you to glory." Amen.

## CHAPTER 10

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### *Two Sacramental Questions on Our Duty to Take Communion*

*But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

—1 CORINTHIANS 11:28

There are two sacramental questions I would now consider, that is to say:

**Question 1:** Whether all baptized Christians are bound to partake of the Lord's Supper? Or whether it be the duty of all Christians who are entered into the Christian Church by baptism to be partakers of this other sacrament also.

**Question 2:** What should be the reason why so many good people, as we hope they are, do yet live in the neglect of this ordinance of the supper?

#### **Answers [to Question 1]**

1. As to the first question, "whether all," etc., several things may be replied, as first, that baptism as an initiatory institution and rite is to precede the Lord's Supper, according to what we read, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body," and it follows, "and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13), first baptized and then made to drink, not

admitted to eat of this bread and drink of this cup until after baptism, which order the church of Christ has held from the beginning. The one sacrament is for our implantation into the body of Christ, and the other for our spiritual nourishment and growth.<sup>1</sup> As none uncircumcised were admitted to the Passover, according to the Old Testament dispensation, so none without baptism are to be admitted to the Lord's Table under the New.

2. Secondly, Christian baptism alone is not sufficient, unless the baptismal covenant be understood and owned, unless there be the answer of a good conscience, upon self-examination. For it is possible that after baptism men may turn atheists, Sadducees, and infidels, and live in known and notorious wickedness. The sacraments are symbols of the church, as it is differenced from the world. And Christ will have them to be a distinct society.

As to the baptism of infants question, whether that does immediately give them a right to the Lord's Supper, as several of the ancients thought, and did very early give the sacrament of bread and wine to baptized infants? I cannot see how such a custom can be justified, for they cannot examine themselves, therefore must be excluded by the apostle's rule, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat." Otherwise not: many in the primitive church believed it necessary to the salvation of infants,<sup>2</sup> that without both the sacraments, no man could partake of the kingdom of heaven. Saint Augustine himself was of this opinion. And for above six hundred years, down to the time of Charles the Great, the church of God did give the holy communion to newly baptized infants.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Footnote in original: Justin Martyr.

2. Footnote in original: Bp. Taylor's *Worthy Communicant*, Chap. 3. Sect. 2.

3. Footnote in original: Capit. Catoli. Mag 1. 1. cap. 161.

He that comes to the Lord's Table should examine whether he has been true to his baptism, whether he heartily consents to the covenant sealed in that sacrament, whether he be in the faith, and whether he has true and genuine repentance towards God for all his past sins. This ought to be done before we come to the Lord's Table. We are called to repentance and faith by the preaching of the Word. They that refuse to obey that call are not to come to the Lord's Table while they continue impenitent unbelievers. Without faith and repentance, they are not guests qualified for that table. How can they have right to the seals of the covenant, who have not heartily consented to the terms, who are not willing to come under the bond of it? And what communion can they have with Christ in this ordinance, when there's no union to Him by faith? What exercise of grace, by such as are dead in their trespasses and sins? How can pardon of sin be sealed to those who are impenitent? They are not capable of performing the duties of the Lord's Supper, before, at, and after, nor of receiving the mercies of it. It is true, a good man for lack of examination and the proper exercises of grace, by unsuitableness of frame, by sloth and negligence, or indulged sensuality and worldliness, in some late instances, may receive unworthily, for lack of actual readiness and fitness at that time. But there is a vast difference between the unfitness and unworthiness of a believer, as to present frame, and an unworthiness as to state, which is the case of all the ungodly who are yet in their sins, alienated from the life of God. They can neither remember Christ aright, nor discern Him, nor receive Him, nor feed on Him. They cannot attain the ends of the sacrament for increase of grace and comfort. They cannot seal a covenant into which they never entered. Nor [can they] have the assurance of eternal life, being none of those to whom it is promised.

There needs [be] not only a competency of knowledge, as to the principles of Christian religion (which very many among Protestants do lack), and some competent knowledge concerning the nature of that ordinance in particular, without which they cannot discern the Lord's body, and know their work. (Though ministers should be very tender how they exclude people on point of mere ignorance, if they can give a tolerable account of the essentials of religion, or when you ask them by way of question, can answer so as to show that they understand it.) But besides knowledge, there must be a suitableness, a savor, and a relish of those great things by faith and love, that we may behold a crucified Savior, humbly adore Him, thankfully receive Him, affectionately praise and admire Him, and firmly trust Him, surrendering ourselves to be entirely His. There must be likewise an answerable conversation becoming the disciples and followers of Christ. So one of the most ancient writers after the apostles' time expresses it.<sup>4</sup> It is lawful for no others to partake of the Lord's Supper but such as particularly believe the doctrines taught in the gospel, and are baptized for the remission of sins, and so live as Christ has required and commanded.

3. Thirdly, all the visible members of the Christian church capable of self-examination are bound to prepare themselves for the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper, that they may obey the order of Christ, to do this in remembrance of Him, and show forth His death this way. They are bound first to receive Christ as their teacher, Savior, and Lord, and heartily to repent of all their sins, and then to profess this faith and repentance at the Lord's Table. They are bound to make a true and sincere profession of faith and repentance before

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4. Footnote in original: Just. Mart.

they come, otherwise they take what does not belong to them. They are bound first to be habitually fit and worthy, and then actually prepare, and so to receive, as every Jew was bound to be circumcised and purified, and so to eat of the Passover. If not circumcised and purified, they were not at that time to eat. Sinful unpreparedness, either habitual, or actual, will not excuse from the obligation to the duty, because we ought to endeavor to be both habitually and actually prepared.

However, there is a difference to be made between real, inward worthiness, and visible, outward, apparent worthiness. A minister of Christ and a society of Christians may admit such to come with them to the Lord's Table who profess themselves to be sincere Christians when yet God knows their hypocrisy; and they should not yet have come, being as yet destitute of the grace necessary to the ordinance. And it may be, they know that they live secretly in such sins as are inconsistent with a state of salvation, and that they can have no right, before God, to this ordinance. There may be some such who may yet make such a profession of faith in Christ, and universal subjection to Him, who may thereupon be admitted to this feast by the servants, when yet they may be rejected by the master, for lack of a wedding garment. He that professes faith and repentance, and desires to commune, and does not contradict such profession by gross ignorance, or a disorderly life, he may be admitted, though he may be a hypocrite, and know that against himself, which for the present should have stopped him, until he had repented. Doubtless heaven's gates will be shut against many who will be disowned by Christ at the last day, and yet may pretend and plead that they have eaten and drank in His presence (Luke 13:26). But if they are dead in their sins, unreconciled to God, destitute of any spiritual life, they can no more receive Christ in the sacrament than a chicken that should come into the assembly, and pick up

some of the crumbs of the bread on the ground, can be said to receive the body of Christ. Rather, the case is much worse, for they are guilty of His body and blood. They profane the ordinance, eat and drink judgment to themselves, and provoke God to punish them in this world and the next.

4. Fourthly, all they that partake of this and other ordinances ought to remember, they are to be used with faith and obedience. There is in every divine institution a command and a promise. We must give obedience to the command, in belief and hope of the blessing promised. We have the commandment for our rule, and the promise of the covenant for our reward. We must come in obedience to the command, and order of Christ. We must look to the promise of His presence and blessing as knowing and believing that He is able to make good all that He has promised, as desiring and waiting for the accomplishment of His promised mercy, and not be discouraged, though we find not the benefit and blessing presently, which we believe is promised, and others partake of. But that will be spoken to more largely under another question.

5. Fifthly, the resemblance between this feast of love, this feast, upon the sacrifice of Christ, and the Jewish Passover, will help us to understand our obligation as to this ordinance—that we are not to neglect it, and at the same time, that we are carefully to prepare for it. It is expressly said, “But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the Passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people” (Num. 9:13).

The Passover is called the “corban of the Lord,” because it was to be killed, and the blood sprinkled, which shows it to be a proper sacrifice, and then eaten, by God’s commandment,

in thankful remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt, which shows it to be a eucharistical sacrifice.<sup>5</sup> For though the first sacrifice in Egypt was to procure deliverance to them, from the destruction that fell on the Egyptians by the destroying angel, yet ever after, it was a thanksgiving for the deliverance then wrought, and of God's special favor to them, of which there was a short commemoration (Ex. 12:25–26).

The like threatening is against him that did not keep the Passover in a right manner. He was liable to the like penalty (Ex. 12:15). The danger was great both ways, if he did not keep the Passover at all, and if he did not observe it in a right manner. The same punishment is threatened for the neglect of circumcision, and the Hebrew doctors differ in their opinion about the meaning of it, what it is to be “cut off from his people.” In some cases it is plainly meant of being put to death by the magistrate, and is so explained (Ex. 31:14). Or if that be neglected by the magistrate, and the crime be concealed, and the guilt known only to God, then to be cut off by His immediate hand, shortening the life of such a person. It cannot be understood of excommunication, as some would explain it, because such a person was never a member of the Jewish church; he was to be made so by circumcision. Whether this *chereth*, or cutting off, belongs to the magistrates [in their] execution of justice, or to some punishment inflicted by the immediate hand of God Himself, must be determined by the matter to which it is joined.

The neglect of the Passover was a neglect and contempt of God Himself, and a tacit renunciation of that religion, and of the covenant of God with them, and of their interest both in that past deliverance out of Egypt, and in a future, much greater deliverance, promised by the Messiah.

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5. Footnote in original: Bp. Patrick, Gen. 17:14.

The punishment was very severe, and God would look to the execution of it Himself. The like punishment is threatened (Deut. 18:19) against those who will not obey the Messiah. God will require it of him. Or, as the apostle Peter renders it, he "shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:23), the same expression which the Septuagint uses for cutting off (Num. 15:30). Every soul that will not hear that great prophet, who will not believe and obey the promised Messiah, and own the commands of this great prophet, one of which is to show forth His death at His table, and to do this in remembrance of Him, shall be cut off.

There is danger on either side, not to eat the Passover at all, or not in a due manner; the like penalty is threatened for both. There is danger in receiving unworthily, and I wish it were remembered that there is danger also in not receiving at all. Many are apprehensive in the one case, who make very light of it in the other. But if there were no such danger as to ourselves, I think our regard to our blessed Savior should be enough, our regard to His authority, and to His love, His dying love, this being just before His passion. And how did He long for that bloody baptism! How was He straitened until it was accomplished! Indeed He even thought the time tedious, until He was betrayed and condemned and scourged, and tortured for us! With what earnest desire did He long to eat that last Passover before He suffered! If it had been but the request of such a dying friend, the night before He suffered, how could we forget it, or slight it? But it is an order, and a command, to do this in remembrance of Him, repeated three or four times, by three evangelists, and afterwards by the apostle, Saint Paul, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you" (1 Cor. 11:23). So that Christ has not left us at liberty to do it if we will, but has commanded us to do this in remembrance of Him. "Ye are my friends," says He, "if

ye do whatsoever I command you” (John 15:14). And how are we His friends, without expressing our love and obedience in such instances? “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord,” may He say to many professors, “and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). “Never pretend that you are My friends, if you disobey Me in so plain a command, if you will not publicly honor Me by showing forth My death in that ordinance.” If then we have any sense of shame, one would think we would not forget it, and if we had any sense of duty, that we dare not, any sense of love that we will not neglect, but as we have opportunity, do this in remembrance of Christ.

6. Lastly, let me add, or rather explain, what was intimated before, concerning ministers admitting persons to the Lord’s Supper, that if such as are baptized will own that profession of Christianity they were baptized into, and are not guilty of plain ignorance, or a disorderly, scandalous life, to contradict their profession, if such desire to be admitted, by what power can we refuse them? What can we desire, or demand more than a serious, visible, credible profession of Christianity? Numberless inconveniences will follow, if positive evidences of grace must be required of everyone that is to be admitted to the ordinances of the gospel as the only thing that can give him a right. For what certain ground can a minister have that the person he admits has such a right, unless he has an infallible knowledge of another man’s spiritual state. A visible, credible, profession of Christianity is sufficient to give him a right, as to what concerns the minister or pastor, and that church and society of Christians with whom he desires to join. For how can we see further, or require more, than a professed consent to own the doctrine of the gospel, and a willingness of subjection to Christ, according to all the rules and commands of it? What is there more in Scripture that can be urged? Only let

the persons who come to the Lord's Table look to it that they be sincere in this.

### **Question 2**

What should be the reason so many good people, as we hope they are, do yet live in the neglect of the Lord's Supper, put it off a great many years, and are hardly persuaded to dispose themselves for it? The example of such has a very ill influence on a great many others. Young people are encouraged to hope that they may be in the favor of God, and shall run no hazard or danger of their salvation, if they never concern themselves about preparing for the Lord's Supper, because they see others who are reckoned very good Christians by all that know them, who yet never come to the table of the Lord.

### **Answer[s]**

1. First, it ought to be considered that they who make these examples an encouragement, or excuse, for neglecting this ordinance, would not think it sufficient in any other case. They would not think it a proper or justifiable method to come to the knowledge of their duty by regarding the practice of other men, rather than the order of their Sovereign, as to such things wherein He has made known His will. For if others neglect their duty, it is not a sufficient warrant for you to neglect yours.

And have not the generality of serious Christians in all ages made conscience of this as a principal part of divine worship? If we indeed believe in Christ, if we are sensible of His kindness in giving Himself for us, and if we are affected with His love in laying down His precious life for us, we ought to come and openly profess this with our fellow Christians. We ought publicly to declare this by remembering Him and His death

in this way which He has appointed. If we truly repent of our sins, if we genuinely renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, and if we desire and resolve to forsake every known way of wickedness, we should come to renew and exercise repentance at the table of the Lord, and there to behold a crucified Savior, whom we have crucified. It will greatly assist us in the exercise of faith and repentance. In the meantime, if others neglect this, let us pity and pray for them, but not imitate them, when we have an order of Christ for doing this.

2. Secondly, may not one reason for the neglect of this ordinance arise from a slight opinion (which too many have) of sins of omission? They would be startled at great commissions, contrary to negative precepts, but make less difficulty of violating affirmative ones, as if they were only proposals and overtures, which we might observe if we please, or let alone, as if they were not injunctions and orders, that at our peril we must obey. But the guilt and danger of sins of omission is so plainly expressed in Matthew 25, and other places, that I think none should dare to make light of it.

What is there [that] can give us a dispensation from obeying such an express command as, "This do in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:24)? What can we say for ourselves as to this omission, though others be guilty of it? The practice of the apostle and the first disciples is plain, and the presence of Christ is promised to continue in this work to the end of the world. And the death of Christ, which is there remembered, is as great a mercy to us as to the first Christians. There is not the plainest duty in the whole New Testament but we may as well elude as this. Indeed baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two distinguishing institutions of Christian religion, which they who would own Christianity, and go beyond Deism and natural religion, ought to make conscience of. In some

ages of the Christian church, when this ordinance was more frequently administered, he could hardly be reckoned a true Christian who turned his back upon it, and was no communicant. And how can any be serious and conscientious in praying, and hearing, and sanctifying the Lord's Day, who neglect this part of their duty? For if they intend to get spiritual strength, and to mortify sin, and subdue corruption, to grow better, and be made more fit for heaven, by other helps than this duty, this ordinance, which Christ has appointed, as a help and means to these ends, should be minded too.

3. Thirdly, but with many it may be supposed that this neglect proceeds from an extraordinary reverence for this ordinance, arising from some mistaken apprehensions concerning the nature of it. They think they dare not make so bold. It is not for them to adventure upon it. They dare not presume so far. But is it presumption to obey the command of Christ? If you dare not venture because you are not yet fit, when do you intend to be so? You are afraid of presumption if you come, but if you refuse to come, do you not slight the invitation, condemn the ordinance, affront the kindness and condescension of your Savior, and refuse subjection to His authority? If you do not understand your baptismal covenant, or are not true to it, and willing to renew it, the longer you neglect it, the more unfit you will still be. You ought to desire it. You ought to endeavor to prepare for it, and to advise with those who are fit to be consulted about it, to direct you in what manner you ought to come, and not set this ordinance at too great a distance from other parts of Christian worship, when you are commanded to show forth the Lord's death this way. It does not look like respect, awe, and reverence so much as disobedience and contempt to keep off from year to year.

4. Fourthly, to many the preparation for it, and the consequent obligation to walk strictly, as becomes serious Christians afterwards, lies at the bottom of their fears to partake. That many neglect to observe this precept of Christ, that they may take the more liberty to transgress some other precepts. Doubtless, he that makes conscience of preparing himself to come in a due manner from time to time to the Lord's Table must needs be more afraid to commit sin which he has lately repented of and engaged against, and which he knows he must repent of shortly, if he does commit it, than such as lack this help. They lack those assistances of the Spirit of Christ to mortify sin and resist temptation, which we may hope for by obeying our Savior in this ordinance.

5. Fifthly, diverse people are scared by the terrible words of "eateth and drinketh damnation to himself" (1 Cor. 11:29), if they receive unworthily. Instead of admiring the love and grace and mercy which in this feast of love we are called to consider, they spend their thoughts upon the danger of wrath and judgment, vengeance and damnation, and so overwhelm their minds with terror, when they should be ravished with the contemplation of divine love and the unsearchable riches of the grace of Christ. That passage of the apostle, it is certain, is an awful and terrible truth, and ought to be considered more than it is by careless, lukewarm professors, and such who contradict their profession by secret wickedness. Yet the sin and danger of unworthy receiving is no argument for the neglect of the ordinance, but for the greater seriousness in the performance. We must not neglect praying, or hearing, or the Lord's Supper, because of the sin and danger of trifling with God in such duties. Eating and drinking unworthily is not to be understood of the lack of assurance when we come, or of coming with many imperfections, for this is a means to increase grace.

Nor does all deadness and darkness in duty make a man an unworthy receiver. If we do not regard iniquity in our hearts, but are set to please God, it is a lesser offense to keep on and continue in the performance of our duty (though with some dullness and indisposition), than wholly to neglect it. Sometimes the services we perform of this kind may be acceptable to God, when they are not pleasing to ourselves, and even when we lament that it was not as we would wish, but are humble under the sense of it. We may be more accepted of God than when the sails are filled with lively affections, because the principle from which that proceeds is spiritual. The sense of our duty, and an awe of Christ's authority, makes us pay Him this homage, when we have not that quickening and comfort that others may meet with. Some of the most devout, heavenly, and serious Christians, who adorn their profession by a most strict and exemplary life, and have lived and died with the deserved character of eminent and excellent saints, have freely owned that for many months, and for some years, they had not such quickening and vigor, affection and joy, at the Lord's Table as some younger and more affectionate Christians. Their bodily temper, their age, and experience, and great improvement in knowledge, make them need such helps less, and they have been able to act in faith and love, in a more spiritual and judicious manner, without the assistance of such sensible affections, as many I fear lay too great a stress upon.

Take heed therefore of the two extremes in your preparatory work. You must not come without preparation, with a common careless frame of spirit, as to common work, for fear that by forgetting to sanctify God in your hearts, you eat and drink judgment to yourselves, not discerning the Lord's body. And yet on the other hand, take heed that you do not disorder and discompose your spirits by such unbecoming fears of the sin and danger of unworthy receiving, as may unfit you for

the exercise of faith, and love, and thanksgiving. See that you mistake not that for unworthy receiving that is merely from your unwilling infirmity. You may not (as several do) condemn yourselves as unworthy and believe that you cannot receive in faith, if you lack full assurance.

6. Sixthly, it is observed of many that do come, as well as of several who do not (and for that very reason), that they place too much religion in poring over their sins, and mourning for their corruptions, and desiring to mourn more. They do not study the love of God in Christ so much as they ought, nor spend so much of their time and thoughts in praising God as they should, nor consider how much the very nature of practical godliness consists in our delighting in God, in blessing and praising Him with joyful thanksgiving, for His manifold mercies. The work of praise and thanks for divine mercy does not take up so much room in their daily devotions as it should. This especially concerns such as are inclined to melancholy by bodily constitution, or by pain and sickness, or by outward afflictions and disappointments in the world, who suffer themselves to give way to a melancholy, timorous temper, to their unspeakable loss, both as to grace and comfort.

7. Seventhly, many receive nowhere, because of the divisions and differences among Protestants. They know not where to join, because of the lack of charity and love, and mutual forbearance among those that differ somewhat about the manner of administration. If they join with a congregation or church of such a denomination, they shall be blamed by some of their acquaintance and relations, and if they commune with another, they shall be censured by as many of a different opinion. Whereas the difference as to the manner of administration is not so great, but you may and ought to choose what

you think most agreeable to the Word of God, and yet maintain a very favorable and charitable opinion of other Christians who differ somewhat from you, as to the manner of administration. And why should you not sometimes commune with them also? One would think it hard that you should find none with whom you can be satisfied to join, and live in the total neglect of the ordinance. Have you discoursed your misgivings and objections (after serious prayer to God) with any that may be thought able to answer them? If you have not, you are the more to blame, to sit down in despondency, and pretend to be still waiting for more light about such a question as this. And if you do not diligently endeavor to have your doubts resolved, it seems little better than to pretend to tenderness of offending, while you continue willing to offend. Therefore consider it seriously, that our Lord has appointed such means of grace to strengthen our faith, and love, and hope, and joy, and to make us progressive in the spiritual life, as by virtue of His own institution we may expect a blessing upon. And if He appoints such helps, He knows we need them. And His institution makes it fit and needful for us to observe them. Let us not despise what He has mercifully appointed, and be sure He is too wise and kind to appoint them in vain. So that we cannot be without them but to our own loss and detriment.

8. Lastly, there is one plea more, which some good people make, for keeping off from the Lord's Table, which I wish every communicant would endeavor to remove, to wit, that they do not see that such as come are better than others that keep off. They do not perceive that such as commune often are more humble, heavenly, charitable, less covetous, less censorious, less proud and conceited than others, or more public spirited. They see not that they are either better men, or better Christians than others.

**Answer**

I hope it is not altogether true, nor true as to the generality. Doubtless there are several that have come to the Lord's Table who were under such hopefulfulness in their youth as to matters of religion that neither their relations nor the ministers who knew them but must think the Spirit of God has begun a good work on their souls. But afterwards, by evil company, by the lusts of the flesh, and the snares of the world, they have lost that seriousness they once had, and are sunk into a carnal, earthly frame. They may possibly be kept from great and scandalous transgressions, yet keep up but a form of godliness, while they are vain and earthly, proud and uncharitable, and do not seriously mind religion in their families or closets, or keep up the power of it, in the temper of their own spirits. Such communicants as these, who have a name to live and are dead, are an offense and stumbling block to many who observe them. They are a shame to their profession, and are exposed to the spiritual judgments of God. And if He have any kindness for their souls, He will awaken them by His Word and Spirit, and it may be, make use of sharp afflictions or terrors of conscience to bring them home, if the root of the matter be in them. Otherwise they will still be more hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and are like to perish with higher aggravations of guilt and vengeance than any whatsoever.

Woe to the world because of such offenses. But woe to such by whom they come. They come to the Lord's Table under the profession and character of serious Christians, and yet live no better than such who should be debarred from coming. They claim the privileges of believers who are in Christ, and yet show nothing of the temper and practice of such as partake of His Spirit.

They come among the faithful, when they should not. And because they do so, others who should come tarry away.

I wish they would consider the mischief they do to others, as well as their own souls, and how much they hinder the honor of God, and the edification of their brethren, and the credit and beauty of the Christian church, by such ill examples. And what a dreadful account they will have to give another day. But yet remember, by what we see of others not walking regularly and becoming the gospel, we should not so take offense as to neglect our own duty and privilege. We should endeavor in our places to admonish and reform such, or to have them debarred from that privilege they walk so unworthy of. And having done our duty, we should then consider that “every man shall bear his own burden” (Gal. 6:5). I may be accepted and edified, strengthened, and comforted, and attain all the ends of that ordinance, for my own soul, though another plays the hypocrite, and dishonors Christ, and eats and drinks judgment to himself.

## CHAPTER 11

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### *Four Sacramental Questions on Those Unworthy to Take Communion*

*For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

—1 CORINTHIANS 11:29

There are other sacramental questions to be considered, as:

1. First, whether the Lord's Supper be a converting ordinance
2. Concerning the admission of unworthy persons
3. What it is to commune unworthily
4. What is the danger of eating and drinking unworthily at the Lord's Table

To these I shall now speak, and close with some counsels and directions.

#### **Question 1**

Whether the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, instituted by Christ, be the means for the conversion of souls, as well as the preaching of the Word, and consequently whether all manner of persons should not be admitted, as doubtless they ought to be, if it be appointed by Christ as a converting ordinance.

**Answer**

To which I answer in these following particulars:

1. First, I grant there is so much of the Word of God recited and made use of in the administration of that ordinance, that it may prove a means of the conversion of a hypocrite. This is possible, and more than possible, with reference to the spectators who come, or to some hypocrites who commune. There is somewhat<sup>1</sup> proper and likely to awaken conscience, and persuade to repentance, in the solemnity of the ordinance itself, and in the things there mentioned, and called to remembrance concerning the death of Christ and His sufferings for our sins, the love of God in giving His Son to die for us, and many other things spoken by the minister in prayer, or instruction before and after. And the Spirit of God may make use of some of those things for conversion. Consideration of the love of Christ there represented may make the first saving impression upon the soul of a communicant or spectator, but the preaching of the Word is the usual means—"Faith cometh by hearing" (Rom. 10:17).

2. Secondly, I grant likewise that many have been awakened to serious impressions, and it may be to a thorough change, by the fears of unworthily receiving, by the dread of that judgment and damnation threatened to unworthy receiving. They have been so much awakened in their preparations for that ordinance, from fear of eating and drinking damnation to themselves, that it may have proved a means of their conversion.

3. Thirdly, however that may have sometimes been the event, it will not follow that it was the design of Christ in the institution,

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1. Somewhat: something.

for then it would be the duty of ministers to give infidels the Lord's Supper, and to give it to the most notoriously profane, as a means for their conversion, even to such as make no profession of saving faith and repentance. The preaching of the Word is appointed to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, and therefore all should hear. And if this ordinance were instituted for that purpose, all should commune. We may look for such an effect from the preaching of the Word, because of God's institution of it to that end. But this cannot be said as to the Lord's Supper. It is not as the Word preached, the seed of the new birth, but the food of the new born. We must be born before we eat, and feed before we can be nourished. It is appointed for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. Though it may prove a means of conversion, it does not appear [that] it was instituted for that purpose. A minister may be converted at his ordination, yet the laying on of hands is not instituted for the conversion of ministers.

4. There have been many other things besides the sacrament [that] have been the means of conversion to some—the holy lives, and patient sufferings, and courageous deaths of good men, fervent prayer of near relations, God's terrible judgments on some notorious sinners, and many other things. I have read of one who gave a young prodigal a ring with a death's head on it, upon this condition: he should spend one hour every day looking on that ring, thinking on it, which produced a mighty change in his life. And yet who will say these are converting ordinances and so intended by God? Our own sickness, or the sickness of a friend, by the grace of God, may help to convert a man. Indeed, falling by temptation into heinous sin has affrighted some to leave their sins. But these are not means to be chosen or used to such an end. No nor

is the Lord's Supper to be used by infidels, and impenitent, ungodly people as a means to convert them. They are not allowed to claim it, nor are ministers commanded to give it them. Nor can it be given them without impiety. Much less should force be used to constrain them to take it (though it may accidentally prove the means of their conversion, as a thief may steal a Bible or sermon book and be reformed by it). But this is not the end of this sacrament.

5. Fifthly, the qualifications of a communicant are not the same with the qualifications of a hearer of the Word. There must be more. What is required of the worthy receiver in that ordinance cannot be done by the impenitent and ungodly, and therefore they are not to come to it as a means for their conversion. To discern the Lord's body, to show forth the Lord's death, to do this in remembrance of Christ's love with the faith and hope of His coming again, to feed on Him by faith, to have communion with Him and His church, as partakers of one bread, and to exercise those sacramental graces to which the benefits of that ordinance are promised—the unconverted are incapable of these things. There is the pardon and forgiveness of sin sealed. Can such have a sealed pardon for sin that never repented of sin? If the promises of the gospel covenant do not belong to the impenitent and ungodly, the sacrament cannot seal those promises to them.

6. Sixthly, this ordinance, being appointed for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace, supposes that we are living Christians, as spiritually alive through faith, repentance, and love to Christ. And that which is appointed as the means of health and strength to the living cannot be thought to be intended to give life to the dead. Sacramental bread and wine are not given to enliven a soul that is dead in trespasses and

sins, but to nourish and strengthen one that is alive. There can no nourishment be intended without a supposition of life. It is the communion of Christ's body, and supposes union to Him by faith. It is for the friends of Christ, who have received the atonement, and for them only to be feasted at His table.

### **Question 2**

But what if there be unworthy communicants admitted, such as I think unfit to come? Am I defiled by communing with such? How far is my sin or duty concerned, as to that matter?

### **Answer**

Ministers and private Christians must everyone in their place do what they can, that their brethren and fellow Christians who eat of the same bread may walk as becomes the gospel. And if they do not, after private admonition, they are to be suspended and denied that privilege. But let a man examine himself, judge himself, and condemn himself, let him look to himself in the first place, for every man shall bear his own burden (Gal. 6:5).

You are faithfully warned to look to it, everyone that comes to the Lord's Table, that you truly repent of sin, and heartily believe in Christ, accept Him, love Him, trust Him, obey Him; and that you come with charity and a forgiving spirit towards all that have injured you, as ever you hope to have the seal of God's forgiveness; that you come with fixed resolution, and purpose of heart, to follow Christ, and take up His cross, denying yourselves and engaging to be faithful to His interest, and persevere in the faith, worship, and obedience of the gospel, to your life's end, in hope of eternal life. This you are often exhorted to mind, as to yourselves. And then as to others, the guilt and danger of eating and drinking

unworthily is so great that in our several places we should do what we can to prevent it, that we may not partake of other men's sins by our neglect of duty. And therefore when particular members see or hear that (concerning any of their brethren) they are fit to be reprov'd, admonish'd, and complain'd of, they must follow the Scripture rule. Having mourn'd for such offense towards God, and pray'd for the person's repentance, they must first make use of private admonition, and if that be without success, afterward complain to the church (Matt. 18:17). They must give timely information of such offenders, that they may accordingly be proceeded against, and if you have done your duty, there is no defilement on you by the company of any such who continue to commune, though you think they ought to have been suspended. The Master of the feast was justly offended with him that came without the wedding garment, but did not reject the rest that came in his company. Our Lord was not defiled by coming to the baptism of John, though there was a wretched generation of vipers that came to it likewise. Neither were Christ and His apostles defiled by the presence of Judas at the Passover supper.

And if Christians should keep off from the ordinances of the gospel because some unworthy persons are admitted, for fear of communing with such, they may never commune while they live. For some may have truly repented of their past sins whose crime you have heard, but nothing of their repentance. And since you have not a key to their hearts, you ought to hope the best, esteeming others better than yourselves. And though the greatest care be taken, there always has, and will be, a mixture in the visible church (2 Chron. 30:18-19). The Passover was kept, and there were many that had not cleansed themselves, according to the purification of the sanctuary, who did eat of it, and for whom Hezekiah pray'd that God would forgive them. However, the rest that were cleansed kept

together with great gladness, and to them it was a feast of joy (v. 21). But I have said more of this question in answer to another, that is to say, whether Judas was present with Christ and His apostles at the institution of the Lord's Supper.<sup>2</sup>

### **Question 3**

What is it to be an unworthy receiver—to eat of this bread, and drink of this cup unworthily, so as to hazard damnation, and judgment from God?

### **Answer**

To do this unworthily is to receive the Lord's Supper not in such a holy manner, nor to such an end, or with such a spirit and affection, as the nature of the ordinance calls for. As on the contrary, to receive worthily is to do it in a spiritual manner, with such spiritual graces and affections as are suited to such a holy institution. Worthiness sounds high and great at first, but you must take care to understand it aright, so as to comprehend humility, and repentance, godly sorrow for sin, hunger and thirst after Christ, prizing His blood, breathing after His Spirit, sense of your many needs, earnest desires of a supply, with an apprehension of your unworthiness of the least mercy, etc. This is called your "worthiness," and so he may be most worthy that is most sensible of his own unworthiness. Therefore (as one says) let not the pride of any worthiness of our own bring us to the Lord's Table, nor any sense of our unworthiness keep us off.

To receive unworthily is to do it without sacramental graces in habit and exercise, to do it ignorantly, without a competent knowledge to discern the Lord's body. He cannot but come

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2. See the following sermon, entitled, "The Fourth Discourse: Whether Judas were present, etc."

unworthily to the table of the Lord who knows not what he does in coming—to do it impenitently, without genuine sorrow for sin, and hatred of it, and resolved endeavors to forsake it; to do it carelessly and in unbelief, without faith in Christ's death, resurrection, ascension and glory, without a serious, thankful heart, warmed with holy love to a crucified Savior; to receive hypocritically, pretending to be what we know we are not;<sup>3</sup> to receive uncharitably, without hearty love to all our brethren; to come with bitterness and rancor, revenge and malice in our hearts, against any man whatsoever; to receive customarily, and out of form, only because we are accustomed to do so, without that devotedness to God, and resignation of ourselves, and all we have to Him, which is our proper business at that time; to receive rashly and unpreparedly, not considering beforehand what we do, nor endeavoring to dispose ourselves with a suitable frame for such solemn work; to receive irreverently, without any awe on our minds and spirits of the holiness and justice of God, of His majesty and greatness, of His adorable condescension and goodness, to pardon such guilty sinners, to cleanse such polluted and defiled creatures, to vouchsafe such a mighty privilege and honor to such unworthy, unthankful rebels. In short, to receive unworthily is to come without due preparation for it, and to behave ourselves unsuitably when we come, without serious thoughts of our Savior, and of His love, and of His death, and of His resurrection and glory, without serious thoughts of ourselves, and our sins past, and the ingratitude, and baseness of them, and resolutions against them, for the future, etc., and then afterward, not to take care to walk becoming the obligations we have laid upon ourselves. In these three consists the nature of this unworthiness: lack

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3. Footnote in original: Burroughs, *Gospel Worship*, p. 242.

of preparation before we come, lack of suitableness of spirit when we come, and lack of circumspection and care afterward.

But as to actual communing, we do it worthily if there be a suitableness in the behavior of our body, temper of spirit, and government of our thoughts, or the motion and employment of our affections. These things are more largely explained in many sacramental treatises.

#### **Question 4**

What is the danger of unworthy receiving?

#### **Answer**

Such eat and drink judgment to themselves. The bread and wine shall be so far from being spiritual food to them, or the body and blood of Christ to them, that it shall prove their bane and poison. It will be hurtful and prejudicial. It will bring them under greater guilt, and give the devil an advantage against them, expose them to the judgments of God in this world, and, without repentance, to eternal wrath.

Bodily sickness, and weakness, and temporal death, are expressly mentioned as the consequence of this unworthy receiving (1 Cor. 11:30). God may, and often does, punish these faults with temporal calamity, by bodily sickness, and other afflictions, and sometimes by death. But if we escape in this life, we are in danger of the damnation of hell. It is no ordinary offense. Such are said to be guilty of the body and blood of Christ, to offer an indignity and affront to our crucified Savior. They make themselves partners with Judas, and the wicked Jews, who crucified the Lord of glory. They despise His authority, and at the same time contemn His love, and set at naught His precious blood, the price of our redemption.

We may well expect that God, who would be sanctified in all that draw nigh to Him by their holy suitable affections, will be sanctified upon them in His righteous vengeance (Lev. 10:3). It is spoken on the occasion of Nadab and Abihu being struck dead in the place for offering strange fire. There is another passage will help explain this, then "shall [I] be sanctified in her" (Ezek. 28:22). God does sanctify Himself upon men for unworthy receiving by inflicting temporal calamities, or by leaving them to spiritual judgments, and at last, by eternal punishments. But the most are little terrified with the one or the other. They escape for a while as to sickness and calamity, and they feel not the increase of hardness of heart, formality, and security, worldliness and earthly mindedness, and such spiritual judgments. And they believe not, or consider not, the danger of an everlasting hell. Surely to be guilty of the body and blood of Christ can be no small guilt, and to eat and drink damnation can be no small punishment.

I know very well there are extremes in the explication of this passage. Some are affrighted too much from what is their plain duty by these words of "eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." Others understand it in such a manner as to interpret away all the terror that is contained in it.

1. First, it must be granted that the "unworthy receiving" that the Corinthians were guilty of was such as none of us, I presume, ever were, or will be charged with. That is, they made no difference at all between the Lord's body and common food. And under a pretense of meeting to celebrate the Lord's Supper, they used the church of God as if it were an ordinary eating house or tavern, some of them going away drunk from the assembly.

2. Secondly, I believe, likewise, that the judgment and damnation threatened in that place does especially and primarily mean temporal judgments. “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (1 Cor. 11:30). However:

3. Thirdly, the danger of unworthy receiving is very great. God has always declared Himself jealous of His honor as to matter of worship, and assured us that He will punish such as do not sanctify His name in the duties of His solemn worship. And the expression of being guilty of the body and blood of Christ (to be a murderer of the Son of God), must imply so dreadful a guilt that we ought in faithfulness to warn you of the danger of unprepared, careless, unsuitable, and sinful approaches to the Lord’s Table. For every time you receive unworthily, you know not how dear it may cost you.

a. First, as to affliction and sufferings in this world. It may cost you a fit of sickness or hazard your life by it. I did but taste a little honey with the end of my rod (says Jonathan), and I must die for it. You think it a small matter to taste a bit of bread, or a little wine, but if you do it unworthily, in an undue manner, you may die for it. And doubtless:

b. Secondly, as to spiritual judgments, there is great cause to fear. These are more common than is generally considered. For when once professors have overcome the difficulties and objections they once had of coming to the Lord’s Table, and accustomed themselves from month to month to partake of that ordinance, but do it slightly and carelessly, so as to eat and drink unworthily, they must needs sink and decline, and by degrees fall into formality and worldliness, grow careless, and proud, and secure. And as they are the worse, and not the better, by coming to the Lord’s Table, they are hardened against

the influence of the Word preached. What is spoken to sinners, to awaken such, they think does not concern them. They hope as to their state, that they are saints, believers, and members of Christ. They are within the bond of the covenant (have often received the seals of it) and so sleep on under dreadful security, and never apprehend their danger until they die and find themselves rejected of God among the workers of iniquity.

c. Thirdly, the condemnation of such Christians in another world as are guilty of the body and blood of Christ must needs be terrible. Of all that perish under the gospel, none are like to have so miserable a portion hereafter as they who continued in the love and practice of their sins, who lived and died under the reign and power of their lusts, and yet were accustomed to come to the table of the Lord. How should the hearts of ministers be affected in giving the bread and wine to such and such, who after they have eaten and drunk in the presence of the Lord here, shall yet be shut out from the last great supper of the Lamb in glory. God forbid it should be your case who reads this. But it ought to be considered, and laid to heart by every communicant, how great the sin and danger is of unworthy receiving, that so we may not eat and drink damnation to ourselves. To this end, let me give two or three counsels and directions.

#### **[Counsels and Directions]**

1. First, I would advise those that come to the Lord's Table, when visited with sickness, as to their persons, or families, to sit down and remind themselves what their carriage and behavior has been as to this ordinance, and how far they have provoked God by coming carelessly and rashly sometimes, or by tarrying away when they might and ought to have come. And how often they have refused to be at any pains to prepare

themselves, and though that were the true reason at the bottom, have made little excuses, and other pretenses, to stop the mouth of conscience for the neglect of that duty. Review yourselves, whether you have not been faulty as to these things, that if you find you have, you may humble yourselves, and use greater care and circumspection, if it please God to recover you and bring you again to that feast of love.

2. Secondly, let all of us consider the dreadful guilt of continuing in sin, notwithstanding our coming to the Lord's Table. Such, be sure, receive unworthily. Such, of all others, are guilty of the body and blood of Christ. They crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to open shame. They pretended to love Him, because He died for their sins, yet they continue to live in sin, notwithstanding their coming to show forth His death. Such a one is supposed to consent to the murder of Christ. He crucifies the Lord of glory again. He approves it. He is not sorry for it, nor for the sins that caused it.

There is a virtual, interpretative crucifying of Christ, and being guilty of His murder. We read our Lord was crucified at Rome (Rev. 11:8). And you know He died without the gates of Jerusalem, at Golgotha: "the dead bodies of the witnesses shall lie in the streets of the great city, which spiritually is Sodom, Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." You may know the great city, that for filthiness, and corruption, and cruelty is like Egypt, and who so like as Rome Papal and anti-Christian? And if that be said to be Sodom in a spiritual sense, for the likeness of the sins of Sodom and Egypt, our Lord may be said to be crucified there, upon the account of the likeness of those sins committed there to that sin of the Jews in putting Him to death. And it is very plain how they dishonor Christ, and vilify Him by their abominable doctrines and impure worship, as much as the Jews did when they hanged Him on a tree.

Now consider a little to whom the apostle speaks these words, that by receiving unworthily, they were guilty of the body and blood of Christ. He charges the Corinthians with this guilt—not the Jews but Christians at Corinth, gentiles that owned the Christian religion. They are charged as guilty of the body and blood of Christ, though neither they nor their fathers had any hand in crucifying Him. They were not present in the High Priest's hall, when Christ was condemned, when the people cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." Nor present at Golgotha to approve His execution. They were not partners with the Jews or Romans in His blood. And yet by unworthy receiving they are charged with the like guilt. By coming to the Lord's Table without repentance, without faith in Christ, without resolution to obey and follow Him, you partake in the guilt of the Jewish murder of our Lord. Instead of sharing in the benefits of His death, you despise the blood of the covenant, as if it were the blood of a malefactor. You do, as it were, nail Him to His cross again. You thrust the spear into His heart again. You crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to open shame. You are guilty of His body and blood.<sup>4</sup>

Let us consider that He died for our sins, He was wounded for our transgressions, that His false accusers spoke our sense. They who condemned Him scourged Him, crowned Him with thorns, fastened Him to the cross. They in effect acted in our stead. And can we look upon Him whom we have pierced, and live in sin still, which in effect is to crucify Him again? Would we pull Him from His throne of glory to hang upon a gibbet as a malefactor once more? Is this the recompense and requital of His dearest dying love, that we act over the tragedy again? That we again put Him to open shame? Indeed wicked Christians, carnal professors, unworthy communicants, they

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4. Footnote in original: Heb. 6:6.

outdo the Jews in cruelty and unkindness. For we sin against the Son of God, with greater light and knowledge by far than the Jews had. For had they known, they had not crucified the Lord of glory. And He was then in a state of humiliation, but is now upon a throne, and has all power in heaven and earth committed to Him. Besides we sin against more promises, professions, and engagements to the contrary, and against greater obligations, and so with a baser ingratitude than their putting Him to death could be charged with. What shall become of such wicked Christians, such unworthy communicants, in the day of reckoning? Shall it be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for Jerusalem, more tolerable for ignorant heathens than for unbelieving Jews, more tolerable for those that never heard of Christ than for those that killed Him? How much worse then will it be for such as crucify Him again! The wicked Jews who put to death the Lord of life and glory will have a cooler place in hell than some Christians that have shown forth His death at His table.

3. Thirdly, let not what has been said be abused by any, to keep them off altogether from this sacrament because of the danger of unworthy receiving. There is danger in coming in an undue manner, but it is a Christian's duty to come. There are unworthy non-communicants, as well as unworthy receivers. There is equal (if not greater) danger by not coming at all. If you desire to please God, and obey Christ, and hate sin, and leave it, and would grow in grace, and are willing and desirous to use all God's appointed means to these ends, you ought to come with cheerfulness and courage, with hope and love, with thankfulness and praise, to testify to all the world that you rejoice in Christ Jesus, and glory in His cross, and are not ashamed to look for pardon, and righteousness, and life, by a crucified Savior. You have the more reason to do it now

than at other times because of the insolent attempts that are made against the authority of our Lord, His crown and dignity, against His Godhead and against His satisfaction, and against His kingly office, and as to all the orders and institutions of the gospel, especially as to the sacraments.

That which I have said to awaken the secure, to startle the hypocrite, to convince the worldling, and to make the sleepy, careless, nominal Christian feel the terrors of the Lord, should not dishearten the humble and contrite, the weary and heavy laden, the mourner and penitent, and such as groan under the burden of sin and prize Christ above all the world, and love His cross, His gospel, His day, His table, His ministers and ordinances. They shall eat and drink, and find spiritual strength and vigor by it. They shall be as welcome as the other are unwelcome. They shall be feasted with the fat things of God's house, and shall magnify the Lord Redeemer. He will seal to them the pardon of their sins. He will speak to their souls with the voice of love and sweetness. He will kiss them with the kisses of His mouth, and display toward them the banner of His love. All these threatenings, thunderbolts, and terrors shall not touch the head of a humble, upright, serious Christian that does this in remembrance of Christ, in the best manner he can, and desires every time to do it better, who longs to be more conformed to the example and life of Christ.

Let not such a one be disquieted or cast down. What is a cup of trembling to hypocrites, shall be a cup of salvation to you, a cup of blessing to you, and the communion of the body and blood of Christ. All the unsearchable riches of Christ, all the benefits and privileges of justification, adoption, increase of grace, perseverance therein to the end, hope in death, and afterward everlasting life, shall all be yours, confirmed and sealed to you by the blood of the everlasting covenant, and the inward witness of the Spirit, applying all this as your

portion, and your inheritance. Let others who are not willing and resolved to part with their sins be afraid to come (and well they may). You that are of the contrary temper and character ought to be afraid to keep from the table. It is good to be in the way where Jesus passes by. It may be, He will give you a kind look, and speak a word of power to your soul, that shall scatter all your clouds, and make you know what inward joy and peace of conscience (by the witness of the Spirit) means. He shall make you feel it, at your very heart, that it is He, and could be none else but He, even your Savior, your beloved Jesus, who loved you, and gave Himself for you, on the cross, who has loved you and pleads your cause in heaven, who has loved you and gives Himself to you in the sacrament.

He has loved you with an everlasting love, and will perfect what He has begun, and keep what you have committed to Him, even to the great day. And then shall you see Him whom your soul loves, see Him come in glory, to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe. We love Him now, we admire Him now, in whom believing, though we see Him not, we rejoice. We are ashamed we love Him no more. But how shall we love Him when we shall see Him as He is? How shall we love Him when we shall be made like Him? When Christ who is our life shall appear? When He shall show how much He has loved us and raise and enlarge our capacities, and fill them with light, and love, and joy unspeakable and full of glory? Let us try to let our thoughts run out in this, or the like manner on Christ Jesus, that we may come to His table with a heart full of love to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, and will never reject a soul that genuinely loves Him.

**[Exhortations]**

For a conclusion, let me exhort you to two things from what has been said, concerning your preparing for the Lord's Supper.

First, humbly own before the Lord, this evening, your utter unworthiness to partake of His feast. However:

Secondly, most earnestly beg the Spirit of grace to enable you to partake of it worthily.

*1. First, own your unworthiness*

Be humble and vile in your own eyes. Judge yourselves, abase yourselves, condemn yourselves, and you will be the more welcome guests to that table. The sense of unworthiness should not deter us from a plain duty. It is no argument of humility to keep off in such a case. We are unworthy of the least mercy, spiritual or temporal, unworthy of the bread we eat, and of the clothes we wear, and of the mercies of providence, every day. And will you starve yourselves and go naked because you are unworthy of food and raiment? It is true you run a great hazard if you receive unworthily, but do you not do so by performing other duties in an undue manner? May not your prayers be turned into sin? May not what you hear rise up in judgment against you? You are unworthy of the privilege to make your requests known to God, unworthy that God should speak to you by His Word, or send His ministers in His name to instruct you and beseech you to be reconciled. [You are] unworthy to lift up your eyes to heaven, unworthy to have liberty of access to the throne of grace. You are invited to hear His Word, and commanded to seek His face, and should not neglect it for being unworthy. In like manner may I not say, are you not invited, called, and commanded, and expressly required to do this in remembrance of Christ? To show forth His death this way, though it be a privilege we are altogether unworthy of?

The deeper [the] sense of your unworthiness, the more welcome may you hope to be at His table. Remember the Centurion, who said, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst

come under my roof" (Matt. 8:8). Nevertheless he accepted of our Lord's offer, and received the benefit of His miraculous assistance, and was honored with this testimony, that the Son of God had not found so great faith as his. You may heighten the sense of your unworthiness, as a part of your preparation for this table. To this end, think what a gracious God you serve, what a kind Savior invites you, what He has done and suffered for you, while you think also what you have done against Him, what you have deserved by sin, and yet what dignity and privilege you are called to partake of by Christ.

*2. Secondly, beg the Spirit of grace to enable you to receive worthily*

That you may not be guilty of Christ's body and blood, that you may not eat and drink judgment to yourselves, beg the Holy Spirit to fix your thoughts, to prepare your hearts, to excite your repentance and godly sorrow, to quicken your desires after Christ, to kindle, increase, and exercise your love to Him with thankfulness for His love to you, and charity to all that have injured you. Do not disorder and discompose your spirits by such unbecoming fears of the sin and danger of unworthy receiving as should unfit you for the joyful exercise of faith, and love, and thankfulness. Look to Christ, and beg His grace. Do not think Him to be a hard Master, unwilling to receive you. He will not break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. You may receive worthily, notwithstanding your unwilling, lamented infirmities, if you are resolved and diligent in the use of God's appointed means for the mortification of sin and the increase of grace.



## CHAPTER 12

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### *Wasn't Judas Present at the First Celebration of the Lord's Supper?*

*But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread,  
and drink of that cup.*

—1 CORINTHIANS 11:28

Another question I would now consider is this:

#### **Question**

Whether Judas was present at the institution and first celebration of the Lord's Supper. For many are ready to say, "What need you make so much ado about examining yourselves before you come? Surely all sorts of people may come as well as Judas. And ministers need not be scrupulous whom they admit when our Savior at the first institution admitted Judas, though He knew him to be a thief, and a devil."

#### **Answers**

There are so many wise, learned, and good men of different opinions about this question that I shall endeavor fairly to represent what may be said on either side, and then make some reflections for our instruction from it.

*1. It is urged by many, and with very plausible arguments confirmed by very great authorities of ancient and modern divines, that Judas did receive the Lord's Supper with the other apostles<sup>1</sup>*

There was another supper which accompanied the Paschal supper, or immediately followed the eating of the Paschal lamb in which they ate herbs and unleavened bread. The master of the family first dipped in his morsel, and then the rest of the family, after which a collation, or post-supper where he broke bread into pieces, and distributed a part to every one of the guests; and first drinking himself, gave them the cup filled with wine, according to the age and dignity of the persons, adding to each distribution a form of blessing proper to that mystery, which was eucharistical, and commemorative of their deliverance out of Egypt. This last our blessed Lord begins to celebrate, the night before He was betrayed. [He] changed the form of blessing, and turned the ceremony to a higher purpose, and gave us bread and wine in commemoration of His body and blood, commanding His apostles to perpetuate this rite, in the Christian church until His second coming. The question is whether Judas was now present at this supper.<sup>2</sup>

Some think that the supper mentioned in John 13, at which Judas was present, is not to be understood of the Paschal supper, at the end of which our Lord instituted this sacrament, but of some ordinary supper, before the feast of the Passover (v. 1), at which supper Judas received the sop, and went out, and the devil entered into him. And we read he did so enter, before the Passover was fully come, when it only drew nigh (Luke 22:1, 3). At this supper, they say, He washed His disciples' feet, which

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1. Footnote in original: Cyprian, Austin, Jerome, Chrysostom, Theodoret. Many Schoolmen and Romanists; and of the Reformed, Beza, Martyr, Bucer, Dr. Hamond, Dr. Lightfoot, etc.

2. Footnote in original: See Dr. Edwards, *Exercit. Crit. & Histor.*, 1702. Exerc. V. on Luke 22.21.

might well enough be performed at a common supper, but not so well at the Passover feast, where they must needs be straitened for time. And for one that had the bag to go out from a common supper to buy necessaries for the Passover feast might well be accounted for, but it would be thought very strange, and contrary to the custom of the Jews to go out from the Paschal supper, to go to market, and buy provision for another, much less to provide for that feast.

It cannot be denied but that as the evangelist Luke delivers the history, Judas seems to be present, not only during the Passover supper, but at the Lord's Supper which followed, if the right order of things, as they came to pass, be there laid down, for He says the hand of the traitor was with Him on the table, after He relates how the bread and wine were distributed. It is also said by one evangelist that He sat down with the Twelve, and while they were eating, took bread (Matt. 26:20–26), and that after supper, He gave the sop to Judas, says another, "It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish" (Mark 14:20). "Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table" (Luke 22:21), mentioned after the institution of the Lord's Supper, etc. And then the devil entered into him, and he went out immediately (Luke 22:4). And our Lord said, "That thou doest, do quickly" (John 13:27). And the disciples understood it as if he was to buy something for the Passover feast. That feast therefore was not yet come, if this supper was some days before the Passover supper. And then our Lord's saying, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me" (Matt. 26:23), might be understood not to refer to his present act, but to his custom of feeding with Him.<sup>3</sup> "He that dippeth his hand with me," that is, he that is

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3. Footnote in original: See Bishop Kidder's, *Demonstration of the Messiah*. Part III. Cap. III. Sect. 9.

accustomed to eat with me, and so it would not particularize Judas, but only signify that one of the Twelve should betray Him. And it ought to be considered that if all the disciples had understood it of the present action of Judas's dipping his hand with our Savior in the dish, at that time, there would have been no room for saying, "Lord, is it I" some days after this. And the Greek word "having dipped,"<sup>4</sup> in the past tense, and not in the present, does favor this sense. So that notwithstanding this, they say, he might be present at the Passover feast, and Lord's Supper too, and not be discovered by those words of his Master.

Others say that Judas stayed until the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered to him and the rest of the disciples, and then immediately went out. And if it be objected that some of the words used by Christ at that time could not be applied to Judas—"This is my body which is given for you.... This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:19–20), "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you" (Matt. 26:29)—they say that the apostles sometimes addressed themselves to a whole church, where may be supposed many hypocrites, and false Christians, and yet apply the general promises of the gospel, in which only true believers have a special right. We know, says the apostle, "your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.... And ye became followers of us" (1 Thess. 1:3–4, 6), etc.

They say farther, if Christ called Judas a devil, He calls Peter by the name of Satan and devil, because he so far complied with the devil as to oppose His sufferings. Moreover

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4. Greek: *embapsas*.

they say Christ did this to tell His ministers how it would be with their congregations, that there would be wolves as well as sheep present themselves among them, and to let us know the tares and the wheat must grow together until the harvest. And to convince us that another man's unworthy receiving cannot make us unworthy, therefore would our Lord permit Judas to receive. He was known to be a wicked man, yet admitted by Christ. He did not pollute the communion to Him, and to the rest of the disciples, either at the Passover, or the supper. After this manner some argue for his being present.

Among our divines, many men of note, and of different persuasions, do agree that it is hard to make it out clearly whether it was the Lord's Supper that Judas received or not.<sup>5</sup>

*2. On the other hand, it is urged that he was not present at the Lord's Supper*

That the sop was no part of the sacramental supper—upon his receiving whereof the devil entered into him, and he went out from Christ and His apostles—but of the common supper which followed, and that was before the institution of the Lord's Supper.<sup>6</sup>

It is certain Judas was excepted by Christ in several kind and comfortable expressions which He used to them while he was present. But there is no such exception of him, as to what our Lord said at the institution of the supper. He told them, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70). And in the 13th chapter, v. 10, "and ye are clean, but not all." "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread

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5. Footnote in original: Gillespie's, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, p. 461. Mr. R. Vines, *On the Lord's Supper*, Chap. XX. p. 271. Mr. J. Burroughs, *Gospel Worship*, p. 238.

6. Footnote in original: Dr. Edwards, *Exercit. V.*

with me hath lifted up his heel against me” (John 13:18). If He excepted Judas in such expressions, one would think He should much more at this supper, if Judas had been present. Did he that was a devil partake of Christ’s body and blood? “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matt. 26:29; Luke 22:28–30). If it be understood of the kingdom of heaven hereafter, or the kingdom of glory, it is not applicable to Judas. Neither is it so if understood of Christ’s eating and drinking with them after His resurrection, for Judas was dead and gone to his place before. “Drink ye all of it,” says Christ, that is, all that were present, and then adds, “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:28–30). Besides, our Lord, one would think, should be far from saying to Judas, “My body, broken for you, My blood, shed for you,” when He excludes him by name out of His prayer as “the son of perdition” (John 17:12) whom He knew was lost.

And therefore, though the evangelist Luke says, “The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table” (Luke 22:21), and mentions this after He had related the institution of the supper, it is likely that the evangelist there observes not the exact order of time, but only relates the substance of the matter as he heard it from the apostles, it may be at several times. He was not an eye witness, as Saint Matthew and Saint John were. And after the history of the sacrament, he only adds what Christ said of the traitor. And if we will keep to the strict order of the words in the gospel of Saint Luke, Christ did not tell His disciples of the traitor while they were eating the Paschal lamb, but afterwards, after they had done.

As to the expression of Christ's sitting down with the Twelve, there can be little argued from it, for we read (1 Cor. 15:5) that Christ, rising from the dead, was seen of Cephas, and then of the Twelve. Though that must be understood of the Eleven, for Judas was gone to his place before our Lord was crucified.

Grotius expressly declares in his *Annotations on 26 Matthew and 22 Luke* that the supper in which the sop was given to Judas, and on which he went forth, was the common supper, and not at the Lord's Supper, and that Saint Luke does not place the words of Christ, concerning Judas, in their proper order. The sop given to him seems not to be sacramental bread, for this reason, because that was broken, but not dipped in any liquor that we read, which might be at common supper.

In short, one would hardly think that our Savior who whipped the buyers and sellers out of the Temple should admit one whom He knew to be a devil, to be partaker of His body and blood. The evangelists Matthew and Mark relate the discourse of Christ at the table, about him that should betray Him, to be before the institution of the supper, whereas Saint Luke places it afterwards. Either they two put that before which should be after, or he puts that after, in his relation, which should precede. Here is not only two against one, but in several other particulars, that evangelist does not observe the exact order of time in his history. But without positively determining this matter, wherein so many learned men differ, let me observe:

**[Observations]**

1. First, that they who grant Judas to have been present at the Lord's Supper do yet generally deny that any known scandalous people of wicked lives should be admitted. Chrysostom grants Judas to have received the sacrament, and yet discourses largely

against the admission of scandalous and profane persons.<sup>7</sup> The wickedness of Judas was not then known in public, not until after he had the sop, and left the disciples, and went to betray his Lord. The evangelist John says expressly, it was in secret that he bargained with the enemies of Christ, and no man did know of it (John 13:28–29). And though, when Judas said, “Master, is it I?” our Savior replied, “Thou hast said” (Matt. 26:25), yet he only, in his own conscience, might understand the meaning of those words. He was not a known scandalous person, if he did receive the Lord’s Supper. Scandal arises from a sin committed by a professor known and divulged. Judas had not yet betrayed his Master, any more than Peter had denied Him, and so He only foretold his future treachery.

2. Secondly, they that are secretly guilty of great crimes and heinous should be afraid of coming to the Lord’s Table upon supposition that Judas did receive, for fear that they run the same hazard and incur the same fate—for fear that the devil enter into them, and take possession of them, as he did of Judas upon his unworthy receiving, if he did receive, and so hurried him to the vilest crimes, the murder of Christ and self-murder.

3. Thirdly, our Lord, in the administration of the Lord’s Supper, supposing Judas was present, acting as a minister, could not be witness and judge too. The sins He knew that Judas would commit were not yet committed, and so not yet scandalous. We must be careful how we urge an imitation of what Christ knew and did in His divine nature upon ordinary ministers. Had our Savior here acted as judge and witness too, it might have been an ill precedent to ministers, to take upon

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7. Footnote in original: Hom. on St. Matth.

them by their own power to deny the sacrament judiciously to whom they pleased, or upon suspicion, and jealousies without proof, where neither ignorance nor scandal can be objected.

4. Fourthly, all must grant that it is rare, if possible, to find any part of the visible church upon earth where the ordinances of the gospel are administered, that is, not mixed with good and bad. You may as soon find a body without any blemish, spot, or wrinkle, or imperfection, as a church without some corrupt members, and yet the body may be beautiful, and the church too for all that. The gospel net will gather good and bad, as to visible profession, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6). The rules of faith and love are pure and perfect in the Word, but not so observed by all visible Christians, as the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages may be pure in books, but hardly found to be purely spoken by any nation in the world.

5. Fifthly, though some unworthy, wicked persons should be admitted, we are to endeavor they should be separated, and are not to separate ourselves until that be regularly tried and is not done. A particular member is not to usurp the power of the keys to suspend or excommunicate. There must be proof, by sufficient evidence, of matter of fact, to convince any man or woman before they be suspended. It is true, thieves and robbers, and other vile offenders should be reformed and purged out of the nation and city, but it must be done regularly, and in course of law, or the mischief will be greater. Particular members must do their duty first, if they know any unworthy communicant, and can prove it. They are by the order of Christ to admonish such in private, to tell him of his fault. And if you cannot gain him that way, get two or three witnesses and endeavor to bring him to repentance by due

conviction. If after this he be obstinate, and stand out in his sin, tell it to the church, acquaint the minister, or pastor, and by him (if needful) the whole society. And when persons have done their duty, then it is time to talk of public censure. Until then, they can blame nobody but themselves. Mr. Burroughs says expressly, "If by revelation, I know such or such a man to be a hypocrite, yet I might communicate [commune] with him still, and not be at all defiled, except I could prove by witness what I know."<sup>8</sup> And he says farther, "I must look to it, to examine myself; but for others, I am only so far bound, as to keep myself clean."

I therefore add, if there be any such as are wicked and unworthy receivers that commune with me, if I be not accessory to their sin, it does not pollute me. It is my duty and my right to come to the Lord's Supper. If another come unworthily, he shall bear his own burden. He "eateth and drinketh damnation to himself" (1 Cor. 11:29). Shall I keep away because he sins in coming? Or because the minister and the church sin in not excluding him? If I have done my part towards it, I may be satisfied. Must not I go and offer my gift to the altar, because another should not come, until he first go and be reconciled to his brother? There was a Ham in Noah's ark; shall I leap out of the ark for that? I am not bound to go and pry into another man's life and conversation, so as to give an account of things secret. But if anything offend me, I am bound by the rule of Christ to admonish my brother. And if he appears to be wicked, I am bound to endeavor he should be purged from the congregation. If I neglect what is my duty, I am so far defiled, but not otherwise. It is true it is said, "If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to

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8. Footnote in original: Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel Worship*, pp. 238, 240.

eat" (1 Cor. 5:11). This is to be understood of common meals, and ordinary familiarity, however the consequence is good. If not to eat with such at common meals, we are not at the Lord's Table. But then we must have a mark set on them, by their suspension, to avoid their company. Otherwise, if the minister and church neglect their duty, or are not sufficiently informed of such faults, a private Christian may be a worthy communicant, notwithstanding some such be admitted. If according to the law of Christ, he has endeavored his conviction and reformation by private admonition, and if that be not effectual, have imparted it, in order to more public censure. Without this, there may be endless separations, and you may run through all points of the compass until you have separated through the whole circle, and never know where to fix.

What work would it have made in the Corinthian church, if you may suppose the communion of one incestuous person had polluted all the rest, and had been a ground of separation. If hypocrites and wicked people will join with us in our profession, we do not therefore join with them in their sin. We cannot be infected and defiled but by our own consent and the neglect of our duty. Nor do we profess ourselves to be one body with them any further than they profess themselves members of Christ. And yet if they be not what they profess, it is not our profession that is false, but theirs that is so. "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure" (Titus 1:15), by which it is plain that what is impure to them that are defiled is not made impure to them that are pure.

6. Lastly, let us consider and learn from the case of Judas (leaving it undetermined whether he did receive or not, so as not to be obliged to maintain either opinion) not to rest in external privileges, in being one of the family of Christ, as

visibly related to Him. We are so by baptism, and by coming to the Lord's Table. If he did not eat of the supper, as many believe he did, yet it is certain he did eat of the Passover, and preach in the name of Christ, and might work miracles, and cast out devils, as well as the other apostles, and was no more suspected of treachery against his Lord than any of them. They all said, "Is it I?" (Mark 14:19). And yet the devil entered into him, and he proved a hypocrite, a murderer, and a devil. Let us not therefore rest in any external privileges as being visibly related to Christ. Remember the case of Judas.

**PART 3**

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**Sermons Related to the  
Lord's Supper**



## CHAPTER 13

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### *The Purposes of Receiving the Lord's Supper*

*But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread,  
and drink of that cup.*

—1 CORINTHIANS 11:28

I have considered several sacramental questions, and resolved and answered them in the most practical manner, to assist your preparations for this ordinance. That which I would now speak to is concerning the ends we should propose to ourselves in coming to the table of the Lord. Hereby you will be helped to examine yourselves, and be able to judge whether hitherto you have come with right ends, or not. And, consequently, whether you did receive worthily, or unworthily. And from thence may be able to judge what you have to repent of, and what to be thankful for, as to former communions, and will also be assisted more worthily to commune hereafter, by fixing your ends right, when you come. “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat”—particularly as to his ends and design in coming to this ordinance.

Among several things which might here be proposed, the principal ends of a Christian in coming to the Lord's Table are such as these:

*1. To profess his relation to Christ, as one of His disciples, and his communion with his fellow Christians, as a member of the same body*

By eating of that bread, and drinking of that cup, we declare to all the world that we are Christians, and not ashamed of our baptismal covenant—that we reckon it our honor to be accounted the followers of a crucified Savior, and glory in His cross. We openly acknowledge our faith in Him and hope of salvation by His death. We distinguish ourselves from atheists, and infidels, and heretics, who deny the Lord that bought them. We profess to belong to the family and kingdom of Christ, by partaking of the children's bread. For, as the apostle speaks, "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17). And therefore the Lord's Supper is called the communion, whereby we have fellowship with one another. One bread, being made up of many corns, and one cup, or the wine in it, of many grapes. So, "we being many are one bread, and one body." The bread and the church are called by one name, the body of Christ.

Hereby we take upon us the badge and livery of our great Lord and Master. We wear His colors and own Him to be our general, and the captain of our salvation. As circumcision and the Passover distinguished the Jews from the rest of the world, so do baptism and the Lord's Supper distinguish Christians. And they that kept the Passover, are said to keep it unto the Lord, as a profession of their allegiance, to Jehovah in opposition to the service of idols.

*2. We come to this ordinance to testify our obedience to Christ and our regard to His authority*

He has bid us do this in remembrance of Him, and show forth His death this way. We show our reverence for what He has appointed and commanded, and that we dare not live in the neglect of what He has enjoined—especially considering

how kindly He instituted this rite a little before His death, the night before He was betrayed, and commanded us this way to remember His love in dying for us. Which command is repeated three times by the evangelist, and again by the apostle Saint Paul, that it might not be thought an unnecessary or a trivial matter. It is true, we should never have thought of this, if He had not appointed it. But by our obedience and careful observation of it we show a respect to our Lord's authority. Did He give such a positive order about this, and shall we disregard it? We are no more left at liberty as to this than as to any other parts of Christian worship. And it is very bold and arrogant for the disciples to pick and choose which of their Lord's commandments they will obey, and which not.

*3. We come to the Lord's Table to renew our covenant with God in Christ, to engage our fidelity to Him, and to receive the seal of His faithful promises to us*

For all the privileges which Christ has purchased, all the mercies He has procured, all the blessing and favors He has promised in the gospel, are sealed in this ordinance to the worthy receiver. And therefore [it is] called the New Testament, or covenant, in His blood. We here receive a sealed pardon for all our past sins, and for those in particular of the last month, which we remember and confess in our preparatory work. We give up ourselves again to God, as His covenant servants, professing that we are so, and engaging that we will be so, that this God shall be our God. And if we be sincere, and genuine, He at the same time assures us that He is our God, and has blotted out all our transgressions, and will remember them no more.

As sacrifices formerly were one way of covenanting with God, so to feast upon a sacrifice is one way of sharing in the benefit of it. It is to partake of the sacrifice. It is to give our consent

to the covenant that is confirmed and ratified thereby. This is a covenant rite between God and a believer, signifying friendship, reconciliation, and kindness. We feed on the sacrifice of Christ at His table, as those who have received the atonement, as those who are in a covenant of friendship with God, whose peace with heaven is made by the bloody sacrifice of Christ.

If we be humble and sincere in renewing this covenant with God in Christ, on our part, we may consider for our comfort that it is a seal on God's part too, [a seal] of His being in covenant with us, and a confirmation of our faith that He will be our God and fulfill all His promises to us. It is one part of our design in coming, to show we are a people in covenant with God. And by taking and eating the bread, and drinking the wine, we testify that we are such, and we bind ourselves to continue so. In the eastern countries, leagues and covenants were ratified by feasting together. And as they who did eat of the sacrifices offered to devils had thereby fellowship with devils, and as the Jews, by eating a part of their sacrifice to Jehovah, held communion with God, and professed subjection to Him, as you read [in] 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, so by the Lord's Supper, we renew that covenant with God that we entered into by baptism. That is to say, to take God the Father for our creator, preserver, ruler, and sovereign, and to place our happiness in His love; and to take Jesus Christ for our only Savior, through whom we hope for all our acceptance with God, and ability to serve and glorify Him; and the Holy Ghost for our sanctifier, to renew us after the divine image, and to be the author of all grace, and comfort to our souls; and to take the holy Word of God to be the rule of our faith and life; and hereby renouncing the world, the flesh, and the devil, are engaged to follow Christ, and be faithful to Him, as long as we live, in hopes of eternal life which He has purchased, promised, and is gone to prepare.

4. *Another end in coming to this table is to express our thankfulness to God for giving His Son to die for us, and our thankful admiration of the love of Christ in giving Himself as our ransom*

Herein has God commended His love to us, that when we were sinners, He sent His Son to die for us. And herein we express our thankfulness to God when we remember His love this way. We ought therefore to excite and stir up holy love and thankfulness when we come to this table, as the proper season of the most lively exercise of these graces. And there is that in view before us that is proper to raise and increase the flame. How great a part of our work holy thankfulness is may be gathered from the name of the institution, so often given it by the Christian churches, “thanksgiving;”<sup>1</sup> an action of thanksgiving. We here solemnize the remembrance of the greatest blessing that ever God bestowed on the world, and if we consider how great, and glorious, and excellent a gift that was, and how low the condescension on God’s part, and how high the provocation, and privilege, on ours, and how wretched and unworthy creatures we are that are so favored, and with what unspeakable kindness and affection He died and suffered all for us, when He submitted to take the form of a servant, and die the death of the cross for our redemption, we shall easily perceive that this must be one great end of our coming, to express our genuine thanks, and ascribe “blessing, and honor, and glory, and power...unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Rev. 5:13), who has loved us and “washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Rev. 1:5).

Let us hereupon recollect with what ardent desire, with what a zealous love, with what forwardness and resolution, our Lord died for us. When He was entering upon His passion, when He speaks of His own crucifixion, says He, “I have a

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1. Greek: *eucharistia*.

baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50). He longed to suffer and die for us. He seems to think the time long before He was betrayed, before He was condemned, before He was scourged, and mocked, and tortured, before He was crucified and shed His blood for us. And this He said at the beginning of that supper, after which He instituted this sacrament, "With desire have I desired to eat this Passover" (Luke 22:15)—"With the most earnest, ardent desire have I longed to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

Let us always make this one great end of our coming, to express our thankfulness for the love of God and His dear Son to us—that we may praise the Lord for His goodness, that our souls, and all within us, may bless His holy name. Let us, to this purpose, assist our meditations by considering from what a state of sin and misery we were redeemed, and to what a state of blessedness and glory we are advanced by the Lord Jesus. Let us consider what it cost the Redeemer to save us from wrath to come, and to procure our reconciliation to God and eternal salvation. Oh, come with love and thanksgiving to this feast of love! A feast of fat things, full of marrow, of wine on the lees, well refined, where He leads us into His banqueting house, and displays His banner of love before us. Our souls therefore should magnify the Lord, and our spirits rejoice in God our Savior.

*5. Another end of coming to this table is to profess our love to all the saints, and our charity to all mankind, and, in particular, our forgiveness of those who have injured us, and hearty reconciliation to them*

We there profess our love to all good men, as bearing the image of God, as lovers of God, and beloved by Him, as members of Christ, and part of His family, as interested in the fruits of

His death, and heirs of the heavenly inheritance. And therefore, “be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32), “not rendering evil for evil” (1 Peter 3:9), but “overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21). And if a brother trespass against us seven times (that is, very often), yet if he repent, forgive him. Indeed, if he does not, you must forgive him, so as not to retain any malice or rancor in your hearts against him. You must be willing to be reconciled. You must endeavor it, and seek it. And if you are not in the fault, but are the person injured, you can the better seek for reconciliation. You should endeavor this, before you come to the Lord’s Table, according to our Savior’s advice: “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar,” or are about to do so, “and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee...go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Matt. 5:23–24).

This charity of forgiving injuries is an excellent imitation of our heavenly Father, who forgives us our trespasses. And it is a piece of charity to your brother’s soul, and will be found very much to promote the peace of your own.

I cannot but take notice here that many keep from the Lord’s Table upon this account, because of the animosities, and quarrels, and contentions between families and persons. Whereas, if Christians made conscience of obeying this order of Christ, they would soon find themselves obliged to seek for peace and reconciliation, and rather than tarry from the Lord’s Table, would make up all such breaches, that they might come to profess their charity and forgiveness of others, and receive the seal of God’s forgiveness. But the many grievous contentions among Christians, the sad quarrels between families, the multitude of perplexing, uncharitable lawsuits that make the Christian world miserable are very much owing to the neglect of this instrument of charity, or not understanding the nature

and end of it, or not coming often to it in a due and a serious manner. When I come to the Lord's Table, I must consider what God has done for me who have done so much worse against Him than any man has or can do against me. I consider how many thousand talents He has forgiven me, through the blood of Jesus. And shall I be unwilling to put up with a reproach or false accusation, an injury, or wrong, an act of injustice, unkindness, or unfaithfulness, from my fellow creature? Can it be so, especially when I consider that without this forgiving of others, we cannot be forgiven ourselves? To profess and increase our charity should be remembered as another end of coming to this supper. And therefore we must endeavor to purge out the old leaven of malice and revenge beforehand.

There is another sort of charity to be expressed when we come to the Lord's Table. That is, relieving the poor, leaving somewhat to supply the necessities of the poor members of Christ. And what more fit, more necessary season than when we have just remembered the love of Christ to us, who, when "He was rich, yet for [our] sakes he became poor, that [we] through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). What fitter time to feed and refresh the poor members of Jesus than when we ourselves have His body and blood given to feed us and to nourish our souls to eternal life?

*6. Another end is to strengthen our weak graces, to promote our improvement and growth in grace, in conformity to Christ, our great example*

To be sure, the graces that are here to be exercised may by that very means be improved. And our faith, and love, and repentance, and hope, and charity which have here such proper employment, and exercise, may thereby be increased. And by preceding self-examination, we may find out where we are weakest, and most defective, where we need most assistance

and supply, and accordingly beg it at the table of the Lord. We should go to Christ as the fountain of all grace, in whom all fullness is lodged, and beg that He would not be a sealed fountain to us, but vouchsafe what we need out of His treasure. And are any of us so fat and flourishing in the courts of the Lord that we do not need this nourishment from time to time? Are we grown up to the stature of angels, that we can live without food? Does our faith never shake, our hope stagger, love to God decline, holy desires abate, etc.? Would you not gladly have corruption more subdued, and grace strengthened? Would you not have your smoking flax blown up into a flame? Would you not get more above this world, and be more entirely conformed to the Spirit, and life of Christ? Would you not live more in communion with Him, and dependence on Him? Is there no increase of spirituality, and heavenly mindedness yet needful? What! No further strength, progress, and improvement in grace to be desired? Though we may be cured of the deadly wounds of sin, yet we are not so thoroughly healed but some sores (though not mortal) do yet remain. And how can we but long for a perfect cure, while we are sanctified but in part? One end of communing must be growth and progress in holiness, by feeding on a crucified Savior, by more acquaintance with Him, by nearer union to Him, and more serious consideration of His dying love, and of His holy life. The former may constrain and engage us to imitate the latter. And here we must remember that larger communications of the Spirit of grace may be expected in this ordinance than ordinarily at other times. The Holy Ghost was poured out in an eminent manner on the primitive Christians, who were more serious and constant in their attendance on this ordinance than we are in the later ages of Christianity. By feeding in a due manner at this table, you may hope to grow in grace. These provisions of our Father's house are designed for it, that we may not look

meager and ill-favored by the abounding of ill humors such as pride and worldliness, uncharitableness, and impatience, and the like. These corruptions will be purged, these lusts will die by influence from the cross of Christ, in a due attendance upon this ordinance, and the contrary graces be increased, enlivened, and acted. Our good purposes will be confirmed, our souls more rooted and established against wavering, and more fortified against temptation by renewing our covenant with God, after the violation of it in some particular instances. The assistances of the Holy Spirit pertaining to it are here communicated more abundantly to every thirsty soul. Of His fullness we may all receive, according to our capacities and needs. One reason why our Lord continued the use of bread and wine in this institution instead of the Passover might be to signify that variety and abundance of grace that He gives us in a due partaking of this ordinance. For bread and wine are the most principal and substantial sorts of our nourishment—one to strengthen man's heart, and the other to make it glad. And the designation of them to this use may import the plentiful assistance of the Spirit given to the followers of Christ, not only so much as is necessary for their support, but such a portion of the Spirit as is productive of cheerfulness and pleasure. The bread is eaten, and wine drunk, to promote our growth, as well as to maintain our life. This was verified in the primitive Christians, whose charity and zeal were active, their love to Christ vigorous, their courage and constancy unshaken. And we may reasonably think it was much owing to their frequent and serious attendance upon this sacrament.

And the experience of Christians in every age will confirm it, that hereby our minds are more fixed on heavenly things, and our hearts more set against sin. We have a better sense of the love of Christ, and a more lively hope of His mercy. Our charity to others is increased, and we are better able to bear

and to forgive injuries. We never see the evil of sin so much as in this ordinance. And the view of a crucified Savior opens the springs of godly sorrow and repentance for it. If that, or any other grace, be weak, we may here receive strength, and go away with increase, by exercise. A real Christian not only maintains that spiritual strength that he has, but here he receives more than he had before. It is of use to prevent the decay of our spiritual strength, and to renew and recover it, after any decay. By thus waiting upon God, we find the fulfilling of His Word, "They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God" (Ps. 84:7).

And one means of its promoting our spiritual growth is by helping our recovery from backslidings, when we have fallen into sin through temptation, contrary to our solemn engagements and promises at the Lord's Table. We are then to consider that though such a case be sad, it is not desperate. There is forgiveness with God for the penitent that will cease to do evil, and reform as well as be sorry. The blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin. If therefore we have fallen into sin, and been overcome by temptation, after we had renewed our vows at the Lord's Table of fidelity to Christ, what must we do? We must heartily repent. We must humble and abase ourselves before God, particularly confess and aggravate our sins, pray more earnestly for God's grace, be sensible of our weakness, and depend upon His strength, watch more carefully against temptation for the future, and beg the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and apply it. And then, upon renewed repentance and faith, we may come to the Lord's Table. For we must not decline the remedy because we are loath to promise that which we fear we shall not perform. Your promise to a physician to take more care of your health hereafter, does not imply that you shall never be sick again, or that he will never help you if you are. But it implies [that] you will not willfully bring

diseases upon yourselves, but use all due means to preserve your health for time to come.

*7. Concerning this, another end we should have in our coming to the Lord's Table is to be progressive in the mortification of sin, to increase our hatred of it, and strengthen our resolutions against it*

Never does sin look so ugly, abominable, and hateful, as when we consider it in view of the cross of Christ—especially pride, covetousness, vainglory, love of the world, envy, uncharitableness. As long as we bear about us a body of sin and death, as long as indwelling sin remains, as long as corruption is not quite destroyed, as long as evil inclinations are not quite cured, as long as the root of bitterness is not quite withered, we shall need this. And therefore, as we should consider beforehand what grace needs strength, so before we come, we should examine ourselves what lust and corruption in particular to pray against, to confess, to bewail, to repent of, to resolve against, and to beg supplies of the Spirit to mortify. And whoever considers the state of his own soul, and is tolerably acquainted with himself, will find that a watch, or a clock, does not more need to be wound up and set right at certain seasons than we do to review ourselves, our state and frame, and renew our engagements against sin, and get fresh sprinkling of the blood of Christ for pardon; and new supplies of His Holy Spirit, to heal the disorders of our spirits, and recover us from our backslidings, and carry on our victory over sin and the devil. And by faith, in prayer, we may look up to our great Advocate and plead His cross, His death, His merit, His purchase, to send down the Holy Spirit, and soften a hard heart, and cure an earthly, unbelieving heart, and subdue such or such a powerful corruption, etc.

*8. Another end in our coming to the Lord's Table is to obtain clearer evidence of our interest in the special love of God, and greater consolation and joy by the proof of our adoption and covenant relation*

We come to obtain the seal, and earnest, and witness of the Spirit of Christ with our spirit, that we are His. It is here especially that pardon and eternal life are sealed and assured to us. Every individual communicant that takes and eats that bread, and drinks of that cup, if he be what he professes to be, may apply it to himself when a minister of Christ, in His name, and by His authority, says, "Take, eat this bread in remembrance of Christ's dying for you. Take and eat. Take and drink. Take it as from Christ. Take it with a sealed pardon of all your sins, with a sealed covenant, comprehending all the promises of the gospel, and all the purchase of the blood of Jesus, if you consent with your hearts, and yield yourselves to be the Lord's." The great question that troubles a doubting Christian is this: Are my sins pardoned, and my transgressions blotted out? God has instituted this sacrament to resolve this to the weak in faith. Behold the sign and the seal! If remission of sins be an article of the covenant, of the promised benefits of it, the seal must reach to them. And all that come penitently and believingly have here a sealed pardon for sins past. Because we are jealous and suspicious to believe that such wretches as we should be forgiven, God has granted us this abundant assurance. He has received us to His own table. He gives us, under the symbols of the bread and wine, the body and blood of His Son who died for our sins, as a sure pledge of His favor in the forgiveness of them.

And is not this the way to assurance and comfort? Can there be any institution more proper to give us peace, more likely to fill us with joy? We can hardly suppose in a numerous assembly of devout and serious communicants but here and

there are many instances of such a joy. Many there be who adore and praise, admire and extol the free grace of God, and whose hearts are ready to speak such language as this.

Lord! What a privilege is this! That such an unworthy sinner, such a vile creature, such a worm, such a wretch as I am should be called to eat of the children's bread! Lord, who am I, that I should be so favored of the King of glory? [I] who had resisted Thy grace for many years, and lived in rebellion against Thee, have disobeyed Thy call, and slighted Thy love! [I] who have behaved so obstinately and faultily, slothfully and unbecomingly, since I gave up my name to be Thine! That I should have so many sins forgiven, such spots cleansed, such backslidings healed, such forfeited, surprising mercies bestowed! If there be no heart or tongue in all the world to speak the praise of free grace, I must avow it, profess, and own it, that He loved me freely, and received me graciously, and forgave me sooner than I could forgive myself. Blessed be God, that I may avouch Thee for the Lord my God. I do it gladly and joyfully, with a heart fuller of love, and joy, and praise than any words can reach. O my God and Savior, Redeemer and Sanctifier, what hast Thou done for my soul! Oh, matchless grace! Oh, incomparable love! Oh, amazing condescension! I was ignorant of Thee, and at enmity against Thee, and might have been left to perish, but Thou hast rescued me from the pit of destruction. Thou hast opened my eyes, and conquered my heart, and called me by Thy grace to the blessed hope of the gospel. Thou didst mercifully soften my hard heart, and make me willing in the day of Thy power, and drew me by the cords of love. Thou didst choose me out of this lost world, sanctify me for Thyself, turn my heart from sin, pluck me out of the snare of the devil, adopt me into Thy family, display the riches of Thy grace, and seal Thy love, and entertain me at Thy table with the comforts of Thy Spirit, and shed abroad Thy love in my heart. And

so let me know that God's thoughts are not as ours, nor His ways as ours, but as high as the heavens are above the earth, so are His thoughts and ways above ours.

*9. I might add another end, to get ability and strength to resist such and such temptations as we are burdened with, and sometimes overcome by, and find it difficult to withstand*

God has promised, as the God of peace, to tread down Satan under your feet (Rom. 16:20). Yet for many years you have, some of you, been struggling against such and such temptations. But [you] neglect to come to the Lord's Table, to plead that and other promises there as that He will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, etc.

*10. [Another end is to cast our burdens on the Lord] under the pressure of afflictions*

Under disappointments in the world, under bodily weakness and distempers, under poverty and disgrace, unfaithfulness of friends, malice of enemies, and death of relations, etc., whatever your burden be, come to the Lord's Table with this end, to cast your burden on the Lord, to spread your case before Him, and to beg a supply of all your needs, and support under all your trials, and gracious improvement by them, and such a sanctified deliverance as shall manifest that all things are working together for good—for such ends as these we should come to the table of the Lord.

### **Use 1**

How dreadful is it that so many come to the Lord's Table ignorant of the true end they ought to have in coming. I confess there are some young people ripe in knowledge, but many, both young and old, extremely ignorant of the nature, ends, and uses of the Lord's Supper. And it can hardly be

imagined by any, except ministers who have experience of it, what strange answers they will give to very plain questions, even about the principles of the doctrines of Christ, and especially about the sacraments, and the covenant of grace. Who is in fault? You will say, ministers in part, for lack of catechizing in public, as well as people for lack of reading and learning their catechism. But if ministers should be never so careful and constant in public catechizing, except, first, parents and masters of families will do their part in their several houses, it will signify little. Secondly, except particular persons, whether older or younger, will be at some pains to attain to the knowledge of Christian religion, as they will be, and are, about any other thing that they profess to have a value for. And therefore such as desire to come to the Lord's Table will do well to read several books that may inform them concerning the nature of the ordinance, and discourse with such of their friends as can instruct them about it. And it may be some help to be spectators of the administration, though they be not as yet actual communicants. It is principally for these that such a liberty is admitted in any of our congregations—for such, I say, as desire and intend to prepare themselves to come to the Lord's Table, and not for others in common, who have no such thought or design.

## Use 2

How sad is it for any to come without such ends as these! Especially if it be only to appear good, and to be thought better than we are, or if there be some secular, carnal end in view. To receive upon such base, mean, or ill principles, must needs be highly provoking. No wonder therefore if many come for the worse, and not for the better, when their ends are not right. God will be sanctified in all those that draw nigh Him, but He cannot be so by those who come for a wrong end. No,

He is dishonored, and the ordinance profaned, and it may be expected that He will some way testify His severe displeasure. For they are guilty of the body and blood of Christ. They eat and drink judgment to themselves. They hazard sickness, calamity, personal and family afflictions. It may be death of relations. It may be their own death, by displeasing God in communing without right ends. For this cause many are sick and weak, and some fallen asleep, and are cut off by death. Rather, it looks as if this may be the case of such as may be good men as to their state, and shall not be condemned with the wicked world, but are thus severely judged by the Lord here for lack of examining themselves and coming in a right manner, which can never be without right ends in coming.

**Use 3**

Let me beg you therefore to look back, you that have been often at the Lord's Table. What have your ends been? Can you say they have been such as I have now mentioned?

**Use 4**

If such should be our ends in coming to that ordinance, and such ends may be attained and reached, how are they lacking to themselves who live in the neglect of it, or make very little of that which is a proper means to such excellent and valuable ends!

**Use 5**

Let us then resolve and endeavor to come to this feast with such desires and ends as have been named—upon such principles, from such motives, with such views and designs. And let us seriously examine ourselves as to our ends in desiring to come. Let me briefly recollect the sum of them. To profess

our relation to Christ as His disciples, and our communion with our fellow Christians. To yield obedience to the authority of our Lord, who commands us to remember His love and death this way. To renew our covenant with God in Christ, by feasting on this sacrifice. To express our thankfulness to God for giving His Son, and to our Lord Jesus for giving Himself to die for us. To profess our love to all the saints, and our charity to all mankind, and our forgiveness in particular to those who have wronged and injured us. To strengthen weak grace, and promote our sanctification and improvement in holiness. To get more victory over sin, and to be progressive in subduing of corruption. To obtain clearer evidence and assurance of our interest in the special favor and covenant love of God. That we may live a life of joy, and have the witness of the Spirit. To be better enabled to resist and overcome particular temptations to sin, which it may be with great difficulty we have long struggled against. And, lastly, to bring our wills to submit to the divine will, to bear the burdens and afflictions of human life, and reap the benefit and advantage of all our trials. It is here, at this table of the Lord, we may obtain grace and strength to be so. With such ends and designs, let us all endeavor to come, and God will accept us in the Son of His love, and our coming together shall be for the better, and not for the worse.

## CHAPTER 14

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### *The Cross of Christ, a Christian's Glory*

*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

—GALATIANS 6:14

It was foretold that the humiliation and sufferings of the Messiah should be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. That Christ crucified should be for the fall, as well as the rising, of many. That almost everybody should be offended at His cross. That it should be a scandal to the Jews, and reckoned foolishness by the Gentiles. And yet this is less strange than that our Lord's own disciples, who lived in His family, and for a good while conversed with Him, who had seen His works, and heard His divine discourses, that they should be so offended when He speaks of going to Jerusalem to suffer. For upon such a discourse Saint Peter said, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be," to which our Lord replied, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Matt. 16:22–23). And it was owing to these prejudices that they forsook Him at His death, as out of all hope, and that they were so hardly persuaded to believe His resurrection, until after the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, whereby their minds were enlightened to understand the truth of the ancient prophecies concerning Him, and so were brought to glory in His cross, and rejoice in it. But when the

extraordinary gifts of the Spirit began to cease in the Christian church, the prejudices against the cross of Christ began to revive. Insomuch that we read in ecclesiastical history that some of the ancient Christians were so loath to acknowledge His cruel death that they turned the whole history into fable, and would not own the reality of His sufferings, saying that He only appeared, and seemed to suffer, but did not really feel any pain. And the Muhammadans to this day have that foolish opinion concerning Christ, that He escaped and did not suffer the death of the cross, because they knew not how to reconcile it with His glory, that He should be crucified. They were ashamed to own themselves to be disciples of such a Master. Whereas a Christian who is rightly instructed in knowledge of Christ's cross is so far from being ashamed of the crucifixion of his Savior that it is the matter of his joy and glory, and nothing more so. "God forbid," says the apostle, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14).

God forbid that I should glory in anything else. It must not be that I should, or let it not be. I ought not to glory in anything else. And, further, not to glory in this would be most abominable, a thing to be abhorred. Such an expression is never used, but in reference to something very wicked, or very pernicious, as, "Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? God forbid" (Rom. 3:5). "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid" (Rom. 6:1-2). "Is the law sin? God forbid" (Rom. 7:7). "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid" (Rom. 9:14).

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," that is, let who will be offended and stumbled at the sufferings, humiliation, and death of Jesus Christ, I rejoice in it, and boast of it; living and dying, I trust to it. Let who will be ashamed to acknowledge themselves the disciples and followers of such a Master who died upon a cross, and

was ignominiously hanged upon a gibbet, and put to death as a criminal, between two malefactors. I can glory in my relation to Him, and comparatively with that in nothing else. God forbid I should glory in anything beside. He rejects with extreme indignation any other thing as the matter of his glory and the cause of his happiness.

There is a threefold gradation in this expression, which is very significant. First, that he was so far from being scandalized at the cross of Christ, as a matter of shame, that he owns it and glories in it. Secondly, that he knows of nothing in all the world so fit to be gloried in as this. Thirdly, that it is so necessary to have this persuasion concerning the cross of Christ, so necessary to entertain this good opinion of it, that we ought to detest and abhor the contrary opinion and practice—"God forbid that I should glory," etc.

These shall be the three heads of my discourse:

1. First, that the cross of Christ is the matter of a Christian's glory
2. Secondly, that there is nothing else, in comparison with it, to be gloried in
3. Thirdly, that not to glory in this, or to prefer anything else, is wicked and detestable

Which will make way for a serious application, by inferences of truth and duty.

*1. First, that the cross of Christ is the matter of a Christian's glory and rejoicing*

And here I must consider:

- a. First, what we are to understand by "the cross of Christ"
- b. Secondly, what by "glorying in it"
- c. Thirdly, prove that it is a fit matter of a Christian's glory

a. First, as to the cross of Christ, we are not to limit it to the tree to which He was nailed, the gibbet, to which He was fastened, the wood on which He hung and suffered. We are assured that He did die that sort of death, the death of the cross, but the Spirit of God has taken no care to satisfy our curiosity about that instrument, and learned men do not agree about the shape and figure of it. The Romanists make a great stir about the wood of Christ's cross, and have many pieces of it preserved as relics, which are devoutly worshiped. The cross of Christ, they tell you, was buried for three hundred years underground, and found by Helena, the mother of Constantine. And to discover that this was the true cross, miracles were wrought by it, and not by the other two crosses of the malefactors, who suffered at the same time. But I leave these stories to such as will believe them.

By the cross of Christ, I mean His passion and suffering on the cross, His death and crucifixion. I take in all the pain, and shame, and curse of that death, considering at the same time the dignity of the person who suffered that death, the necessary antecedents of it, in His incarnation, etc., and the excellent consequents and fruits of it, for our advantage—the glorious design and end of it, the gracious covenant that was confirmed by it, etc.

And then the doctrine of the cross will appear no matter of our shame but [of our] glory, as the great object of our faith, the basis of our hope, and the spring of our consolation.

It is not unusual in Scripture for the suffering or punishment to be expressed by the instrument of it, as, "what shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall...famine or... sword?" (Rom. 8:35). That is, death by famine, or inflicted by the sword. So the cross of Christ here, that is, His death on the cross. So the apostle speaks of Onesiphorus, he "was not ashamed of my chain" (2 Tim. 1:16), that is, of the reproach of

my imprisonment. He was not ashamed to own me, though I were a prisoner.

b. As to the expression of glorying in the cross of Christ. The same word is used sometimes for rejoicing, "Rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2), sometimes for boasting, "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God" (Rom. 2:17). And it often signifies something yet more, that is to say, exultation, triumph, a preceding satisfaction in some great privilege and blessing obtained, or benefit enjoyed. As when the apostle expresses his triumph, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). So that to glory in the cross of Christ must imply our open acknowledgment of a crucified Savior—an open profession, to believe in Him, as dying for our sins, and suffering divine justice by the sacrifice of Himself, as saving us by His death, and sanctifying us by His blood. It implies that we own our baptism, being baptized into His death. That we look for life and salvation by His being crucified for us, and are so far from being stumbled at the method of God's grace in bringing about our salvation this way that we are fully persuaded of the wisdom and righteousness of God herein glorified, and accordingly desire to be more and more enlightened in the knowledge of Christ Jesus, and Him crucified, determining with the apostle to know nothing in comparison of this (1 Cor. 2:2).

And indeed this doctrine of the cross, or of Christ crucified, is the greatest thing we are to study. It is to this that the rites and ceremonies of the law refer. This the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament do all center in. This the two great ordinances and institutions of the New Testament do exhibit and commemorate. We are baptized into the death of Christ by the one sacrament, and we show forth the Lord's

death by the other, and thereby have communion with Him. All the virtue of the baptismal water comes from the cross of Christ. And in the other ordinance, we feast upon His sacrifice. The bread we there eat is the communion of His broken body on the cross. And the cup we there drink represents His blood shed for the remission of sins. And well may we therefore rejoice and glory in the cross of Christ, which I come in the next place to prove, that is to say:

c. Thirdly, that this is a fit matter of a Christian's glory. And here are three sorts of persons especially concerned. i. First, the Jews, who were scandalized at the ignominy of the cross. ii. And the Gentiles who reckoned it foolishness to expect life and salvation that way. iii. And then professing Christians, who generally despise this cross of Christ, or do not glory in it as they should.

i. First, as to the Jews. The humble appearance of our Savior, especially His suffering and death, did mightily stumble the generality of the people, being misled by the notion they had of the temporal dominion and kingdom of the Messiah, for in that low and earthly sense they understood those Scriptures that speak of His glory, and to this day they are hardened in their unbelief by reason of that prejudice. It is certain that in our Savior's time they pleased themselves with the hope of temporal salvation by the Messiah. But they mistook His character. They looked for a fighting prince that should overcome the Romans, and make all the world subject to their nation, imagining their Messiah should have the pomp and magnificence of an earthly monarch. They did not dream of a Savior who should suffer and die. If He would come down from the cross, they might believe in Him, but they could not imagine the promised Messiah should be brought so low as to

die on a cross. The disappointment of their expectation in this particular enraged them against our Lord Jesus Christ. He appeared to them as a root out of dry ground, without form or comeliness, and therefore all His discourses, and all His miracles could not persuade them to receive Him as the Messiah. But they resolved to destroy Him for pretending to it. If He would not be their prince and captain in their own sense, He shall be their martyr!

But how unreasonably did they object against a suffering, dying Messiah, when there are so many types and prophecies to that purpose in the Old Testament! And why should it be thought strange that the glory and grandeur of His spiritual kingdom over the souls of men should be set forth in such a lofty manner, by terms of temporal dominion and greatness? But there they stopped, and understood not the heavenly, spiritual sense and meaning of it.

They considered not that His dominion and empire was to be over the souls of men, and His throne to be in heaven, that He was to sit down at the right hand of God, and His kingdom not to be of this world. The great victories He should obtain over the world and Satan were to be, by the power of His doctrine, by the efficacy of His Spirit, by the merit of His death, by the patience of His followers, etc. This they might have learned from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, for the veil on the face of Moses was not so dark, the cloud that covered the mystery of Christ's spiritual kingdom was not so thick, but they might have seen through it, had there not been another veil upon their hearts. Do not the prophets very frequently promise and represent the Messiah as preaching the gospel to the poor, restoring sight to the blind, and setting those at liberty who were under the bondage of sin and Satan? We meet with expressions that plainly prefigured a state of humiliation and suffering. And would it not have been unworthy the

great design of the Son of God to come into the world only to avenge the Jews of their enemies, to fill the world with blood and slaughter, only to raise that people above all others on the earth, and to have ruined and destroyed all other nations of the world?

Had they not plain types and figures of a suffering, dying Messiah? They cannot deny but Isaac was an eminent type of the Messiah, and bore the wood on which he was to suffer, as a sacrifice, by God's command and his father's intention. And this was the custom of such as suffered on the cross, to carry the wood. And some think it was very near the place where our Lord afterward suffered. And when the knife was at his throat, you know he was redeemed by the substitution of a ram, to intimate that the offering of the promised Savior was as yet suspended, and beasts for a time accepted as a pledge of that expiation He should one day make.

Moreover, as to the Paschal lamb, not a bone of him was to be broken, to intimate that the true Paschal lamb who should take away the sin of the world was to suffer that death to which breaking of bones did belong, that is to say, crucifixion. But God, for the fulfilling of the Scriptures, prevented that particular, as to Christ, "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken" (Ps. 34:20), as was usual. Besides the prophecy of Zechariah, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced" (Zech. 12:10), compared with that of the psalmist, "They pierced my hands and my feet" (Ps. 22:16).

Besides the many types, there are express prophecies that "Messiah be cut off" (Dan. 9:26), where the prophet dates his account of time not from His birth but from His death. And in Isaiah 53 there are so many express passages concerning the sufferings, humiliation, and death of the Messiah that the Jews have no way to evade the force of those Scriptures but by a tale of two Messiahs that should appear in the world,

the one to be afflicted and killed, and the other to triumph and reign. Nor can any of the enemies of the cross of Christ among the Gentiles evade the proof from that chapter, but by supposing that chapter to have been written after the crucifixion of Christ. But as to the Jews themselves, they all witness the contrary. The Jews therefore were inexcusable in being offended at the cross of Christ.

ii. Secondly, as to the Gentile world. Christ crucified is foolishness to them, and yet the sufferings and death of the Messiah are unreasonably urged by them as a prejudice against His saving power and design. For how often do they reckon it the portion of the best and greatest persons that have ever been in the world to suffer and be afflicted! How usual is it for them to glory in the extraordinary death of some of their worthies, Socrates, Regulus, Anaxarchus, etc., as examples of greater virtue than ordinary. And what tributes do they make on those that lost their lives by tyrants, and died for their country. But those that know anything of the pagan worship must needs be convinced that the heathens had little reason to be ashamed of the cross of Christ, who had so much reason to be ashamed of the follies, dotages, and impurities of their own religion. Their idolatrous worship was made up of such a bundle of fooleries, mixed with so many impious and impure rites that they cannot be mentioned without abhorrence. For they could not be like the gods they worshiped without being incestuous, adulterers, drunkards, and most profligate villains. For such they acknowledge their very gods to have been whom they worshiped, and yet these are the people that count the cross of Christ foolishness.

iii. Thirdly, as to us Christians, who have the badge of Christ's disciples by baptism, let us consider His cross as the matter of

our glory, and what abundant reason we have to rejoice and glory in the cross of Christ, and in nothing else. To which end consider it:

As it was appointed and ordered by God the Father, as the great means to accomplish His glory, in the salvation of sinners. For, however He was slain by wicked hands, He was yet delivered to death by God's determinate counsel. "It pleased the LORD to bruise him" (Isa. 53:10). It was God's appointment that made the cross of Christ meritorious for us, His sufferings and death having this design, to bring about the glory of God in the redemption and recovery of lost sinners. On which account, when He was in the sorest agony, and His soul troubled, though He prays to be delivered from that hour, He does not insist on it, in consideration that His sufferings were to be the means of God's glory, "For this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name" (John 12:27-28).

Now the glory of God, or the glorifying of His name, consists in the discovery and manifestation of the divine perfections. God's glory is the luster, the radiance of the divine perfections. It is the beauty, the loveliness of what is designed and done by God, agreeable to the infinite excellencies of His being and nature. This is His glory, which is observable, and ought to be taken notice of, by intelligent creatures capable of it, that so He may be actually glorified. But whether it be observed and taken notice of or not, there is a perfect rectitude and beauty in all that He does, as conformable to His own infinite perfections. This is His end, as the first supreme being, and in this He takes complacency. Now the death and sufferings of Christ, and particularly His being crucified, did thus glorify God. That is, He herein did act suitably to Himself, becoming the excellencies of the divine nature—"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things... to make the captain of

their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Heb. 2:10). There is a luster on the perfections of God that issues from this.

*2. It is the matter of our glory if we consider the Person suffering this death*

And here we may take notice both of the dignity of the Person and of His willingness to suffer. Consider that He was the eternal Son of God, the brightness of His Father’s glory, who is far above angels, principalities, and powers, the great Emmanuel, who was in the form of God and counted it no robbery to be equal with Him, He that fills and clothes all creatures, and is the fountain of living waters. It was He who hung naked upon a tree and cried out, “I thirst.” The eternal Wisdom of the Father was treated like a fool, scorned, reproached, derided, and mocked. It was the beloved Son of God, who complained of His being forsaken of Him. Besides the dignity of His person, let us consider His readiness and willingness to suffer and die for us. His eternal readiness for this work is described (Prov. 8:31), rejoicing from eternity in the habitable parts of the earth, considering what work He was to do for the children of men. We may likewise run over in our thoughts the greatness and extremity of His sufferings, as to His body and soul. As to the former, they were exceedingly heightened by the tenderness and delicacy of His constitution, His body being immediately framed by the Holy Spirit in the virgin’s womb. None of the martyrs, therefore, could be so sensible of their sufferings as He must be of His. Besides His sense of the evil of sin, and His particular knowledge of all our sins, and the aggravations of them, and their contrariety to God, and His perfect love to God, joined with the clear sense of His displeasure against sin, must needs make His sufferings extraordinary, beyond that of the martyrs. Had there been only the common apprehension of pain, our Lord, who was perfectly innocent in His own

person, sanctified by the Spirit, supported by the Deity, and assured of success, would not have staggered, and groaned, and been sorrowful unto death, sweating drops of blood in the garden, and crying out on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). But He was to answer for our sins. He beheld the indignation of God flaming against sin—the Father, as Sovereign of the world, not sparing His own Son, who undertook to make expiation and atonement. No wonder that He was amazed, and terrified, even to an agony, so as to utter such expressions in the garden, and on the cross. And so extraordinary was this that at the same time the whole world was troubled too. The heavens mourned, the sun was darkened, the eye of the world was covered with sackcloth, when the Sun of Righteousness was thus eclipsed, which being at Passover time, always at full moon, must needs be miraculous. The earth trembled, the rocks rent, the graves opened, the veil of the Temple was rent from top to bottom.

But because it is the cross of Christ that is particularly mentioned, let us consider that He humbled Himself to the death of the cross, which was:

a. A most painful and violent death, wherein the hands and feet, the most nervous and most sensible parts, were nailed and pierced, after they were extended and racked. Besides, it was a languishing death, of some hours' space. It was to die by slow degrees, and in great torment, the weight of the body lifted up from the earth, hanging upon His pierced hands. And this was after His agony and bloody sweat in the garden. It was after His being whipped and scourged, whereby He was so weakened that He could not bear His own cross. His death therefore was more painful than that of those who were crucified with Him. He complains His strength was dried up like a potsherd, and they might tell all His bones. But much more

terrible was the suffering of His soul, when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, when He made His soul an offering for sin, and bore the stroke of that justice that we deserved.

He had a particular knowledge of all the sins committed in the world, past, present, and to come, which was so much the greater trouble by how much the more He prized the honor of God, and loved Him. No wonder if none of the martyrs complained as He did, because none of them felt what He did. His suffering and sorrows made His heart melt like wax, burnt up His bones like an hearth, and made His tongue cleave to the roof of His mouth. Many of the martyrs had courage and joy of soul under the most exquisite torments their enemies could inflict by all their engines of cruelty, and artificial instruments of painful dying. But our blessed Savior felt more than they. The sorrows of His soul were more than all His other sufferings. His heart had sharper nails to pierce it than His hands and feet. His soul was more crucified than His body. He endured the pains of the second death, for substance, so far as was consistent with the perfection of His nature. Though the personal union was not dissolved, the sense and effects of the divine love and favor were for a time withheld, which He complains of on the cross. It is true, the worm of conscience did not touch Him. That is an effect of personal guilt (with which He could not be tainted), not of imputed sin, when He undertook to answer for sinners, and make atonement. And His temporary sufferings were equivalent to eternal, from the dignity of His person. His suffering for a time was of more weight and value than the eternal sufferings of sinners, or of all creatures. We must not say, He was seized with the despair and horrors of the damned, for His Father was ever well-pleased with Him, and never more than when "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). And this our Lord knew, for He assured

the thief that confessed Him, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). But God retired from Him for a while, and, as it were, hid His face from Him, and left Him to tread the wine-press of God's wrath alone. The wrath of God, not against His Son, but against the sins of men, He was to make atonement for, which He now sustained like a victim, and bore in His body on the cross. Otherwise, why could not He, who might have commanded legions of angels to rescue His body, have commanded more than a common strength and assistance to rescue His soul too? But He was willing to drink the very dregs of the bitter cup for our sakes. "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.... But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities" (Isa. 53:4-5), and was "made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13), a "propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2).

b. Consider the shame and ignominy of the cross. Crucified without the walls of the city, and Barabbas, a murderer, a thief, preferred before Him, and released. And the crucified were stripped naked, for the greater disgrace. And He suffered in company with the vilest malefactors, between two thieves, and was first scourged, after the manner of slaves, with a reproachful taunt at every blow. And they put on Him a scarlet robe in derision, a crown of thorns on His head, and a reed in His hand for a scepter, crying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" For the greater shame of such as were crucified, the cause of their punishment was written over them in capital letters, that it might appear just and equitable, and this inscription was set over Him, "THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Matt. 27:37), and that in three languages, that it might be taken notice of by all. And then they derided and reproached Him, if He were indeed a king, and the son of God, that He should come down from the cross, and they would believe Him. Now, though nothing be

more contrary to glory than shame, yet in His shame we glory. We do not lament and bewail it. No, we celebrate the triumph and glory of our Lord's ignominious passion. We adore the majesty of His abasement. All the contemptuous addresses of honor, the mock purple, the counterfeit scepter, the bloody diadem, and thorns, they were mystical representations of His real kingdom, and declared Him to be the Messiah, according to the types and prophecies of Him.

c. It was an accursed death. Hanging on a tree, being lifted up from earth, this had a ceremonial curse annexed to it, though crucifixion was not usually a capital punishment among the Jews, but the Romans. But even among the Jews, great malefactors, when they were put to death, were sometimes exposed to the ignominy of a gibbet, and so, being hanged on a tree, were cursed by the ceremonial law. Now though the Jews had lost the supreme power, and were under the Romans, and so Christ was not condemned to death, strictly according to the Law of Moses, yet the providence of God so ordered it that the death He underwent from the Romans contained in it that ignominious peculiarity to which the legal curse belonged, that is to say, hanging on a tree. And He is said to bear the curse, and to be made a curse for us, including all the punishment of our sins which He endured for us.

*3. Next to the consideration of the death of Christ, and the kind of it, let us consider how much we needed all these sufferings of the Son of God, and what are the benefits and advantages we receive by it, that so we may make it the matter of our glory*

You know they are such as these: reconciliation with God, deliverance from hell, [and] victory over Satan, the great enemy of our souls. He is conquered and overcome by the seed of the

woman. He received a fatal blow on his head, when he bruised the Mediator's heel, by the death of the cross.

Moreover, the confirming the covenant of grace, the sealing of all the promises, and the assurance of their accomplishment, because God spared not His own Son. All the precious legacies and blessings that He bequeathed to us had been of no value, unless sealed by the death of the testator. And consequently the heavenly glory is purchased for all believers, death is sweetened, and the sting of it removed, and our resurrection assured, and heaven is the purchased possession, as the fruit of His death. And a fitness for it by the sanctification of our natures, in order to communion with God here, and hereafter, is another fruit of His dying for us. It is to this we owe our freedom of access to God, His throne being a throne of grace, as sprinkled with the blood of Christ. It is the purchase of His death, [so] that we have support under all afflictions—assistance, comfort, and deliverance as to all our crosses, especially in suffering for His Name's sake, being assured that He will strengthen us, and that we shall not lose our reward, and that all things shall work for good. If therefore the apostle gloried in his sufferings for Christ, much more may we in the cross of Christ, whence is all our support, succor, assistance, strength, victory, acceptance, reward, etc.

### Use 1

If we now glory in Christ crucified, and ought to do so, let us remember He is risen, and ascended, and glorified, and the ignominy of His cross removed by His exaltation. If His cross is the matter of our glory, His heavenly crown should much more be so. It is this that makes the contemplation of His death to be matter of joy, because we are assured that He that was dead is alive, and behold He lives forever, and shall come again for other ends, and in another manner than He came at first. He

is risen, and ascended, and sat down at the right hand of God. All the angels of heaven worship Him. All the heavenly host are subject to Him. Every knee bows to Him. Every creature pays Him homage. He is Head over all things to His church. He is appointed universal judge of all. All the world of mankind shall be summoned before His bar, and receive their decisive, final, everlasting sentence from His mouth. "He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thess. 1:10). We see Him now but as in a picture. He is represented and set forth crucified before our eyes. But what is such a sight of Him, by showing forth His death now, to what we expect, and hope for, when we are brought to be with Him, and behold His glory! We now admire Him, we love Him, we trust Him, and hope in Him. We glory in Him, by the little knowledge of Him as crucified for us, and as dying for us, though it is but through a glass that we see, and a very little that we know at best. But when we shall see Him glorified, when we shall see Him face to face, when we shall see Him as He is, when the veil shall be removed, and our faculties enlarged, and we shall behold Him in His glory, and all His holy angels and glorified ones about Him, then shall we admire His love indeed, by considering who He was, how great and mighty a person He was who stooped so low for us, to be incarnate for us, to be scorned and scourged for us, to be killed and crucified for us, to bear the curse, and be made sin for us. Is He now the chiefest of ten thousand, as seen by an eye of faith, as at His first coming to die for our sins? How much more glorious, how much more lovely, beautiful, and desirable will He be at His second coming, when He shall appear without sin for our salvation! "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). We now rejoice by believing in Him, and loving Him whom we never saw with our bodily

eyes. We rejoice in a little glimpse of Him. We rejoice in the hopes of the glory of God. But what thoughts shall we have of Christ, what a sight of Him will that be, when His triumph, and dignity, and beauty, and glory in His exalted state shall be such as to make amends for the reproach of His cross! If His bloody cross be lovely, what will His triumphant throne be, to which His cross was the way! For, "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him" (Phil. 2:8–9).

### **Use 2**

Let us apprehend our obligation to manifest this our glorying in the cross of Christ. Partly by a genuine love to Christ, and zeal for His glory, in the defense of His name, truth, Word, worship, and followers, when they are ill-treated, or spoken against. Partly by showing forth the Lord's death, according to His order and appointment, at His table. Partly by being crucified to the world by the cross of Christ, and endeavoring more and more, in spirit and practice, to be conformed to Him as our Head. And further, by a readiness to suffer for Him, to take up His cross and follow Him, whenever we are called to it. And in the meantime, to be suitably affected towards our brethren, who suffer for His Name's sake, to sympathize with them, to pray for them, to justify their cause, and to assist them to our utmost.

### **Use 3**

How much are they to be reproved, who count the doctrine of the cross foolishness, when the apostle here glories in it! Who either judge it to be false, by denying the truth of the history, or charge it with absurdity, as not agreeing with their notions and schemes of things. That the pardon and salvation of sinners

should be brought about this way, and that we should expect to be saved by a crucified Savior! As if there were no rational connection between believing in Christ and eternal life. These are to be reproved and pitied at once. For the gospel must needs, to them, be the savor of death unto death.

#### **Use 4**

How much does it concern us to seek after an interest in this death of the cross! The lepers, under the law, were not cured by the bare shedding of the blood of the sacrifice that was offered for them, but by the sprinkling and applying of it. Nor were any healed by the brazen serpent who did not look up to it. Christ and His cross are the great objects of our faith. But we must take care that by faith we receive and apply them. We must receive and own Him as a prophet and as a King. But it is Christ crucified, Christ as a priest, Christ dying on the cross, bearing the curse, and making expiation for sin, that is the principal object of justifying faith, and therefore we read so often of faith in His blood.

Lastly, be persuaded to study the cross of Christ more than ever, if we must glory in nothing else. He calls to us, as from His cross, "Behold Me! Behold Me! Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth!" You among the isles of the Gentiles, He calls to all of you from His cross, "Come unto Me, sinners, and behold the price of your redemption. Come unto Me, weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Though your sins be as scarlet and crimson, come unto Me, and I will make them as snow and wool. My blood cleanses from all sin." He calls to His professed followers and disciples. He calls to them from His cross, to behold His sorrows, to behold His love, to consider how low He humbled Himself for us, and

how highly He expressed His affection by it, to us miserable, wretched, unworthy creatures.

Let us study the cross of Christ with application to ourselves. "O my soul, did He love me, and give Himself for me? Did He humble Himself to the death of the cross for me? Did He tread the wine press of His Father's wrath for me? Did He bear the curse that belonged to me, and that must have fallen on me? Did He give His soul a ransom for me? Was He wounded for my transgressions? Oh, admirable mystery of divine grace and love!" Oh, how little is it believed! How seldom considered! How unthankfully neglected, undervalued and made light of! How few thoughts do we employ in a week, or month, about it! And yet this is the principal and the greatest thing we are to study. All the other parts of the history of Christ were but preparatory to this, or but the fruit of it. For instance, His incarnation, His birth, His life could not avail us, without His cross. And, without that, we could have no part in His resurrection and heavenly glory. It is by His blood, as the blood of atonement, that we are justified, and have peace with God. It is by that blood that we are sanctified too, and recovered to the divine image, by the spirit of holiness. By the power of His death, we are enabled to die to sin and live to righteousness. It is by the death of the cross that our redemption is completed, a sufficient sacrifice offered, full satisfaction made, Satan overcome, the world baffled, death slain, the grave buried—by Christ's dying and rising again! And therefore we should glory in Him.

This is the great spring of our comfort. Who now shall accuse? Who shall condemn? Who shall separate us from Christ, since He has died for us? Hereby He has taken away all our misgivings, and answered all our doubts, solved all our objections, and routed all our fears. The cross of Christ, or Christ Jesus crucified, answers all. Therefore let Him be the

object of your most frequent, serious, delightful thoughts. Let His image be engraved on your hearts. Think on Him oftener than ever. Let Him be the guide of your youth, and the stay of your age—your glory in prosperity, your support in affliction, your refuge at all times. For all our prayers, tears, services, without the sprinkling of His blood, all our sorrows and sufferings without His suffering, will not make atonement for the least sin, will not answer the justice of God for one evil thought. We must look to Christ and His cross for all. Let us resolve therefore to value nothing, to rejoice in nothing, to esteem nothing, to love nothing, to glory in nothing, in comparison of Christ Jesus and Him crucified.



## CHAPTER 15

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### *The Promise and Oath of God*

*For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.*

—HEBREWS 6:16–18

Among the many eminent examples of the ancient worthies, who by faith and patience have inherited the promises, there is mention made of Abraham (v. 13), who, having waited long for the accomplishment of what God had promised, yet had the highest assurance that could be that he should not wait in vain. For the promise which God had made him was confirmed by the oath of God. And, “because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, ‘Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee’” (vv. 13–14). But for fear that it should be said that Abraham was an extraordinary saint, and a special favorite, which is not so much to our comfort, our case is so very different from his that it is strange that from his example we should be exhorted “to the full assurance of

hope unto the end" (v. 11). That he was peculiarly privileged, and what reason have we to expect the like? The apostle obviates such an objection in the words I have read, declaring how this oath concerned all the heirs of the promise, that all believers have the same ground of certainty, by the promise and the oath of God, as Abraham had, "wherein" (or in which oath spoken of before) "God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath" (v. 17). In which promise made to Abraham, all that believe in Christ are concerned, as Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:29). And the promise was this: "Surely blessing I will bless thee" (v. 14), referring to, or at least including, spiritual blessings upon his spiritual seed, for the same promised blessing to Abraham is said to come upon the Gentiles that should afterwards believe (Gal. 3:14).

These promised blessings, the blessings of the New Covenant, God assures us of by His oath, the highest security that He can give, to obviate all errors, to remove all doubts, for fear that after the declaring of His will we might think He should alter the event. For fear that we should suspect there may be some tacit condition that should hinder the performance, he tells us God annexed His oath, which two things, the promise and oath of God, are the most undoubted evidence of His immutable counsel.

It is concerning the oath of God, the nature of it, and our comfort by it, that I would speak to from this Scripture. And here I might consider: 1. Something in general of the nature of an oath, as relating both to God, and us, and then: 2. Speak of the particular manner, mentioned in Scripture, of God's swearing, and afterwards: 3. Consider the signification and design, the intention and meaning of the oath of God, with respect to us, and conclude with some practical reflections, by way of use.

*1. First, in the general, as to the nature of an oath*

It is a special kind of confirmation of what is less certain by that which is more certain, or of what is less evident by that which is more evident. If we swear, it is by the blessed God, His being and perfections, which are more certain than anything that we can affirm. In an oath we appeal to God as the witness of what we say. It is an invocation of the name of God for the greater certainty. If God swear by Himself, by His own eternal life and being, that is more certain than that He will do this or that in particular for His creatures. So that the oath of God consists in His express engagement of His holy attributes and perfections whereby He is known to be God, for the accomplishment of what He promises or threatens, or for the truth and certainty of what He declares. And it is said He swears thus by Himself, and engages His own being and perfections, because He could swear by no greater. For in an ordinary oath, there is an invocation of some nature superior to our own, in whose power, or at whose disposal we are expecting protection if we swear truly, or punishment on the contrary, if we do not, with a kind of imprecation or execration expressed or implied.

*2. You will the better understand this if you consider the particular manner of God's swearing by Himself and His perfections, as the Scripture gives us an account*

In an oath there is a positive engagement of what is sworn by. Thus the being and attributes of God are engaged, when He swears by Himself or by any of His perfections. "By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD...that in blessing I will bless thee" (Gen. 22:16-17). And by His holiness, "Once have I sworn by my holiness" (Ps. 89:35); "The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness" (Amos 4:2). In other places He is said to swear "by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength" (Isa. 62:8). He is brought in, laying His hand on His throne, and swearing

to root out Amalek (Ex. 17:16). In other places, He engages the immutability of His being, pledges His very Godhead, as if He were willing to forfeit it if He did not perform what He promises, and make good what He says. Sometimes He stakes His very life—"As I live saith the LORD," that is, "do not take Me for a living God, if what I say be not true." In other places we read that the Lord has sworn "by the excellency of Jacob" (Amos 8:7). That is, by Himself, of whom Jacob and his posterity boasted and gloried, as their God, and there was no nation so great that had God so nigh unto them.

Sometimes He only affirms that "he hath sworn," for He is abundantly His own witness. The same thing is called God's decree. "The Lord sware and will not repent" (Heb. 7:21), concerning Christ's being a priest forever, says the apostle. "The LORD said unto my Lord," says the psalmist (Ps. 110:1). When God will unveil His own decree and purpose, so as to testify it to be unchangeable, He does it in the way of an oath or affirms what He has sworn in the case. For by the oath of God, His purpose is declared to be unalterable. [He affirms] that there is no reservation or exception, as we find there has been in the declaration and threatening of temporal judgments. But whatever be the manner and form of expression, or whatever of God's perfections, properties, and excellencies be mentioned, yet He is still swearing by Himself. He must therefore deny Himself, and cease to be God if He does not make it good.

As to that part of an oath, which refers to imprecation, or execration, which is supposed to be in all swearing, it is observable that in the Hebrew language it is always concealed and hidden. "Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David" (Ps. 89:35). Here is something understood but restrained, that is, if it be so, then let Me not be trusted or obeyed. So our Savior gives a like instance in the New Testament (Mark 8:12). When the Pharisees tempted Him and

demanded a sign, He sighed in spirit, and said, “Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation,” etc. So we read it, but in the Greek it is, “if there be” a sign given to this generation.

*3. Thirdly, let us consider the reason and end of God’s swearing to anything that He declares what it intends and signifies as to us, and that in these four particulars*

- a. First, the great importance of that which is attested by oath
- b. Secondly, the strangeness and difficulty of believing it
- c. Thirdly, that we might be better satisfied and assured of the certainty of it
- d. Fourthly, that we might have the more abundant consolation and joy

a. First, the great importance and consequence of the thing so asserted and declared upon oath. An oath is not to be taken upon every trifling occasion. It is a seal that ought not to be affixed, but only where the matter is of great weight and moment. Wherever you find in Scripture [that] the oath of God is added to His word, it is in some solemn and weighty business where the honor of God or the happiness of man is very much concerned. As that, “every knee shall bow to [Christ]” and all the world acknowledge Him as their Lord and King (Rom. 14:11; Isa. 45:23). In this both God’s glory and our own interest are concerned, and therefore the oath of God is prefixed. An oath among men must be taken in judgment, as well as in righteousness (Jer. 4:2). There must be a just and serious occasion for it, otherwise we take God’s name in vain, and profane a part of His worship, and He will not hold such guiltless. Doubtless the blessed God would not swear and add

His oath but where the matter is of great consequence. The apostle gives us an instance in that great article of the Christian religion, the eternal priesthood of Christ (Heb. 6:20 compared with Ps. 110:4). He proves the excellency of Christ's priesthood, by which it was confirmed and ratified, in so much that not without an oath was He made priest, says the apostle. "The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek," says the psalmist (Ps. 110:4). The Levitical priests were by God's appointment. They had a divine constitution and call, but no confirmation by the oath of God. He used not an oath about anything that belonged to them. This advances the honor and excellency of Christ, and of His mediation and priesthood, above that under the Law.

And having mentioned this, of God's confirming the eternal priesthood of Christ by an oath, it ought to be considered when we may suppose this to have been done, for He says, "[I have] sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever." Some suppose it at the ascension of Christ into heaven. But will not this confound the kingly and priestly office of Christ? Is it not reasonable to think that this oath of God should precede any solemn duty of His priestly office, at least the principal part of it, in His sacrifice and death? Will it not take off the force of the apostle's argument in this (Hebrews 7)? For it would then follow that the principal discharge of Christ's priestly office, that is to say, the sacrifice of Himself on the cross, was antecedent to the oath of God, whereby He was made a priest. Either He was made a priest, and discharged His office as to that great part of it, His sacrifice on the cross, without the oath of God, or else the death of Christ did not belong to His priestly office. And wherein has He then any preference before the Levitical priests, as to His being made so by the oath of God, if this were not before His ascension into heaven? May we not therefore suppose the

decree and counsel of God in the eternal transactions between the Father and the Son concerning our redemption, and the revelation and discovery of it, which God made to David, to amount to the oath of God, or His having sworn it? For in these two things, the unchangeable purpose of God and the declaration of it, seems to consist this oath. Hereupon God affirms He had sworn in the case.

We may certainly depend upon it that wherever the oath of God is affixed, it is not a slight and an ordinary matter. To imagine otherwise is to reflect upon the wisdom of God. He has given His oath that He delights not in the death of a sinner. What can be of greater moment for us to know and believe! And that if we will take sanctuary in Christ, as the refuge of hope, we shall be eternally saved. This we are assured of in the text by the two immutable things in which it were impossible for God to lie, having His word and promise and oath affixed thereto. We may thereof not only believe that He will faithfully perform His word, but wherever we find His oath, we may be assured the matter is important, as well as certain.

b. Secondly, the oath of God is added upon the account of the strangeness of the thing, and its difficulty to be believed. No wise man will swear to what is obvious and plain, to what is readily acknowledged, and cannot be denied. There needs no oath to prove that the whole is greater than a part, or that the sun is risen at noonday. The use of an oath is when there is some obscurity and doubt, or some controversy or dispute, some difficulty to believe what is so attested, as in the aforementioned place (Isaiah 45). Concerning the kingly power and dominion of Christ, and the universal subjection of all to Him, this is declared by the oath of God, because it might well be looked upon as a strange and incredible thing, considering the natural averseness of mankind to faith in Christ and

subjection to Him. Considering the depth of His humiliation, when He appeared in the form of a servant, with all the ignominious circumstances of His cross and passion, it is no easy matter to believe that this was the Christ of God, who had all power in heaven and earth committed to Him—that He has a name given Him above every name, and that every knee shall bow to Him. We find to this purpose, when our Savior told the high priest, and the Sanhedrin, that “hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power” (Matt. 26:64), the high priest rent his clothes and cried out, “He has spoken blasphemy, and deserves to die.” It could not enter into his thoughts that the despised Jesus, who stood before him as a criminal, should be ever so exalted as to sit at the right hand of God and have power over all flesh. The promises of grace and glory, of pardon and eternal life by Christ, are hard to be believed. The privileges of our redemption by Him, the blessedness that we expect from Him, are things in themselves so great that we need to have them confirmed by an oath.

We are apt to question the truth of God, and by our unbelief, to make Him a liar. We raise objections against every word and promise of such great and glorious things. We are ready to suppose some reserve and continue some secret distrust. Now God would remove all our suspicion and jealousies by the addition of His oath to His covenant promise. Because the things revealed in the gospel are so difficult to be believed, and our salvation by the death of Christ and faith in Him is a riddle to reason without revelation, God doubles His promise, and adds His oath, that “by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18), we might be encouraged to believe. And therefore some of the ancients have said that every oath of God is “a certain reproach to our

infidelity.”<sup>1</sup> God upbraids our unbelief whenever He gives us His oath for the confirmation of any matter. Not that we might justly except against His promise, or doubt of His word, for His promise and oath are both unchangeable, but in condescension to our weakness He adds His oath, because the things are so great that we are backward to believe them. A declaration or promise confirmed by oath is the highest testimony among men, and yet we may be therein deceived, and many that trust to the promises and oaths of men are so. But the apostle tells us here that it is impossible for God to lie, having once engaged His faithfulness, by His promise, and His oath, which leads us to consider:

c. Thirdly, the infallible certainty of that which is assured us by the oath of God, when He says, “I have sworn by myself.” It is added, “the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return” (Isa. 45:23). There are several declarations God has made that admitted of an alteration, as concerning the destruction of Nineveh within forty days, which yet upon their repentance was not executed. And in the case of Hezekiah, that he should die and not live. And yet, upon his prayer, fifteen years are added to his life. And there is a general declaration (Jer. 18:7–10). But wherever the oath of God is annexed, His immutable counsel, His unchangeable purpose is there declared. And it is observable that, notwithstanding, the threatening of temporal judgments to a sinful nation or person may admit a secret reservation and exception in case of their repentance, yet the final rejectors of Christ and His salvation have the oath of God affixed to ascertain their destruction, “to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?” (Heb. 3:18). Predictions

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1. Latin: *exprobratio quaedam infidelitatis nostrae*.

concerning future events, which are confirmed by an oath from God, express the immutable determinations of His will, whereas there are many predictions and declarations in Scripture without the oath of God, that imply a tacit condition. It seems needful in those things where God declares the irrevocable purposes of His will, that there should be some mark and character set upon them, to confirm His people's faith. And this He has done by annexing an oath to His promise. Not that an oath lays a greater obligation on God to perform than a declaration of His will by promise, but God's oath respects us, and not Himself. It is a testimony to us that God's will declared therein is an unchangeable will, and the mercies promised are such as shall be without any repentance on God's part (Isa. 55:3). The matter sworn to shall never be recalled.

If we consider the sacredness of an oath among men, we find it the highest ground of faith and assurance that can be. All that own a God and a providence have thought this solemn appeal to heaven the best way to put an end to strife and decide a doubtful matter, and there is nothing more infamous, or a greater disgrace to humanity, than a perjured person. If men would give credit to a controverted or doubtful matter, they confirm what they say by an oath. It is the last result of truth and confidence among men, for if that will not oblige men to speak truth, we can suppose nothing will. When men appeal solemnly to God as a witness to the truth of what they say, and a judge and avenger if they swear falsely and do not speak the truth, what can we have more? For an imprecation and execration is implied or expressed—"The LORD do so to me, and more also" (1 Kings 2:23; Ruth 1:17). So that it is not possible for men to lay a more solemn obligation on their consciences than by the swearing of an oath, "If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond"

(Num. 30:2). By swearing, he does in effect pawn his soul for the truth of what he says.

The promise is certain and unchangeable to which God's oath is annexed. The sentence is irrevocable that is hereby confirmed. No greater security can be given. All tacit conditions are cut off. If it be a threatening, the sentence is absolute, no entreaties can alter it. If it be a promise confirmed by the oath of God, what greater certainty or satisfaction can we have? "Once have I sworn," says God (Ps. 89:35). There needs no repetition of it, as sometimes among men. God is said to swear when He binds Himself absolutely to the performance, and thus He condescends for our fuller certainty.

d. Fourthly, it is for our greater consolation and joy, that "we might have a strong consolation" (Heb. 6:18), says the apostle here. That without doubt or misgiving, we may apply the promise, and rejoice in it. Many of the saints of the Old Testament have encouraged themselves against fears and dangers by the consideration of God's oath. "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (Mic. 7:20). "Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah" (Hab. 3:9)—God's oath to them, not theirs to Him. So we find God Himself reminds the Jews of the reason of His continued kindness to them as His chosen people: "[Not] because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand" (Deut. 7:7–8).

This encourages our faith, to trust in the promise, and rejoice in the covenant mercy of God. "With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee," says the Lord, "for this is as the

waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee" (Isa. 54:8–9).

Doubtless there was wickedness enough in the world to have drawn another flood after that of Noah. The same reason that caused one might have brought another. But God's oath engaged His mercy. He adds His oath, that our hearts might be comforted and established, that we might have strong consolation and not be disquieted with fears, not hurried with solicitous thoughts, or discouraged by threatening dangers, but have assured peace and comfort. God is so kind, He would not have us live in suspense, in doubts and uncertainties, but [He would have us] rest steadily upon His word and oath, and fix the anchor of our faith and hope, that not a tittle shall fail of all that He has promised. The ever-living and unchangeable God has sealed His covenant by an oath. He gives word upon word, promise upon promise, and adds His oath to assure and confirm our staggering, unbelieving hearts. Is it therefore presumption to seek after and endeavor to rise up to assurance? No, it is a matter of duty, and the design of God in affixing His oath to His promise. The apostle often prays for this abundant consolation (2 Thess. 2:16–17; Rom. 15:13).

But all our comfort and joy depends upon our certainty, the oath of God confirming and establishing the word of promise. Therefore let us not despise the consolation of God as small. Let us not undervalue the provision He has made for our comfort and joy, which is built upon the surest foundation that can be. Particularly in the pardon of many and great transgressions, His oath is added to His word, that we might have strong consolation. And what strong comfort could there be, if only little sins might be forgiven? The end of an oath is to take away strife. We do not strive with God, or doubt of His mercy, to forgive little sins. This strong consolation

is for those who fly to Christ for refuge, after great crimes. As we cannot have greater blessings and privileges than we have by the gospel of Christ, so we can expect them on more sure and certain grounds. Let us then lift up our heads and rejoice in God our Savior, considering that the oath of God has confirmed His covenant, and confirmed the everlasting priesthood of Christ, to accomplish all that He has promised. And nothing that He has said or sworn shall ever fail. And this will lead me to some practical reflections as the use and application of what has been said.

### **Uses**

1. How admirable is the divine condescension in this matter, to succor and assist the weakness of our faith! Is the immutability of God's counsel the ground and support of our faith? Should we not think His declared word and promise sufficient? But behold, He stoops to give us His oath for fuller confirmation. He pawns His very life, His holiness, His excellency, His very being for our greater satisfaction and assurance. How admirable is His goodness herein! For the great Lord of heaven and earth freely to declare His mind to such worms as we are, to tell us beforehand what He would have done, and what He will do, were great condescension and kindness, but to add His promise, and repeat it, and to treat us in a way of covenant, this is more. And to all this to add His oath is a condescension we cannot sufficiently praise Him for.

2. Secondly, if with such seriousness and solemnity, and for such weighty reasons, God Himself is pleased to swear, how abominable and provoking is the needless rash swearing by God that many are guilty of in common conversation? What profaneness? What contempt of God and of all that is awful and sacred is implied in it? When upon slight and trivial occasions

men will make use of oaths (which are only fit in weighty matters, to determine controversies), it argues a contempt of God and of religion, as well as a distrust of a man's reputation, that his bare word is not sufficient, and will not be taken; Not to mention the incivility of it, in the company of those who have any reverence for God.

3. Thirdly, is God upon His oath for greater certainty, and in weighty matters for our sakes, to assure us the thing shall be certain? How dreadful is the guilt of perjury! How vile and abominable a thing is it to violate an oath, either to God or man—not to perform and make good what we have sworn to! It is not possible to lay a more sacred obligation upon conscience than when we bind ourselves with an oath, and yet how little is the guilt of perjury regarded? How many make light of it, forget their oaths, and contradict them daily, make no conscience of performing what they have sworn to God or man! It is certain there is a great deal of guilt upon this nation with respect to perjury. The multiplying of oaths was never a blessing to any nation. Ill men will swallow any oath for advantage and interest, or to avoid an inconvenience. And the most conscientious will be most scrupulous, because the guilt of perjury in violation of an oath is so heinous.

4. Fourthly, take heed of making God a liar, as to any of those things wherein you have not only His word but His oath. He that believes not the record and testimony God has given in so solemn a manner makes Him a liar (1 John 5:10). And there seems to be more in it. You not only accuse Him of a lie but of perjury. You will say, you do not doubt of God's promise, but of your interest in it. But why do you doubt of your interest in it, but because you believe not what God has said—that the worst of sinners, if they forsake their evil ways, and return to Him,

and believe on His Son, and accept His free grace offered in the gospel, they shall find mercy? You do not believe that “this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15). If you did, you would accept it, and apply it. And if you do not give credit to the declarations of His grace, and the promises of His mercy by Christ, and to His faithfulness to that covenant which is established by His oath, you make Him a liar, and worse. So if you distrust Him, and despond upon every little difficulty, as if His truth failed and His promise should not be made good, and [you] cannot put so much confidence in Him as you would in the promise and oath of one of your fellow creatures.

His promise considered alone is of eternal verity. For the blessed God does not promise one thing and intend another, but He adds His oath to remove all controversy and cure all doubts that might arise in our minds. It is uncharitable not to believe the solemn oath of a man, if we do not know certainly, or strongly presume, that he swears falsely. But not to believe God speaking and affirming, promising and assuring us, over and over, is a greater affront; much more not to believe Him swearing—when He calls all His perfections, and His very being, as a testimony to the truth of what He says.

5. Fifthly, is God graciously pleased thus to condescend, to bind Himself to us by an oath? How reasonable is it we should bind ourselves to Him in the most solemn manner that can be? “I have sworn, and I will perform it,” says the psalmist, “that I will keep thy righteous judgments” (Ps. 119:106). By baptism, by the Lord’s Supper, by renewed dedication of ourselves to Him, we swear fidelity and allegiance to Him, we engage ourselves by a sacred oath to be the Lord’s. It is just and reasonable we should do so, when God binds Himself to us. And how

dreadful will it be to break those bonds, and not perform our vows? To be guilty of perjury against God and Christ?

6. Sixthly, how hardened are impenitent unbelievers, who will not give credit to the oath of God! And how inevitable is their damnation! They are blinded and hardened indeed, who will not believe God's readiness to receive returning sinners, when He has sworn by His own life that He delights not in the death of him that dies, but rather that he should turn and live. We have the security of the divine perfections and being to invite us to faith and repentance. But woe be to us, if this condescension of God be slighted, and we continue in our unbelief.

God has sworn in His wrath against those that believe not, that they shall not enter into His rest. And we do not find the oath of God engaged against any sin, or sinners, as it is against unbelief, and unbelievers. Other sins may have greater provocations in them, but this has such aggravations that God enters a particular caveat against it by an oath. In this sense it is true that unbelief is the only damning sin, because all others may be pardoned upon believing in Christ.

7. Seventhly, how sure is the everlasting covenant of grace, that is confirmed by the oath of God! He might have reserved a power of revocation, but it is unchangeable. Christ, the surety of the New Covenant, has an everlasting, unchangeable priesthood, sealed by the oath of God. And these two things are certain, on which we may absolutely depend: that there shall never be any other way and method of salvation for fallen men but by Jesus Christ, and that this shall never lose its efficacy and vigor through all ages and generations of men. We are secured by the promise of God, and satisfaction of Christ, so that He is both faithful and just to forgive us our sins. By His oath He has engaged His holiness, His power, His very life and being,

to make good His word. On these two depend all our hopes and comfort: Christ being a priest forever, and the covenant of grace being unchangeable and everlasting, whether our house be made to grow and our outward affairs prosper in the world or not. This is “all my salvation, and all my desire” (2 Sam. 23:5). The oath of God affixed to His covenant shows it to be irreversible and unchangeable. The Jewish law and covenant was given without an oath, and therefore might be altered, but the New Covenant and the promises of the gospel, God, intending they should be unchangeable, has confirmed them by an oath.

8. Eighthly, how shameful are the unbelieving doubts of good men who have the Lord for their God! If God has made with us an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and we have the promise and oath of God to satisfy and secure us, and this intended for our greater consolation and joy, what a shame is it that we are so wavering and doubtful! As if God were as a weak man that He should repent, or, which is worse, as a wicked one, that He should break His word, falsify His promise, and violate His oath too. We pretend, when we distrust the promise or grace of God, that we are afraid of presuming, and making too bold with the promised blessings of the gospel, but God has declared again and again the riches of His grace, His promise repeated over and over, and He has added His oath, and sworn to it, that we might believe, and that His joy may remain in us, and our joy be full. Surely after all this, He cannot be pleased with our hesitations and distrust, when He has so kindly engaged Himself not only by promise but by oath. Whereby in a sense He lays down His Godhead as a pawn, never to take it up again, if He fails in the performance. How justly may the blessed God upbraid us, saying, “What would you have Me do to convince you that I am in earnest, and faithful? Will you not take My word? Here is My

oath, that you may no longer doubt. I swear by My holiness, My honor, My excellency, by Myself, My very being, that if you fly to Christ for refuge, and believe and obey the gospel, you shall be saved.”

9. Lastly, improve God's oath to strengthen faith in prayer for all the great things yet to be done which He has assured us shall come to pass—as to all that concerns yourselves in your passage through the world to eternal glory; as to all necessary assistance and support, under all the troubles of this life, and in the agonies of death; and for the reception of your souls when they leave the body; and for the raising of the body again; and for your being acquitted and absolved in the day of judgment, and put into possession of perfect and everlasting blessedness.

You may also believe upon the oath of God that Christ Jesus is Lord and King, and that every knee shall bow to Him; that He shall take to Himself His great power and reign in this world, and that all His enemies shall be made His footstool; that He who has spoiled principalities and powers and triumphed over them, that He who has a name given Him, above every name, and is crowned with honor and glory will come again at the last day as our glorious judge, when all the world shall admire Him, etc.

In the meantime, we may pray in faith for the victory of Christ over all the adversaries of His kingdom; for the preservation and enlargement of His interest in the world; for the spreading of the everlasting gospel to the ends of the earth; and for the pouring out of His Spirit in the latter days, to accomplish the many gracious promises relating to that time, because the oath of God is concerned to make them good. “Once have I swore by my holiness,” says the Lord, “that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me” (Ps. 89:35–36). God has set His king on His

holy hill of Zion, and He has all power in heaven and earth committed to Him, and all His enemies shall be made to stoop to His scepter, or be broken in pieces as a potter's vessel—"I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return" (Isa. 45:23), that "every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (Rom 14:11). Not a tittle of any promise can fail, to which the oath of God is annexed. Lord, increase our faith! Amen.



## CHAPTER 16

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### *Christ's Love for Us Like the Father's to Him*

*As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye  
in my love.* —JOHN 15:9

What greater or more useful subject for our serious meditation, especially when we think of approaching the table of the Lord, than this of the Father's love to the Son, and of Christ's love to us, and of the return of our love to Him. And here you have all three in one verse. The first made the measure of the second, in order to enforce the third, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." Therefore it is but just and reasonable that you "continue...in my love."

You may consider these words either:

First, as a similitude between the Father's love to Christ and His to us—that it is not more certain that He is beloved of the Father than that He loves all His sincere disciples. "As truly as the Father loves Me, even so have I loved you," and in several respects, after the same manner, though not equally, be sure. The Greek particle "as"<sup>1</sup> does not imply an equality always, but a similitude and likeness, as in such expressions: "be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter. 1:16), and "be ye therefore

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1. Greek: *kathos*.

perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). But others think:

Secondly, that it may be understood of causality, as well as resemblance. That is, “because the Father has loved Me, I have loved you.” You are beloved and accepted, because I am. The Father’s love to Christ is the spring, root, and principle of all the love of God and Christ to us. We are chosen in Him, adopted, justified, sanctified, and glorified in and through Him—for His sake, in His Name, by His Spirit, on His account, etc. And so it shall run thus: “because the Father has loved Me, I have loved you.”

But it is of the likeness and similitude between the love of the Father to Christ and Christ’s love to us that I am now to treat. And there are three particulars observable in this passage.

1. First, here is a declaration of the love of Christ to all His faithful followers. “I have loved you, though I do not need your love, nor do you deserve Mine.”

2. Secondly, this love of Christ to us is heightened by the consideration of the Father’s love to Him, and the likeness and agreement between these two. And here, be sure, is a likeness with a difference. For in some respects, the Father loves the Son as the Son could not love us. In some others, Christ loved us as the Father could not love Him.

3. Thirdly, from both these is a duty pressed upon all Christians to continue in the love of Christ. The Greek words are more emphatic: “continue in this love of mine.” If you are made happy by this love, labor to preserve and maintain it. Do not easily hazard, lose, or lessen it, but continue in My love. Keep yourselves in My love, and the sense of it, and do not do anything that may alienate My heart from you. And in order

to do this, be as careful to continue in your love to Me, and all the fit expressions of it. My love to you continues firm; why should yours to Me cool and languish? Oh, continue in My love! For, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you."

Observe: the love of Christ to believers is like the love of the Father to Him, and does therefore challenge their utmost care to continue in His love. I might first consider this excellent subject of the love of Christ as in itself most admirable, and glorious, and without a parallel among men, but shall more largely compare it with the Father's love to Christ.

*1. [A declaration of the love of Christ to all His faithful followers]*

As to the former, the more absolute consideration of the love of Christ, I might show you:

a. First, how freely He has loved us. We were poor vile worms of the earth, and had no loveliness but what was given us by the Father's love and the Son's love, and therefore it is so often expressed by the word "grace," because every act of divine love to us was an act of grace. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor" (2 Cor. 8:9).

What motive was there for Him to love us first? What inducement on our part, but the depth of our misery? And what is there now that should engage Him to love us still? His love had no other cause or motive but His own compassion and grace. To love another for some excellency, usefulness, and worth, though we have no special benefit by it, is the most candid and generous love among men. But that is not the case here, for we have no excellency or good but what is the effect of the love of Christ. While we were sinners and ungodly, guilty and deformed, Christ died for us.

b. Secondly, how dearly He has expressed His love, at what a costly rate He loved us. None ever gave demonstration of the reality of His love at the rate as Christ has done, by giving Himself to be a sacrifice for sin. To be made a curse for us—it is above the thoughts of men and angels to conceive of the greatness of this love, and how low He stooped, and what He suffered, to give testimony of it.

c. Thirdly, how tender and fervent was His love. While He was on earth, He loved His disciples notwithstanding their ignorance, weakness, cowardice, and unbelief. And now [that] He is in heaven, He bears us upon His heart. He carries our names, as it were, on His breast for a memorial before the Lord continually. He does not forget us, now He is upon the throne, at the right hand of His Father, but is gone there on our behalf, to plead our cause, and to obtain for us what our souls need. And because His love is thus tender, He pities us, and pardons us. He bears with us, and notwithstanding many provocations, does not cast us off. What multitudes of sins does He forgive? What stains and spots does He cleanse us from? How many infirmities and failings does He overlook, and heal us of our backslidings, and by fresh supplies of pardoning, and sanctifying grace, continue and evidence His love?

d. Fourthly, this love is most fruitful and active, in many gracious effects. We may love our friends and relations very tenderly, and not be able to help them. We may love and pity one that is sick, or in prison, and not be able to heal or deliver him. We may suffer with them by our affection when we cannot succor them. But the love of Christ is fruitful and effectual to produce all that good which He wills us.

e. Fifthly, his love is constant and abiding: before He was incarnate, while He was upon earth, when He died, and now He is risen, and ascended to heaven. He loved you in His state of humiliation, and does so now [that] He is in triumph above. In the depth of His misery, and in the height of His glory. Our love to Him would quickly be extinguished if His love to us were not lasting, but His love is like His life, forever. It did not end with His stay on earth, but He lives forever to express His love, by making intercession for us, until He has brought us to be with Him (John 17:24).

I close this head with the words of that excellent man, Mr. Joseph Alleine, in one of his letters. "If the pens of all men," says he, "were employed to write volumes of love, if the tongues of the living were exercised in nothing else but in talking of His love, if all the hearts that be were made up of love, filled with love, and all the powers and affections of the mind were turned into one, that is to say, the power of love, this were no less than infinitely too little either to express or conceive of the greatness of Christ's love."<sup>2</sup>

2. [*The comparative consideration of the love of Christ, as like to the love of the Father to Him*]

But it is the comparative consideration of the love of Christ, as like to the love of the Father to Him, which I would now speak of. Though it will not import an equality, yet there is a resemblance: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you."

- a. First, I shall show that most really and ardently the Father loved Christ

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2. Footnote in original: Letter 28.

- b. In what respects Christ cannot love us as the Father loved Him, or strictly as the Father loved Christ, so He neither did or could love us
- c. Wherein there is a resemblance between the Father's loving the Son and the Son's loving us

And then [I will] apply it, by the exhortation in the latter part of the verse, to "continue in His love."

a. First, the eternal Father most really and ardently loved the Son. He does, and ever did primarily and principally love Him. He speaks of Him as His "beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). The kingdom of Christ, into which the Father translates us, is called the kingdom of His dear Son (Col 1:13). Be sure He loved Him as His eternal Son, and the express image of His person. He is said to be brought up with Him, and to have been daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him (Prov. 8:30). And as our incarnate Mediator, He also loved Him. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell" (Col. 1:19). And upon His obedience, besides the excellency of His person, He merited the Father's love. Therefore the very love of Christ to us, in dying for us, is represented to us as a new ground of the Father's love. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again" (John 10:17). He gave the clearest evidence of His love to Christ the Mediator by many gracious promises made to Him upon His undertaking the work of our redemption (Isa. 49:8-9; 53:10-12; Psalm 89). And not only so, but by the excellent qualifications and endowments wherewith He was furnished to discharge His office, and by the peculiar assistance that He gave Him in His actual undertaking it by the Holy Spirit without measure, by the heavenly host of angels, and by owning Him from heaven again and again with

a glorious approbation, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and likewise by the excellent reward which crowned His performances (Heb. 2:9).

Now it is said [that] the ground of the Father's love was His<sup>3</sup> laying down His life. To make that manifest, we might consider several things in our Savior laying down His life as the ground of His Father's love.

For instance, here was a most absolute and pleasing obedience to the order and command of His Father. This was the commandment that He had from Him, to lay down His life (John 10:18). And He readily says, "Lo, I come...to do thy will" (Ps. 40:7-8). And here was the highest zeal and concern for the interest and honor of His Father, which must needs be pleasing to Him. By this our Lord accomplished the great design and purpose of the Father from everlasting, in the recovery of many sons and daughters out of this lost world to glory. And by laying down His life, He declared the most astonishing love and compassion to the work of God, to poor, miserable, fallen man. Upon this the Scripture seems to intimate that the heart of God was quieted (Zech. 6:8)! That the controversy started between His mercy and justice, upon the entrance of sin, might be taken up, and the most gracious combination of grace and justice He brought about, by the harmony of all the divine perfections, in the punishment of sin in such a way as was consistent with the salvation of the sinner. Upon all which accounts, He might very well say that the Father loved Him, because He laid down His life.

b. Secondly, there are several things to be considered wherein the Father did not love Christ as Christ has loved us. The Father loved the Son, but this is natural and necessary. It is

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3. His: Christ's.

like the love of a father to himself, the Son of God partaking of the same essence with the Father. But Christ's love to us, who were strangers and enemies, may be considered as voluntary, as a free dispensation. The Father loved the Son, but He never offended Him. He was essentially holy. He never displeased Him. But we are rebels and sinners, and yet, notwithstanding our enmity and rebellion, Christ loved us so as to die for us. The Father loved Him, but He highly merited and deserved His love. This cannot be said of Christ's love to us, for we were utterly unworthy of it. The Son of God deserved the Father's love, and was loved for His<sup>4</sup> own sake. But Christ loved us upon the Father's account, as given to Him by the Father. And the Father loved us for Christ's sake—"For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me" (John 16:27). The eternal Father loved Christ, but was not capable of expressing His love in such a manner, and by such effects, as Christ has evidenced His love to us, [He] who became man for our sakes, and died for our sins, who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. By His incarnation He became our brother, that He might be our sacrifice. He was born for us that He might live for us, and He lived for us that He might die for us, and He died for us that He might do all the rest that was needful for our salvation. The Father loved the Son, and yet when He was to suffer for our redemption, did not spare Him, though He prayed that the bitter cup might pass from Him, but Christ has loved us and freely forgiven all our debts. The whole work of satisfaction to divine justice He undertook and performed for us. He trod the wine press of His Father's wrath alone, and of the people there was none with Him that had any hand or share in making satisfaction or bearing the

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4. His: Christ's.

curse, etc. How then is it true that, as the Father loved the Son, so He has loved us? Which is next to be considered.

c. Third, the resemblance and agreement between them. The Father loved the Son from everlasting; so has Christ loved us. "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world," says our Lord to His Father (John 17:24). And all the members of Christ were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). "[He] hath saved us," says the apostle, "according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9).

The ground of the Father's love to the Son is nearness and likeness, and after regeneration and union to Christ, all His members are loved by Him upon the like account, when renewed after His image and made partakers of His nature. Christ, the beloved of the Father, is called God's fellow, and every saint has something of this title, with reference to Christ, for God has "anointed [him] with the oil of gladness above [his] fellows" (Ps. 45:7).

The Father's love to Christ, and His to us, agree likewise in this, that both are unchangeable. Nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ, as nothing could separate and divide Christ from the love of His Father. The love of God to His Son is immutable and everlasting, and the love of Christ to all His living members is such. They are betrothed to Him in loving kindness and faithfulness that is forever (Hos. 2:20). The sure mercies of David are promised by an everlasting covenant, well ordered and in all things sure.

The Father loved the Son, and there is a likeness between the fruits of His love to Him and those of Christ's love to us. For instance, the Father loved Christ, and always hears Him, and accepts Him. So are our persons and prayers accepted with Christ, and what we ask in His name we are promised we

shall receive. The Father loved Him, and “hath given all things into his hand” (John 3:35). And to believers the apostle says, “all things are yours...and ye are Christ’s” (1 Cor. 3:21, 23).

As an evidence of the Father’s love to the Son, He delights in His company, “rejoicing always before him” (Prov. 8:30). He is the Father’s joy, and believers are His. When He had finished His work on earth, He returned to the Father, and sat down at His right hand. Christ loved us, and His delight was with the sons of men, in the habitable parts of the earth. It is not improbable but that He appeared as the angel of the covenant, in human shape, to the patriarchs of old, and that He is to be understood by “the man that stood among the myrtle trees” (Zech. 1:10). It is certain He conversed familiarly with us in the days of His flesh, when He went up and down doing good. And when He left this world, He says it was with a design to prepare a place for His followers, and He promises to come again, and take us to Himself, and in the meantime has promised by the presence of His Spirit ever to dwell in our hearts, and continue with us to the end of the world, in all successive ages and generations, until He has finished His great design, and then He will come again in triumph.

His delight in His saints is expressed in the tenderest manner by a “bridegroom rejoic[ing] over the bride” (Isa. 62:5). And the day of His espousal is called, “the day of the gladness of his heart” (Song 3:11). “The LORD thy God in the midst of thee,” says the prophet, which many understand of the Son of God tabernacling in our flesh. He “is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy” (Zeph. 3:17). Christ is the Father’s delight (Isa. 42:1). Believers are His (Ps. 16:3).

The Father loved Christ, and always hears Him (John 11:42). Christ loves His disciples, and assures them of the like privilege (John 14:21–23). The Father loved Christ, and He loves all those that love Him. “For the Father himself loveth

you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God” (John 16:27), and Christ loves us, if we love them that are His disciples. Hereby we manifest and express our love to Him—“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12). The Father loved Christ, and revealed His mind and most secret thoughts and purpose to Him. This is always reckoned an argument of love, an evidence of affection. So Delilah urged Samson, when he concealed from her wherein his strength lay, “How canst thou say, I love thee?” (Judg. 16:15). Now all the secret will of the Father is made known to Christ, and He, “the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (John 1:18). We have this evidence of His love to us. He tells His disciples, “Henceforth I call you not servants...but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (John 15:15), all things that were committed to Me as Mediator to reveal. And again He tells us, “he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:21). All the great things of God are revealed to us by Christ. Therefore we read of “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God” shining into our hearts “in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). These great and deep things of God He has revealed to us by His Spirit, for we have received Him, “that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Cor. 2:12). All the secrets of His covenant, purposes of His will, methods of His grace, the rule of His scepter, the mysteries of faith, the paths of obedience, all that concerns us to know, especially concerning His person and His kingdom. He loves us, and has made them known to us by His Word and Spirit.

Moreover, the Father loved the Son, and qualified His human nature with the most excellent gifts of grace, with the Spirit without measure. So Christ loves us, and has sent His

Holy Spirit as a Spirit of light, and love, and power, of grace and comfort, to sanctify and assist us in His service here, and make us fit for the heavenly glory.

The Father loved the Son, and protected and upheld Him in His whole mediatory undertaking. "I am not alone," says our Lord, "the Father is with me" (John 16:32). "Behold my servant, whom I uphold" (Isa. 42:1), says God of the Messiah. Christ loves us, and has promised us His continual presence to preserve, guide, support, assist, and direct us; and He will never leave us nor forsake us.

As the Father loved the Son, and did most gloriously reward Him after His death and resurrection, so has Christ loved us and promised us a kingdom, promised us to be with Him, to behold His glory and partake of it, and that even our vile bodies shall be changed and made like His own glorious body. He calls us His brethren, and when He ascended, He said, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17). And that He goes but to prepare a place for us, and will come again, and take us to Himself, that we may live with Him, reign with Him, and sit down on His throne, as He having overcome, is sat down on His Father's throne.

The Father loved the Son, and continued to love Him when He was most afflicted. In His deepest humiliation, He was with Him to support Him, and loved Him still. Though the comforting influence of His presence was for a time suspended, yet in His bitterest agonies, and when dying on the cross, He loved Him, indeed, because He died and laid down His life. While He had the face of a judge to Christ as our sacrifice, He did not put off the heart of a Father to Him as His beloved Son. So Christ loves us, notwithstanding any afflictive rebukes for sin. He loves us still, notwithstanding any of our sufferings. Though we must distinguish between Christ's sufferings and ours, they are not on the same account, to the

same purpose, with the same design, or for the same end, yet both [are] consistent with love, in the root of it, however the actual sense and apprehension of His love may alter. Our Lord may say, "My Father loved Me, and yet I was afflicted." May He not love you, and yet rebuke and chasten you? If it may be true as to the eternal Son of God, it may be so as to His adopted children. His love is unchangeable; nothing shall separate from it (Rom. 8:35–36).

Lastly, as the ground of all this likeness between the Father's love to Him and Christ's love to us, we may consider the union between them, that, as the Father and the Son are one, so Christ and believers are one.<sup>5</sup> And therefore, before He left the world, He prayed to His Father that He would keep, through His own Name, those that He had given Him, "that they may be one, as we are" (John 17:11). The union between the Father and the Son is most holy and spiritual, well ordered, without confusion of persons, and inseparable and abiding. And such a union there is between Christ and believers, that has some resemblance between that of the Father and the Son. We grant it is a mystical, or a mysterious union, and not to be too boldly treated of in human phrases, but there must be some excellent meaning of those words of our Lord, where He prays for His disciples, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21).

3. [*The duty pressed upon all Christians to continue in the love of Christ*]

I now come to the third thing, the duty inferred from both these—"Continue ye in my love." And this of all things is most

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5. Footnote in original: See more concerning this union. First Sermon. First part of these *Sacramental Discourses*.

reasonable, considering that He has so loved us as the Father has loved Him. They who are favored with such astonishing love ought to continue in His love. If He has loved us at this rate, we ought to love Him, and continue to love Him.

a. First, continue in His love, and delight in His presence, and in the communications and effects of His love, and mourn when it is otherwise. He is to believers their crown and their glory, their life and strength, and their salvation. Without Him they have nothing; in Him they have all. "But God forbid," says the apostle, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14). Continue in His love, desire the continuance of it. Watch against what may abate, lessen, or intercept the communications of His love. There can be no joy and delight without love. Where I love not, I can take no pleasure, but when I love, I can rest and rejoice. And if I feel and know myself to love Christ, I know I am beloved. And what then is lacking but to preserve and keep it? "Set me as a seal upon thine heart," says the church, "as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death" (Song 8:6). And you cannot but bewail the loss of that which you love, in the enjoyment whereof you delight. Therefore did the church so bitterly lament His absence and withdrawing that she "sought him whom [her] soul loveth: [she] sought him, but [she] found him not" (Song 3:1). This is, and should be, the constant sense of a Christian with respect to Christ—"LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us," "my heart is glad," "thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled" (Ps. 4:6; 16:9; 30:7).

b. Secondly, as consequent to this, by continuing to value and esteem Him, above all persons, above all things—"Whom have I in heaven but thee?"; "Thy lovingkindness is better than life" (Ps. 73:25; 63:3). Indeed, the reproach of Christ is

reckoned greater riches than the treasures of Egypt that were then accounted some of the greatest in the world. You must love and value Him above your dearest relations, above all your earthly possessions, above all your spiritual privileges, above your very lives; and be willing to part with all that is dear to you, rather than displease Him. To them that believe, He is thus precious, the chiefest of ten thousand.

c. Thirdly, continue in His love by faithfulness to Him, and care to please Him, hearkening to the voice of His Word and the conduct of His Spirit, in all things. "If ye love me, keep my commandments"; "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 14:15; 15:10). Watch diligently over your hearts, that nothing creep into your affections to the prejudice or dishonor of Christ. Cherish the Holy Spirit, the Comforter whom He sent in His place, to supply His absence. Take heed of grieving the Spirit, either as a Spirit of holiness, or of consolation. The Spirit of God is grieved, as a Spirit of sanctification, by our loose, careless, and negligent walking. And He is grieved as a Comforter by our excess of joy in other things, and by our refusing the consolations of God which are tendered us by the gospel. Love to Christ will make us watchful on both accounts. It will make us study to please Him, and find out what is acceptable to Him. Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to be, or do? I will be nothing but what Thou wilt. I would be anything Thou wouldst have me be. Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes. Oh, that I might always continue in Thy love! Is there anything Thou wouldst have, though my dearest Isaac? Lord, enable me to surrender it! I would be willing, I hope, to give it up. How do we love Him, if we cannot deny ourselves as to ease, or pleasure, or company, for Him? Do we love Him, and yet do no more to please Him?

d. Fourthly, continue in His love, and be restless in your desires of nearer union to Christ, and communion with Him.

To this purpose are the expressions of thirsting for Him, following hard after Him, etc. To a soul that loves Christ in sincerity, there is nothing that grieves Him but what keeps him from the enjoyment of Christ. What does naturally and necessarily keep from the full enjoyment of Christ? Even our present state in the body, even that it groans under, because by being present in the body we are in some sense absent from the Lord. That which does so morally, and penally, that is to say, sin, that the soul loathes and abhors itself for. Now continue in His love, and let the sole tendency of your souls be after the enjoyment of Him. "The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee" (Isa. 26:8). "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Ps. 42:2). "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices" (Song 8:14). Are there any such restless inquiries and desires after Him? Is it the language of your hearts? "O Lord, be mine, or I am undone! Nothing else will serve me, and I need no more. And Lord, let me be Thine. Let me be to Thee, or for Thee, Thy servant. Or if Thou dost call to, and enable me for it, Thy sacrifice. Whatever Thou wilt! And let all I have be Thine—my heart, my head, my tongue, my time, my interest, my life. Thou hast showed me Thy love. Thou hast taken possession of my soul. Oh, abide with me! Dwell here! Forsake me not! Thou hast entered on Thy habitation. Oh, never leave it! Let it be Thy dwelling forever."

e. Fifthly, continue in His love, and endeavor more and more to be like Him, and conformed to Him. There is a principle in love to stir up our endeavors after likeness to Him whom we love. By beholding His glory we are transformed into the same

image, and so the heart of every believer is habitually inclined to be like Christ, both as to the internal holiness of His human nature and as to His example in the duties of obedience. We are predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). We must endeavor that the same mind be in us as was in Him. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:6). Oh, continue in His love! And let His pattern be continually in your eyes. Be humble, be meek and lowly, condescending towards all, obliging and useful to all, diligent and zealous, charitable and patient, and self-denying, as He was. Endeavor to be like Him in watching against all sin, like Him in the improvement and growth of every grace, and so follow Him in all the fruits of righteousness, to the praise and glory of God.

f. Sixthly, continue in His love, and evidence it by loving all whom He loves. "If you love Me, love My brethren," "inasmuch as you did it to them, you did it to Me," will our Lord say. Without this, neither the love of the Father nor of the Son can be in us. This is the new commandment that He has given us, of loving one another, which is new in regard of the pattern and motive that is set us by the love of Christ. Before, it was, "love your neighbor as yourself"; now it is, "love one another, as I have loved you." And the moral law that commanded love had never such a powerful motive affixed to it before as the example of Christ's love to us. We must love them because of their relation to Christ, because of His love to them, and His image upon them.

And certainly the more the love of Christ is shed abroad in our hearts, the more of love and kindness will appear in our temper and practice towards all the members of Christ, indeed, towards all mankind. And may it not be thought that the unkindness, and hardheartedness, the obstinance, and

perverseness, the stinginess and straitness of spirit that Christians discover one toward another, that as to many, it does arise from this, that they do not live in the sense of the love of Christ. They have lost that, and made breaches between God and their souls by sin. They have no inward peace, comfort, and joy in the love of Christ. And so having lost the sweetness of their own spirits, they are angry and fretful, they are peevish and unbecoming towards others. If you were filled with the Holy Ghost, if the divine Spirit dwell in you, it would be a spirit of love, and kindness, and gentleness. You will be ready to do good to all, especially to the household of faith. You must love all that you know do love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, notwithstanding their difference in lesser things from you.

g. Seventhly, continue in His love, and as an evidence of it, take all occasions to meet and visit Him in the use of those means which He has appointed for it, by the Word and ordinances of the gospel, as the chariots of God. Christ comes to visit us by engaging our souls in suitable exercises of grace, in those we visit Him. And if we love Him, we cannot live contentedly without this. Where is our love to Christ if we can be satisfied with the external performance of duty, without anything of His vital presence? Communion with Christ is the spirit of divine love, and love to Christ is the sweetness of all communion. "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon" (Song 1:7). To this, Christ replies, and returns the invitation, "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" (Song 2:14). And again in the fourth chapter the church says, "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits" (Song 4:16), and Christ accepts the invitation, and replies, "I

am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved” (Song 5:1).

h. Eighthly, “continue in My love, and put the best sense upon all that I do.” When things are at the worst, one that is filled with love to Christ will put the best interpretation on everything. If he be afflicted, he will place the affliction on the faithfulness of God, and believe that He intends him kindness and good. But until we love Him, we shall never put a good sense and construction on what He does. The more we love Him, the more quiet will our spirits be under all His providences. We shall not allow any hard thoughts of God, under our sorest trials, but say, “Let Him smite me, and chasten me, so He does but love me. Let Him make me, or keep me poor, so He will not frown, so He will but love me. Let Him take from me whom and what He will that was the object of my delight, so I may but abide in His love. Indeed, Lord,” will such a one say, “life itself is as the shadow of death without Thy love. Let me rather die in Thy love than live in Thy displeasure!”

i. Ninthly, “Continue in My love, and be jealous of My love, and of My honor.” Be jealous, for fear that anything steal away your love, or rival, or rob me of it. When any earthly comfort or temporal blessing is delightful, and is like to engross the place of Christ, your love to Him should make you say, “I fear I shall displease my Lord. My heart is engaged for Him. I have given it Him. Let Him take it wholly, and keep it to Himself.” For lack of this holy jealousy over ourselves, the world often prevails, and sin does easily beset us, and our foot is taken in the devil’s net before we are aware, and so conscience is

defiled, and grace withered, and comforts wasted, and our peace broken.

So with respect to the honor of Christ. Let us continue in His love, and be concerned for His glory in the world, and grieved for His dishonor by whomsoever it is occasioned. He that loves and honors Christ most will be most tenderly affected with what relates to His interest, and glory, and the honor of His Name. And on the contrary, it is undeniable that he that cares not what becomes of the honor and interest of Christ in the world is destitute of genuine and prevailing love to Him.

j. Lastly, "Continue in My love, and do not take wrong measures in judging either of My love to you, or of your love to Me." Some conclude their love to God and Christ, from such things as will not argue it. Others conclude the lack of Christ's love to them from such things as will not infer it.

"Continue in My love, and do not judge you love Me when you do not," or that you discover your love by such things as are no evidence at all of a prevailing, superlative love. There may be a general common love to God and Christ, upon principles of education only, or a little flashy, sensitive love, from what you read and hear of His excellency, and of His kindness, when the heart is not effectually won to prize Him, to consent to Him, to receive Him, to choose Him, upon a comparison with all things else, against all competitors. And that appears because it is not active and effectual to produce any suitable fruit.

Would you likewise judge of His love to you, you cannot argue against it from your afflictions, because whom He loves, He rebukes and chastens. If you endure chastisement, God deals with you as sons (Heb. 12:7).

But the great thing you would be resolved in, and by which you may resolve the other, is concerning your love to Christ. Recollect then what has been said of continuing in His love.

Do you doubt whether you love Him? Ask your souls whether you do not delight in His presence and mourn for His absence? Do you not value and esteem Him above all things? Do you not endeavor to please Him? Are you not restless in your desires after union to Him, and communion with Him? Do you endeavor more to be like Him? Do you not love all His members, all that He loves, all that relates to Him, and bear His image? Do you often visit Him, and love to be where you may meet Him? Do you love Him so as to put the best sense upon what He does with you, and towards you? Are you jealous of anything that may rival Him in your love? Are you concerned for His honor? Are you careful not to take wrong measures of His love to you, or yours to Him? By such things you may prove your genuine love to Christ, though you do not at present rejoice and triumph in the assurance of His love. Oh, beg the witness of the Spirit, that you may do that also!

Love is a sensible, stirring affection. You know what it is to love in other cases. Are your hearts set on Him? Are your thoughts of Him the freest, and sweetest thoughts? What pleasure have you in speaking of Him? Do you bemoan yourselves, when you fear that He does not love you? Do you recommend Him to others, and persuade them to love Him? Do you consider often what He is, and has done, and suffered to deserve your love? Do you resist and conquer temptation by the thoughts of His love? Are you ready to part with anything for Him that may express your love? In short, you may judge of yourselves by this: whether in the esteem of a believing mind, in the choice and adherence of a resolved heart, and in the careful serious endeavors of your loves, you prefer God and Christ above all things. Before the pleasures of sin and sensuality, before the riches, profits, and honors of the world, to know, love, obey, please, and praise Him, is that next to your hearts, the principal and chiefest thing in your eye?

To conclude, let me press you to this love of Christ, and continuance in it, by the consideration of His matchless love to us. There are such miracles of divine love in Christ as may pose the understanding of men and angels. He is the king of love, the great high priest of love, and the teacher of love. The love of God shines forth in Christ with all its strength and beauty—love in all estates, preventing, assisting, and finishing love. Love of all kinds, and of all degrees, sufficient to relieve the soul against all the difficulties of life, the darkness of death, and the dreadfulness of the day of judgment. And all our love to God must be returned back through Jesus Christ. God's love of bounty to us is through Christ. Our love of duty and thankfulness to God must be returned through Him. And how worthy is He of all our little love? His love pitied us when we were in our blood. His love had compassion on us when we were wounded and left for dead, and poured in wine and oil into our wounds. This is the love that reprieved, and spared, and pardoned us when we were condemned by the law. Justice would have had us delivered up, and our guilty consciences feared it, and gave all for lost. This is the love, the expensive, costly love, that fed us when we were hungry, clothed us when naked, and relieved us when poor, and saved us from hell, when we were ready to perish. This is the astonishing love of Christ that received those who had forsaken Him, that has drawn those that fled from Him, that kissed those that scourged Him, that crowned those that wounded Him, that revived those that killed and crucified Him, and by incomparable condescension, charges those that hated Him to love Him with all their hearts, and enables them to do so.

If all this love and compassion be attractive of love, how much beyond all expression are we bound to love Him? And how shameful is it that we love Him no more? If we cannot say with the apostle, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee"

(John 21:15), yet who would not say, "Lord, thou knowest that I would love thee." Let us then resolve and endeavor that our life in the flesh may be a life of faith and love. Let our works be labors of love. Our sufferings, seals of love. Our sorrows, the sorrows of love. Our prayers, cries of love. Our praises and thanksgivings, songs of love. Let every work we do, every duty we perform, every power of soul and body, be all one sacrifice of love. Let us look steadily and continually, by faith, on Jesus Christ crucified if ever we would be filled with love. Let us behold His hands and feet. Let us come and put our fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust our hands and hearts into His side, until we are warmed with His love, and feel the constraining power of it. There is nothing like the sense of this love, and constant communion with God in the exercise and return of it, that will make us thriving, lively, cheerful, joyful, established, persevering Christians. Now "unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1:5), to Him be glory, honor, and praise forever and ever. Amen.



## APPENDIX

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### *A Paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer*

#### **“Our Father”**

Most merciful and gracious Father, who has made us out of nothing by Thy powerful Word, and formed us after Thine own image, but we sought out sinful inventions, and might justly have perished in our apostasy. We owe Thee homage as the Father of our spirits, as the God of our lives, as the author of our beings; much more as Thou hast called us into Thy family, and favor, by Jesus Christ; as redeemed by Him, and regenerated by Thy Spirit, and privileged with the dignity of children, and may call Thee our reconciled Father.

Oh, what manner of love is this, that such rebellious, miserable creatures as we should be called the sons of God, and treated as such! Holy Father! We have sinned against heaven, and before Thee, and are utterly unworthy to be entertained as Thy servants, much more to be cherished, and spared, and pitied, and provided for as Thy children, and have the promise and hope of the heavenly inheritance. As the children of the first Adam, we are children of wrath, and heirs of hell, in bondage to sin, and serving diverse lusts; the works of our father the devil we have done. But by Thy redeeming love and grace, through Jesus Christ, we are set free from that slavery, and partake of the liberty and privilege of sons in Thy house

and family. Oh, let the Spirit of Thy Son breathe continually in our hearts, and teach us to cry, "Abba, Father," as created by Thy power and goodness, and reconciled, and saved by Thy mercy, after we had undone ourselves. Give us that faith and humble confidence in prayer, by the Spirit of grace and supplication, that we may go to Thee in all our necessities, as children to a father, and come with boldness to a throne of grace. We beg the Holy Spirit of grace to that end, which Thou art more ready to give to them who value it, and ask it earnestly, as sensible of their need of it, than any father on earth is to give bread to his children that ask it of him.

Oh, let this name of Father, and our consequent relation to Thee, be our glory, and our refuge, our defense and guard, the principle of our obedience and love to Thee, and of charity, kindness, and affection to all our brethren, who are children of the same Father, and adopted heirs of the same inheritance. And let all those whom Thou wilt own for Thy children, most gracious Father, be united to Thee, and to one another, in holy bands of love and concord; bearing with one another wherein they differ, let them heartily join together to advance the honor of Thy holy name, to celebrate Thy praise, and promote Thy truth and worship. Grant to them and us the help of Thy Spirit, that we may so pray, and live.

O God of the spirits of all flesh, the Father of glory, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, teach us so to ask as Thou mayest please to grant. Teach us to worship Thee in spirit and in truth, that our persons may be well pleasing in Thy sight, and our prayers be accepted through the great Mediator. We would ask nothing but in His name, for the manner, so nothing but what He has advised and taught us to desire, and seek.

**“Who art in heaven”**

And since Thou dwellest in heaven (though the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee), that is Thy throne, and the earth Thy footstool; Thou beholdest whatsoever we do, or say, or think, and will call us to an account; let us reverence Thy glorious majesty, Thine all-seeing eye, and Thy sovereign power. And raise our affections above earthly things, that we may seek heaven as our country, where our Father is, and our Redeemer, and where we hope to possess the inheritance prepared for us by everlasting love, through the purchase and merit of Thine eternal Son, who owns Himself our elder brother; and who, when He was on earth, was concerned for nothing more than for the glory of Thy name. Therefore in imitation of His example, in conformity to His counsel, and obedience to His command, we beg Thy name may be sanctified.

**“Hallowed be Thy name”**

Thou hast proclaimed Thy name to the world, and they who know it will trust in Thee to be a God gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, abundant in goodness, and in truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will not utterly destroy His people, though He does correct. Thou art worthy of all honor, homage, and obedience, and that all the world should adore Thee, and glorify Thy holy name; that every creature in heaven and earth should tremble at Thine irresistible power, admire Thine eternal wisdom, and love Thine infinite goodness. Oh, that the glory of Thy holy name may extinguish in us the desire and love of worldly honor and interest; that we may reckon it our highest dignity to advance and serve the purposes of Thy glory, as the ultimate end of all things. Let us be deeply sensible of Thy dishonor in the world, by our own sins, and the sins of others. Let us grieve and mourn to observe

the profanation of Thy name, and the violation of Thine authority, when Thy laws are transgressed, Thine institutions despised, Thine orders contradicted, Thy majesty affronted, Thy glory bespattered, and trampled on.

The desire of our souls is to Thy name, and the remembrance of Thee. In Thy name we rejoice, and put our trust. Oh, let us not dishonor it by unsuitable affections and actions! Let our lives be answerable to the dignity of our relation, and to what we know and profess to believe of Thine adorable perfections, that we may so glorify Thy name in the eyes of the world that others, seeing our good works, may glorify Thee, our Father, who art in heaven. To this end, let Thy kingdom come.

### **“Thy kingdom come”**

O Thou who reignest among the armies of heaven, and over all the inhabitants of the earth, rule in our hearts by the power of Thy Word and Spirit. Subdue every lust and inordinate affection in us. Mortify all the rebellion of our wills, and the enmity of our carnal minds and hearts, that we may no longer be in slavery to the devil, and to foolish, criminal passions, but our understanding, will, affections, conscience, and conversation be more entirely conformed to Thy holy pleasure and precept. And after the establishment and advancement of Thy kingdom of grace in our souls, perfect it in due time, by admitting us to Thy kingdom of glory.

And let all the kingdoms of the world submit to the scepter of our Lord Redeemer, that He may rule to the ends of the earth. Let all the people praise Thee, and worship Thee! O God, let all the people praise Thee! Let not Satan, the usurping god of this world, tyrannize over so great a part of this earth, but let the kingdom of Thy grace be enlarged, and Thine authority be more generally submitted to all the world. Let the everlasting gospel of the blessed God be published, understood,

believed, and obeyed, from the rising of the sun to the setting of the same. And as the effect of the coming of Thy kingdom in power, let Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

**“Thy will be done”**

Thy will, O God, is the measure of holiness, and peace, the rule of justice, truth, and perfect wisdom. Oh, that it may be the rule of our desires, that our will may be entirely conformed to Thine! All Thy works are wisdom, and all Thy ways of providence judgment. Let us adore Thee as infallible in all the revelations of Thy mind, and as wise, and good, just, and holy, and true in all Thou dost. Let us acquiesce in Thy good pleasure, as knowing, nothing can be better done than what Thou orderest. In fullness, and in need, in joy and sorrow, in life and death, Thy holy will, O Lord, be done!

Let us obediently comply with Thy preceptive will, in all Thou hast commanded, and humbly submit to Thy providential will, in all Thou shalt appoint; and be satisfied with our portion, station, and condition here on earth. Let us be governed in all things by Thy holy will with cheerfulness, and readiness, and faithfulness, and zeal, without deceit, delay, or murmuring complaints. That we may observe, and please Thy will on earth, as the angels do in heaven, where Thou art loved, delighted in, and obeyed in perfection. And let all the world, we beseech Thee, join with us and them, to praise and glorify Thee, with one heart, and one voice, and one consent, and be the servants of Thy holy will forever. But our satisfaction in Thy declared will does not hinder, but we may ask the necessary supports of life, we pray Thee therefore:

**“Give us this day our daily bread”**

Take Thou care of our souls; provide also, we beseech Thee, for our bodies. Prolong our lives, until we have finished the work of life, and answered the ends of living. Continue a suitable and convenient supply for the necessities of our nature. Give us that health, protection, peace, and plenty which may best assist us in our present duty, and tend to our comfortable account in the day of reckoning. Thou hast directed us not to choose either poverty, or riches, because of the temptations of either extreme; give us therefore food convenient, according to that rank, and state, and condition Thou hast placed us in, or may hereafter do. That so the temptation of the right hand may not make us wanton, secure, and proud, forgetful of Thee, and ourselves, and the greater concerns of eternity, or our hearts be set to make provision for the flesh, or fulfill the lusts thereof. And that on the contrary, by the snares of poverty, and pinching straits, we may not be tempted to doubt, or deny Thy providence, or quarrel with it; that we may not be exposed to contempt, and misery, and thereby to impatience, distrust, and despair. Keep us from undue solicitude about these things, and give us contentment with our present condition. Grant us that measure and proportion of temporal blessings which may enable us the better to serve and glorify Thee. And whatever Thou dost with us, let us be calm and quiet, and thankful, and never admit any dishonorable thoughts of Thy rule and government. Let us own Thee, as the original and fountain of all our good, and faithfully depend on Thee for the supply of all our needs. But whatever Thou givest us of earthly good, Lord, what will it avail us, when our sins are so many and great, unless Thou forgive and pardon us? Therefore we beseech Thee, O Lord, to:

**“Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive  
them that trespass against us”**

Look upon us with a merciful eye, for we are here before Thee in our trespasses. Forgive our sins of ignorance, and of willfulness, those of presumption, and those of infirmity, secret and open, in heart, and word, and deed; the vanity of our minds, the carelessness of our spirits, the wickedness of our hearts, the irregularity of our affections, the folly of our lips, and all the omissions and commissions of our past lives, from our birth, and infancy, to this very hour. Look not upon our offenses, but cast our sins behind Thy back; remember them not against us, to our punishment, and condemnation.

We beg this, for the sake of our blessed Savior, who has made expiation for sin by His cursed death. For His sake, be reconciled to us, and remember our iniquities no more, and seal to us the free and full forgiveness of them, by the witness of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may rejoice in God, through Jesus Christ, as having received the atonement.

Enable us by a large and evangelical charity heartily to forgive all those who have any way troubled, or injured, or offended us, for fear that our prayer be turned into sin, and Thou deny us that pardon, which we deny to our fellow creatures. That having, by Thy grace, this character of Thy disciples and children, we may reap the benefit of Thy pardoning mercy here, and in the other world. But because, though we should be forgiven for the time past, we shall run into the like sins again, and contract new guilt, and fall an easy prey to temptation, we beseech Thee, O Lord, preserve us from being tempted, or overcome when we are.

**“Lead us not into temptation”**

Lord, we are weak, and ignorant, and inclined to that which is evil; and our adversary the devil goes about like a crafty serpent,

and a roaring lion, seeking whom he may deceive and destroy; let us never be careless, secure, and confident of ourselves. He is a malicious, experienced, watchful, envious, unwearied enemy; let us not be ignorant of his devices; enable us to mortify the love of sin, and inward lust, and diligently avoid the occasions and appearances of evil, the incentives and provocatives to wickedness. And suffer us not to be tempted above what we are able. Order our conditions and affairs, so as we may be free from great and dangerous temptations. Help us, that by taking to us the whole armor of God, we may be able to withstand the wiles and assaults of Satan; that by the protection, and guidance of Thy providence, the ministry of Thine angels, and the aids of Thy good Spirit, we may not enter into temptation, and yield to it; that such as we cannot avoid may not prevail against us to Thy dishonor, and our eternal ruin. Deliver us from the evil of every temptation, and from the evil one, the tempter, and from other evils, to which we are incident.

**“But deliver us from evil”**

Forgive what is past, remove what is present, prevent what may otherwise be to come: from sin, and shame, from the malice of the devil, and the falsehood and treachery of men, from open enemies, and unfaithful friends, from the deceits of the world, and the lusts of the flesh, but above all, from Thy wrath and vengeance due to our sins, we beseech Thee to deliver, and save us. Pardon us so freely, that all the sufferings of this life may be turned from evil to good; that if Thou smite us here with the rod of a father, Thou mayest spare us hereafter; that all things may work together for our advantage, and that in every condition, we may be kept from sin.

To that end deliver us from the evil one, the great enemy of Thy glory, and our salvation. Let us resist him steadfastly in the faith, that he may flee, and we may conquer. We acknowledge

our own weakness, and desire to be sensible of it, and therefore humbly invoke Thine aid and help. Oh, save us from an impenitent, hard heart, while we live, and let us finish our course in Thy fear and love; let us die the death of the righteous, and not have our portion to all eternity in that region of darkness and torment which Thou hast prepared for the devil and his angels.

**“For Thine is the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory, forever and ever”**

Thou art able to do all this for us, as the Almighty, wise, and holy Lord, and governor of the world, whose glorious perfections are displayed, and honored in all Thy works. We hope the granting [of] these our supplications will advance the mightiness of Thy kingdom, and manifest Thy power, mercy, and truth; For of Thee, and through Thee, and to Thee, are all things; to Thee be glory forever (Rom. 11:36).

**“Amen”**

As Thou sayest, so it is. As Thou hast promised, so it shall be. And as we have prayed, we beg it may be. Amen, and amen.

