

THE LORD'S SUPPER

A still life composition featuring a stack of flatbread, a cup, and a crown of thorns. The bread is on the left, the cup is on the right, and the thorns are in the background. The background is a warm, brownish-orange color.

MATTHEW HENRY (1662-1714)

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THE LORD'S SUPPER

Chapter I

THE NAMES OF THIS ORDINANCE

In discoursing of this great and solemn ordinance of the Lord's Supper, which every serious Christian looks upon with a peculiar regard and veneration,¹ I purpose, as God shall enable me, to open the doctrine as well as the duty of it. It will, therefore, be proper enough, and I hope profitable, to take some notice of the several names by which it is known.

1. Sacrament

We call it the sacrament.² This is the name we commonly give it, but improperly, because it does not distinguish it from the ordinance of baptism, which is as much a sacrament as this—a sacrament which we have all received, by which we are all bound, and are concerned to improve³ and live up to. But when we call this ordinance “*the* sacrament,” we ought to remind ourselves that it is *a* sacrament; that is, it is a sign and an oath.

A. A sign

The Lord's Supper is a sign, an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, for such sacraments are designed to be. It is a parable to the

¹ **veneration** – reverence.

² **sacrament** – Because of the Roman Catholic use of this term, Baptists and other evangelicals prefer the term *ordinance*. The author's view is the historic Reformed definition: “an holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein, by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers” (*Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Q. 92). The *Catholic Encyclopedia* says, “According to the teaching of the Catholic Church...the sacraments of the Christian dispensation are not mere signs; they do not merely signify Divine grace, but in virtue of their Divine institution, they cause that grace in the souls of men...A sacrosanct [very sacred] sign producing grace is a good, succinct definition of a sacrament.”

³ **improve** – apply to good purpose.

eye; and in it God uses similitudes,⁴ as He did of old by His servants the prophets. In it Christ tells us earthly things, that thereby we may come to be more familiarly acquainted, and more warmly affected, with spiritual and heavenly things. In it Christ speaks to us in our own language and accommodates Himself to the capacities of our present state. Man consists of body and soul; and the soul admits impressions and exerts its power by the body. Here is an ordinance, therefore, that consists of body and soul too, wherein Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are—in the instituted elements of bread and wine—set before us and offered to us. We live in a world of sense, not yet in the world of spirits. Because we therefore find it hard to look above the things that are seen, we are directed in a sacrament to look *through* them to those things not seen that are represented by them. Things merely sensible⁵ may not improve the advantage they have from our present state wholly to engross our thoughts and cares. Therefore, in compassion to our infirmity, spiritual things are in this ordinance made in a manner sensible.

Let us, therefore, rest contented with this sign that Christ has appointed, in which He is “evidently⁶ set forth crucified among” us (Gal 3:1). [Let us] not think it can be any honor to Him or advantage to ourselves, but on the contrary a dishonor to Him and an injury to ourselves, to represent by images and pictures the same things of which this ordinance was designed to be the representation. If infinite wisdom thought this sign sufficient, and most proper to affect the heart and excite devotion, and stamp it accordingly with an institution—let us acquiesce in it.

Yet, let us not rest contented with the sign only, but converse by faith with the things signified, else we receive the grace of God in this appointment in vain—and sacraments will be to us what parables were to them that were willfully blind, blinding them the more. What will it avail us to have the shadow without the substance, the letter without the spirit? As the body without the soul is dead (Jam 2:26), so our seeing and receiving bread and wine—if therein we do not see and receive Christ crucified—is dead also.

B. An oath

The Lord's Supper is an oath. That is the ancient signification of the word *sacrament*. The Romans called the oath that soldiers took to be true to their general, *sacramentum militare*; and our law still uses it in this sense: *dicunt super sacramentum suum*, “they say upon their oath.” So that to take the sacrament is to take an oath, a solemn oath, by which we bind our souls with a bond unto the Lord. It is an oath of allegiance to the Lord Jesus, by which we engage ourselves to be His dutiful and loyal subjects, acknowledg-

⁴ **similitudes** – pictures.

⁵ **sensible** – able to be perceived by the senses.

⁶ **evidently** – openly.

ing Him to be our rightful Lord and Sovereign. It is as a freeman's oath by which we enter ourselves members of Christ's mystical body, and oblige ourselves to observe the laws and seek the good of that Jerusalem which is from above (Rev 21:2). We do this so that we may enjoy the privileges of that great charter by which it is incorporated.

An oath is an appeal to God's knowledge of our sincerity and truth in what we assert or promise. In this ordinance, we make such an appeal as Peter did: "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee" (Joh 21:17). An oath is an imprecation⁷ of God's wrath upon ourselves, if we deal falsely and willfully prevaricate.⁸ Something of that also there is in this sacrament; for if we continue in league with sin while we pretend to covenant with God, we eat and drink judgment to ourselves (1Co 11:28-29).

Let us, therefore, according to the character of a virtuous man, fear this oath. We must not fear to take it, for it is our duty, with all possible solemnity, to oblige ourselves to the Lord. But we must fear to break it, for oaths are not to be jested with. God has said it and has sworn it by Himself: "Unto me...every tongue shall swear" (Isa 45:23); but He has also said that we must swear to Him "in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness" (Jer 4:2). And having [thus] sworn, we must perform it. If we come to this sacrament carelessly and inconsiderately, we incur the guilt of rash swearing. If we go away from the sacrament and walk contrary to the engagements of it, we incur the guilt of false swearing. Even natural religion teaches men to make conscience of an oath. Much more does the Christian religion teach us to make conscience of this oath, to which God is not only a witness, but a party.

2. Lord's Supper

We call this ordinance the Lord's Supper, and very properly, for so the Scripture calls it in 1 Corinthians 11:20. There the apostle, reproving the irregularities that were among the Corinthians in the administration of this ordinance, tells them, "This is not to eat the Lord's supper."

A. A supper

This ordinance is a supper. A supper is a stated meal for the body. This is so also for the soul, which stands in as much need of its daily bread as the body does. Supper was then accounted the principal meal; this ordinance is so among Christ's friends. In His family, it is the most solemn entertainment.⁹

It is called a supper because it was first instituted in the evening, and at the close of the Passover supper. Though it is not always required for us to

⁷ **imprecation** – curse.

⁸ **prevaricate** – lie.

⁹ **entertainment** – meal.

administer it about that time, because it would be inconvenient for religious assemblies, yet it signifies,

1st. That Christ now—in the end of the world, in the declining part of its day, as the great evening sacrifice—“hath appeared to put away sin” (Heb 9:26). This glorious discovery was reserved for us “upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1Co 10:11).

2nd. That comfort in Christ is intended for those only who dwell in God's house, and for those only who have done the work of the day in its day, according as the duty of every day required. They only who work with Christ shall eat with Him.

3rd. That the chief blessings of the new covenant are reserved for the evening of the day of our life. The evening feast is a supper designed for us when we have accomplished “as an hireling [our] day” (Job 14:6) and come home at night.

B. The Lord's

This ordinance is the *Lord's Supper*, the Lord Christ's Supper. The apostle, in his discourse concerning this ordinance (1Co 11:23ff), all along calls Christ “the Lord,” and seems to lay an emphasis upon it. This is because—as the ordaining of this sacrament was an act of His dominion¹⁰ and as Lord of His Church—He appointed it. In the same way, in receiving this sacrament, we own His dominion and acknowledge Him to be our Lord. This also puts an honor upon the ordinance, and makes it look truly great. However, to a carnal eye it has no form nor comeliness that it is the Supper of the Lord. The sanction of this ordinance is the authority of Christ; the substance of this ordinance is the grace of Christ. It is celebrated in obedience to Him, in remembrance of Him, and for His praise.

Justly is it called the Lord's Supper, for it is the Lord Jesus that sends the invitation, makes the provision, and gives the entertainment. In it we feed upon Christ, for He is the Bread of Life (Joh 6:35). We feed with Christ, for He is our beloved and our friend, and He it is that bids us welcome to His table. In it Christ sups with us and we with Him. He does us the honor to sup with us, though He must bring His own entertainment along with Him; He gives us the happiness of supping with Him upon the dainties of heaven.

Let our eye, therefore, be to the Lord, to the Lord Christ, and to the remembrance of His name in this ordinance. We see nothing here, if we see not the beauty of Christ; we taste nothing here, if we taste not the love of Christ. The Lord must be looked upon as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, and all in all in this solemnity (Rev 1:8). If we receive not Christ Jesus the Lord here, we have the supper, but not the Lord's Supper.

¹⁰ **dominion** – sovereign authority.

3. Communion

We call it the Communion, the holy communion; and fitly do we call it so, for the following reasons.

A. With Christ

In this ordinance we have communion with Christ, our Head. “Truly our fellowship is with...Jesus Christ” (1Jo 1:3). He here manifests Himself to us and gives out to us His graces and comforts. We here set ourselves before Him, and tender Him the grateful returns of love and duty. A kind correspondence between Christ and our souls is kept up in this ordinance, such as our present state will admit. Christ, by His Word and Spirit, abides in us; we, by faith and love, abide in Him. Here, therefore, where Christ seals His Word and offers His Spirit—and where we exercise our faith and have our love inflamed—there is communion between us and Christ.

This communion supposes union. This fellowship supposes friendship, for, “can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). We must, therefore, in the bond of an everlasting covenant, join ourselves to the Lord and combine our interest with His. And then, pursuant thereto, we must concern Him in all the concerns of our happiness, and concern ourselves in all the concerns of His glory.

B. With the universal Church

In this ordinance, we have communion with the universal Church,¹¹ even “with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours” (1Co 1:2). Hereby we profess, testify, and declare that “we being many are one bread, and one body,” by virtue of our common relation to our Lord Jesus Christ, “for we are all partakers of that one bread” (1Co 10:17). Christ is “the bread of life” (Joh 6:35), signified and communicated in this sacramental bread. All true Christians, though they are many, yet they are one; and we express our consent to and complacency¹² in that union by partaking of the Lord’s Supper.

I say “though they are many”—that is, though they are numerous—yet, as a vast number of creatures make one world, governed by one providence,¹³ so a vast number of Christians make one Church, animated by one Spirit, the soul of that great body. Though they are various—far distant from one another in place, of distinct societies, different attainments, and divers apprehensions

¹¹ **Church** – spiritual “invisible Church” universal, which includes all true believers throughout the world and through all of time, as differentiated from the “visible church” comprised of local assemblies of professing Christians.

¹² **complacency** – satisfaction; pleasure.

¹³ **providence** – God’s...most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures and all their actions. (*Spurgeon’s Catechism*, Q. 11) See also *God’s Providence* by Charles Spurgeon; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

in lesser things—yet, all meeting in Christ, they are one. They are all incorporated in one and the same Church, all interested in one and the same covenant, all stamped with one and the same image, partakers of the same new and divine nature, and all entitled to one and the same inheritance. In the Lord's Supper, we are “made to drink into one Spirit” (1Co 12:13). And therefore, in attending on that ordinance, we are concerned not only to preserve, but to cultivate and improve Christian love and charity—for what will this badge of union avail us without the unity of the Spirit?

4. Eucharist

We call this ordinance the Eucharist;¹⁴ so the Greek church called it, and we from them.

A. Christ gave thanks

It signifies a thanksgiving, and it is so called, because Christ in the institution of it gave thanks. It should seem that Christ frequently offered up His prayers in the form of thanksgivings, as, “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me” (Joh 11:41). And so He blessed the bread and the cup by giving thanks over them—as the true Melchizedek, who, when he “brought forth bread and wine” to Abraham, blessed the most high God (Gen 14:18ff).

Though our Savior, when He instituted the sacrament, had a full prospect of His approaching sufferings with all their aggravations, yet He was not thereby indisposed from thanksgiving, for praising God is a work that is never out of season. Though the Captain of our salvation was now but girding on the harness, yet He gives thanks as though He had put it off, being confident of a glorious victory. In the prospect of that victory, even before He took the field, He did in this ordinance divide the spoil among His followers and “gave gifts unto men” (Eph 4:8).

B. We give thanks

The Lord's Supper is called a thanksgiving because we, in the participation of it, must give thanks likewise. It is an ordinance of thanksgiving appointed for the joyful celebrating of the Redeemer's praises. This sacrifice of atonement¹⁵ Christ Himself offered once for all; and it must not, it cannot, be repeated.¹⁶ Sacrifices of acknowledgment, however, Christians must offer daily, that is, “the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Heb 13:15). The cup of salvation must be a cup of blessing, with which and for which we must bless God, as the Jews were wont to do very solemnly at the close of the Passover supper. [Thus] Christ chose to insti-

¹⁴ **Eucharist** – comes from a Greek word meaning thanksgiving.

¹⁵ **atonement** – bringing reconciliation by paying the debt owed for an offense. See Free Grace Broadcaster 227, *The Atonement*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹⁶ This shows the difficulty in seeing the Lord's Supper as an atoning sacrifice, as is taught by Rome.

tute this sacrament [at the close of the meal] because He intended it for a perpetual thanksgiving till we come to the world of praise.

Come, therefore, and let us sing unto the Lord in this ordinance. Let the high praises of our Redeemer be in our mouths and in our hearts. Would we have the comfort, let Him have the praise of the great things He has done for us. Let us remember that thanksgiving is the business of the ordinance, and let that turn our complaints into praises. Whatever matter of complaint we find in ourselves, in Christ we find abundant matter for praise. That is the pleasant subject upon which, in this ordinance, we should dwell.

5. Feast

We call it “the feast,” the Christian feast (1Co 5:8). “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1Co 5:7). In this ordinance, we keep the feast. They that communicate¹⁷ are said to feast with us. This name, though not commonly used, yet is very significant, for it is such a supper as is a feast. Gospel preparations are frequently compared to a feast: “And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees;¹⁸ of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined” (Isa 25:6). The guests are many, the invitation solemn, and the provision rich and plentiful, and therefore it fitly is called a feast of souls.

“A feast is made for laughter” (Ecc 10:19); and so is this for spiritual joy, the wine in Isaiah 25 designed to make glad the heart. A feast is made for free conversation, so is this for communion between heaven and earth. In this banquet of wine, the golden sceptre is held out to us and this fair proposal made, “What is thy petition, and it shall be granted thee?” (Est 5:6).

Let us see what kind of a feast the Lord’s Supper is.

A. A royal feast

It is a royal feast, a feast like the feast of a king, that is, a magnificent feast. It is a feast like that of King Ahasuerus: “a feast for all his servants,” and designed, as that was, not only to show his good will to those whom he had feasted, but to show “the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty” (Est 1:4). The treasures hid in Christ, even His unsearchable riches, are here set open, and the glories of the Redeemer illustriously displayed. He Who is King of kings and Lord of lords, here issues out the same order that we find him giving: “Come and gather yourselves together to the supper of the great God” (Rev 19:17), and that must needs¹⁹ be a great supper. The wisest of kings introduces Wisdom herself as a queen or princess making this feast: Wisdom “hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine” (Pro

¹⁷ **communicate** – partake of the Lord’s Supper.

¹⁸ **lees** – dregs; settlement from fermentation.

¹⁹ **must needs** – must of necessity.

8:2). At a royal feast, the provision, we may be sure, is rich and noble, such as becomes a king to give, though not such beggars as we are to expect. The welcome also, we may be sure, is free and generous. Christ gives like a king.

Let us remember that in this ordinance we sit to eat with a Ruler, with a Ruler of rulers, and therefore must “consider diligently what is before” us, and observe a decorum (Pro 23:1). He is a king that comes in to see the guests, and therefore we are concerned to behave ourselves well.

B. A marriage feast

The Lord's Supper is a marriage-feast. It is a feast made by a King at the marriage of His Son. So our Savior represents it, not only [as] exceeding rich and sumptuous, and celebrated with extraordinary expressions of joy and rejoicing, but also because the covenant here sealed between Christ and His Church is a marriage-covenant—such a covenant as makes two one. It is a covenant founded in the dearest love, founding the nearest relation, and designed to be perpetual. In this ordinance,

1st. We celebrate the memorial of the virtual espousals of the Church of Christ when He died upon the cross, to “sanctify and cleanse it...that he might present it to himself” (Eph 5:26-27). That was “the day of his espousals...the day of the gladness of his heart” (Song 3:11).

2nd. The actual espousals of believing souls to Christ are here solemnized, and that agreement ratified: “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Song 2:16). The soul that renounces all other lovers who stand in competition with the Lord Jesus, and joins itself by faith and love to Him only, is in this ordinance presented “as a chaste virgin” to Him (2Co 11:2).

3rd. A pledge and earnest²⁰ of the public and complete espousals of the Church of Christ at His second coming is here given. Then “the marriage of the Lamb” comes (Rev 19:7), and we, according to His promise, hereby declare that we look for it.

If we come to a marriage-feast, we must not come without a wedding garment—that is, a frame of heart and a disposition of soul agreeable to the solemnity, conformable to the nature, and answering the intentions of the gospel as it is exhibited to us in this ordinance. Holy garments and garments of praise (Isa 61:3) are the wedding garments. “Put on Christ...put on the new man” (Gal 3:27; Col 3:10)—these are the wedding garments. In these we must, with our lamps in our hands as the wise virgins (Mat 25:4), go forth with all due observance to attend the royal bridegroom.

C. A memorial feast

The Lord's Supper is a feast of memorial, like the feast of the Passover, of which it is said, “This day shall be unto you for a memorial, and you shall

²⁰ **earnest** – deposit giving assurance of full payment.

keep it a feast to the Lord...a feast by an ordinance for ever” (Exo 12:14). The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt was a work of wonder never to be forgotten. The feast of unleavened bread was therefore instituted to be annually observed throughout all the ages of the Jewish church as a solemn memorial of that deliverance. This was so that the truth of it, being confirmed by this traditional evidence, might never be questioned; and so that the remembrance of it, being frequently revived by this service, might never be lost.

Our redemption by Christ from sin and hell is a greater work of wonder than that was, more worthy to be remembered, and yet (the benefits that flow from it being spiritual) more apt to be forgotten. This ordinance was therefore instituted. It was instituted at the close of the Passover supper (as coming in the room²¹ of it) to be a standing memorial in the Church of the glorious achievements of the Redeemer’s cross, the victories obtained by it over the powers of darkness, and the salvation wrought by it for the children of light. Thus the Lord “hath made his wonderful works to be remembered” (Psa 111:4).

D. A dedication feast

The Lord’s Supper is a feast of dedication. Solomon made such a feast for all Israel when he dedicated the Temple, as his father David had done when he brought the ark into the Tabernacle. Even the children of the captivity “kept the dedication of the house of God with joy” (Ezr 6:16). In the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper, we dedicate ourselves to God as living temples, temples of the Holy Ghost (1Co 3:16)—separated from everything that is common and profane, and entirely devoted to the service and honor of God in Christ. To show that we do this with cheerfulness and satisfaction, and that it may be done with an agreeable solemnity, this feast is appointed for the doing of it that we may, like the people of Israel when Solomon dismissed them from his feast of dedication, go to our “tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people” (1Ki 8:66).

E. Feast upon a Sacrifice²²

The Lord’s Supper is a feast upon a Sacrifice. This, methinks, is as proper a notion of it as any other. It was the law and custom of sacrifices, both among the Jews and in other nations, that when the beast offered was slain, the blood sprinkled, the fat and some select parts of it burnt upon the altar, and the priest had his share out of it, then the remainder was given back to the offeror. On it, he and his family and friends feasted with joy. Hence we read of Israel after the flesh,²³ eating the sacrifices, and so partaking of the

²¹ **room** – place.

²² **feast upon a Sacrifice** – Note that the Lord’s Supper is not properly the sacrifice but a feast “upon” it by faith. Christ our Passover Lamb has already been sacrificed for us (1Co 5:7).

²³ **Israel after the flesh** – those descended from Abraham; the Jewish people.

altar: "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" (1Co 10:18)—that is, in token of their partaking of the benefit of the sacrifice and their joy therein.

This eating of the sacrifice was a religious rite, expressive of their communion with God in and by the sacrifice.

1). *Jesus Christ is the great and only sacrifice*, Who by "one offering...has perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb 10:14). And this offering need never be repeated; that once was sufficient.

2). *The Lord's Supper is a feast upon this sacrifice* in which we receive the atonement, as the expression is: "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement" (Rom 5:11). That is, we give consent to, and take complacency in, the method which infinite wisdom has taken of justifying and saving us by the merit and mediation²⁴ of the Son of God incarnate.²⁵ In feasting upon the sacrifice, we apply the benefit of it to ourselves, and ascribe the praise of it to God with joy and thankfulness.

F. Feast upon a covenant

The Lord's Supper is a feast upon a covenant. The covenant between Isaac and Abimelech was made with a feast. So was that between Laban and Jacob, and their feasting upon the sacrifices was a federal²⁶ rite, in token of peace and communion between God and His people. In the Lord's Supper we are admitted to feast with God, in token of reconciliation²⁷ between us and Him through Christ. Though we have provoked God and been enemies to Him in our minds by wicked works, yet He thus graciously provides for us, to show that now He "hath reconciled us to himself" (2Co 5:18). His enemies hungering, He thus feeds them; thirsting, He thus gives them drink (Rom 12:20). If, like coals of fire heaped upon their heads, this melts them into a compliance with the terms of His covenant, they shall henceforth, as His own familiar friends, eat bread at His table continually till they come to sit down with Him at His table in His kingdom.

²⁴ **mediation** – Christ's work as a go-between to reconcile God and man. "It pleased God in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son according to the Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and Man; the Prophet, Priest and King; Head and Savior of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto whom He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified." (*Second London Baptist Confession*, 8.1) See also Free Grace Broadcaster 183, *Christ the Mediator*; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

²⁵ **incarnate** – embodied in flesh as the Son of Man. See Free Grace Broadcaster 234, *Incarnation*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

²⁶ **federal** – pertaining to a league or contract; derived from an agreement or covenant between parties.

²⁷ **reconciliation** – restoration to harmony after hostility.

Chapter II

THE NATURE OF THIS ORDINANCE

When the Jews, according to God's appointment, observed the Passover yearly throughout their generations, it was supposed that their children would ask them, "What mean you by this service?" (Exo 12:26), and they were directed what answer to give to that enquiry. The question may very fitly be asked concerning our gospel passover: What mean we by this service? We come together in a public and select assembly of baptized Christians, under the conduct and presidency of a gospel minister; we take bread and wine, sanctified by the Word and prayer (1Ti 4:5); and we eat and drink together in a solemn religious manner, with an eye to a divine institution as our warrant¹ and rule in so doing. This we do often; this all the churches of Christ do, and have done in every age from the death of Christ down to this day. We doubt not but it will continue to be done till time shall be no more. Now, what is the true intent and meaning of this ordinance? What did Christ design it for in the institution of it? And what must we aim at in the observation of it?

It was appointed to be a commemorating ordinance, a confessing ordinance, a communicating ordinance, and a covenanting ordinance.

1. A Commemorating Ordinance

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper is a commemorating ordinance. This explanation our Lord Himself gave of it when He said, "This do in remembrance of me" (Luk 22:19)—that is, do it for My memorial; do it for a remembrance of Me. In this ordinance He has recorded His name forever, and this is His memorial throughout all generations.

A. In remembrance of the person of Christ

We are to do this in remembrance of the person of Christ, as an absent friend of ours. It is a common ceremony of friendship to lay up something in remembrance of a friend we have valued, which we say we keep for his sake when he is gone or is at a distance...Jesus Christ is our Beloved and our Friend, the best friend that ever our souls had. He is now absent. He has left the world and is gone to the Father, and the heavens must contain Him till

¹ **warrant** – authorization; reason for permission.

the time of the restitution of all things.

Now, this ordinance is appointed for a remembrance of Him. We observe it in token of this: that though the blessed Jesus be out of sight, He is not out of mind. He that instituted this ordinance did, as it were, engrave this on it for a motto: When this you see, remember Me. Remember Him! Is there any danger of our forgetting Him? If we were not wretchedly taken up with the world and the flesh, and strangely careless in the concerns of our souls, we could not forget Him. But, in consideration of the treachery of our memories, this ordinance is appointed to remind us of Christ.

Ought we not to remember, and can we ever forget such a friend, as Christ is? He is a friend that is our near and dear relation: “bone of [our] bones, and flesh of [our] flesh” (Gen 2:23), and “not ashamed to call [us] brethren” (Heb 2:11). He is a friend in covenant with us, Who puts more honor upon us than we deserve when He calls us His servants, and yet [also] is pleased to call us friends.

He is a friend that has so wonderfully signalized His friendship and commended His love. He has done that for us which no friend we have in the world did, or could do, for us. He has laid down His life for us, when the redemption of our souls was grown so precious,² as otherwise to have ceased forever. Surely we must forget ourselves if ever we forget Him, since our happiness is entirely owing to His kindness.

Ought we not to remember, and can we ever forget, a friend who, though He be absent from us, is negotiating our affairs, and is really absent on our behalf? He is gone, but He is gone upon our business. As “the forerunner is for us entered” (Heb 6:20), He is gone to appear in the presence of God for us as our agent. Can we be unmindful of Him Who is always mindful of us, and Who, as the great High Priest of our profession, bears the names of all His spiritual Israel³ on His breastplate, near His heart within the veil (Heb 4:14; Exo 28:29)?

Ought we not to remember, and can we ever forget, a friend Who, though He be now absent, will be absent but a while? We see Him not, but we expect to see Him shortly, when He will come in the “clouds; and every eye shall see him” (Rev 1:7)—will come to receive us to Himself to share in His joy and glory. Shall we not be glad of anything that helps us to remember Him, Who not only remembered us once in our low estate, but, having once

² **grown so precious** – become so necessary, as there was no other possible solution to our need.

³ **spiritual Israel** – people of God in both the Old and New Testaments: “For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Phi 3:3); “Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past [that is, of the Old Testament saints], through the forbearance of God” (Rom 3:24-25).

remembered us, will never forget us? Shall not His name be written in indelible characters upon the tables of our heart, Who has graven us upon the palms of His hands (Isa 49:16)? Surely we must continually remember our Judge and Lord when, behold, the Lord is at hand and the Judge “standeth before the door” (Jam 5:9). Thus must we show Him forth till He come, for He comes quickly.

B. In remembrance of the death of Christ

We are to do this in the remembrance of the death of Christ, as an ancient favor done to us. This ordinance was instituted on the night wherein our Master was betrayed—that “night of observations,” as the first Passover night is called (Exo 12:42, margin⁴)—which intimates the special reference this ordinance was to have to that which was done that night and the day following. In it we are “to know...Christ, and him crucified” (1Co 2:2); to remember His sufferings and, in a special manner, to remember His bonds. All the saints and all the churches could not see Christ upon the cross; therefore, in this ordinance, that great transaction is set before us upon which the judgment of this world turned: “Now is the judgment of this world” (Joh 12:31).

1). *How we remember Christ’s death*

Here we remember the dying of the Lord Jesus.

We endeavor to *preserve the memory of it in the church*, and to transmit it pure and entire through our age to the children which shall be born, that the remembrance of it may be ever fresh and may not die in our hand. That good thing which was committed to us as a trust, we must thus carefully keep and faithfully deliver down to the next generation—evidencing that we firmly believe, and frequently think of, Christ’s dying for us, and desiring that those who should come after us may do so too.

We endeavor to *revive and incite the remembrance of it in our own hearts*. This ordinance was intended to “stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance” (2Pe 3:1). This was so that, giving such an earnest heed to the things that belong to the great salvation as the solemnity of this ordinance calls for, we may not at any time let them slip—or, if we do, we may in the use thereof speedily recover them. The instituted images of Christ crucified are, in this ordinance, very strong and lively, and proper to make deep impressions of His grace and love upon the minds that are prepared to receive them, and such as cannot be worn out.

We see then what we have to do in our attendance upon this ordinance. We must remember the sufferings of Christ there, else we do nothing.

⁴ **margin** – Early editions of the King James Version gave alternate readings in the margin.

2). *What remembering Christ's death requires*

a). Remembering Christ's death supposeth some acquaintance with Christ crucified, for we cannot be said to remember that which we never knew. The ignorant, therefore—to whom the great things of the gospel are as a strange thing, with which they are not concerned to acquaint themselves—cannot answer the intention of this ordinance. Instead, they offer the blind in sacrifice, not discerning the Lord's body and the breaking of it. It concerns us, therefore, to cry after this knowledge and to labor after a clearer insight into the mystery of our redemption by the death of Christ. If we be ignorant of this, and rest in false and confused notions of it, we are unworthy to wear the Christian name...

b). Remembering Christ's death implies a serious thought and contemplation of the sufferings of Christ, such as is fed and supplied with matter to work upon—not from a strong fancy,⁵ but from a strong faith. Natural passions may be raised by the power of imagination, representing the story of Christ's suffering as very doleful and tragic. But pious and devout affections are best kindled by the consideration of Christ's dying as a propitiation⁶ for our sins and the Savior of our souls—and this is the object of faith, not of fancy. We must here look unto Jesus as He is lifted up in the gospel, take Him as the Word makes Him, and so behold Him.

c). The contemplation of the sufferings of Christ must make such an impression upon the soul as to work it into a fellowship with, and conformity to, Christ in His sufferings. This was the knowledge and remembrance of Christ of which blessed Paul was ambitious to “know him...and the fellowship of his sufferings” (Phi 3:10). We all, by our baptism, are in profession “planted together in the likeness of his death” (Rom 6:5). We do this in remembrance of Christ effectually when we experience the death of Christ killing sin in us, mortifying the flesh, weaning us from this present life, weakening vicious habits and dispositions in us.⁷ We also do this in remembrance of Christ effectually when we experience the power of Christ's cross, both as a moral argument and as the spring of special grace, crucifying us to the world, and the world to us (Gal 6:14). When, in touching “the hem of his garment” (Mat 9:20), we find, like that good woman, virtue comes out of Him to heal our souls, then we rightly remember Christ crucified.

⁵ **fancy** – imagination.

⁶ **propitiation** – Propitiation has reference to the wrath or displeasure of God. To propitiate is to satisfy the divine justice and thus to appease His wrath. In the biblical usage of the term, the justice of God is satisfied by the propitiatory sacrifice. (Morton H. Smith, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 382)

⁷ See Free Grace Broadcaster 201, *Mortification*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

2. A Confessing Ordinance

The Lord's Supper is a confessing ordinance. If the heart believes unto righteousness, hereby confession is made unto salvation. The Lord's Supper is one of the peculiarities of our holy religion; by the observance of it, its professors are distinguished from all others. Circumcision, which was the initiating ordinance among the Jews, by leaving its mark in the flesh, was a lasting badge of distinction. Baptism, which succeeds it,⁸ leaves no such indelible character on the body; but the Lord's Supper is a solemnity by which we constantly avow the Christian name. We declare ourselves not ashamed of the banner of the cross under which we were enlisted, but resolve to continue as Christ's faithful servants and soldiers to the end of our lives, according to our baptismal vow.

A. Value and esteem for Christ crucified

In the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, we are said to show forth the Lord's death; that is, we hereby profess our value and esteem for Christ crucified. We show it forth with commendation and praise, so the word sometimes signifies. The cross of Christ was to the Jews a stumbling-block, because they expected a Messiah in temporal pomp and power. It was to the Greeks foolishness, because the doctrine of man's justification, and salvation by it, was not agreeable to their philosophy (1Co 1:23). The wisdom of this world and the princes of it judged it absurd to expect salvation by one that died a captive, or to expect honor by one that died in disgrace. They turned it to the reproach of Christians that they were the disciples and followers of one that was hanged on a tree at Jerusalem.

They who put Him to such an ignominious death, and loaded Him with all the shame they could put upon Him, hoped thereby to make everyone shy of owning Him or expressing any respect for Him. But the wisdom of God so ordered it, that the cross of Christ is that which above anything else Christians have cause to glory in. Such are the fruits, the purchases, the victories, the triumphs of the cross, that we have reason to call it our crown of glory and diadem of beauty. The politicians⁹ thought it had been the interest of Christ's followers to have concealed their Lord's death, and that they should have endeavored to bury it in forgetfulness. But instead of that, they are appointed to show forth the Lord's death, and to keep it in everlasting remembrance before angels and men.

⁸ New Testament baptism, being commanded for believers alone, is not a direct equivalent to Old Testament circumcision, though it "succeeds" circumcision in serving as a sign of the believer's union with Christ as circumcision served as a sign of the Israelite's participation in the benefits of being a descendant of Abraham.

⁹ **politicians** – possibly the Jewish and Roman rulers at the time of Christ's death.

This, then, we mean when we receive the Lord's Supper: we thereby solemnly declare that we do not reckon the cross of Christ any reproach to Christianity. We declare that we were so far from being ashamed of it, that—whatever constructions an unthinking, unbelieving world may put upon it—to us it is the wisdom of God and the power of God. It is all our salvation and all our desire. We think never the worse of Christ's holy religion for the ignominious death of its great Author—for we see God glorified in it and man saved by it. At the Supper, the reproach of Christ's death is rolled away forever.

B. Dependence on and confidence in Christ crucified

By the Lord's Supper, we profess our dependence upon and confidence in Christ crucified. As we are not ashamed to own Him, so we are not afraid to venture our souls and their eternal salvation with Him—believing Him “able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (Heb 7:25). We believe He is as willing as He is able, and we make confession of that faith. By this solemn rite we deliberately, and of choice, put ourselves under the protection of His righteousness, the influence of His grace, and the conduct and operation of His Holy Spirit. The concerns that lie between us and God are of vast consequence; our eternal weal¹⁰ or woe depends upon the right management of them.

Now we hereby solemnly declare that, having laid those concerns near our own hearts in a serious care about them, we choose to lodge them in the Redeemer's hands by a judicious¹¹ faith in Him, for which we can give a good reason. God having declared Himself well-pleased in Christ, we hereby declare ourselves well-pleased in Him too. God having committed all judgment to the Son, we hereby commit all our judgment to Him likewise. He is the sole referee of the great cause and the sole trustee of the great concern. We do this knowing “whom [we] have believed,” even One Who is able and faithful “to keep that which [we] have committed unto him against that day” (2Ti 1:12)—that great day when it will be called for.

This, then, we mean when we receive the Lord's Supper. We confess that Jesus Christ is Lord¹²—we own ourselves to be His subjects and put ourselves under His government. We confess that He is a skillful physician and own ourselves to be His patients, resolving to observe His prescriptions. We confess that He is a faithful advocate and own ourselves to be His clients, resolving to be advised by Him in everything. In a word, in this ordinance we profess that we are “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”—nor of the cross of Christ, in which His gospel is all summed up—knowing it to be “the power of

¹⁰ **weal** – well-being.

¹¹ **judicious** – well-grounded.

¹² See “Is Christ Your Lord?” by A. W. Pink (1886-1952), available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom 1:16), having found it so to ourselves.

3. A Communicating Ordinance

A. Gospel benefits

The Lord’s Supper is a communicating ordinance. Here are not only gospel truths represented to us and confessed by us, but gospel benefits are offered to us and accepted by us. For it is not only “a faithful saying,” but well worthy of “all acceptation” that Christ Jesus died to “save sinners” (1Ti 1:15). This is the explanation that the apostle gives of this ordinance: “The cup of blessing which we bless”—that is, which we pray to God to bless, which we bless God with and for, and in which we hope and expect that God will bless us—it is “the communion [or the communication] of the blood of Christ...The bread which we break” is “the communion [or communication] of the body of Christ” (1Co 10:16). Christ’s body was not only broken for us upon the cross when it was made an offering for sin, but is broken to us—as the children’s bread is broken to the children in the everlasting gospel, wherein it is made the food of souls.

By the body and blood of Christ, of which this ordinance is the communion, we are to understand all those precious benefits and privileges that were purchased for us by the death of Christ, and are assured to us upon gospel terms in the everlasting covenant.

When the sun is said to be with us, and we say we “have the sun,” as in the day or the summer, it is not the body and bulk of the sun that we have, but his rays and beams are darted down upon us, and by them we receive the light, warmth, and influence of the sun. Thus the sun is “communicated” to us according to the laws of creation. So in this ordinance we are partakers of Christ, not of His real body and blood (it is senseless and absurd, unchristian and inhuman to imagine so), but of His merits and righteousness for our justification, His Spirit and grace for our sanctification. We must not dream of ascending up into heaven, or of going down to the depth, to fetch Christ into this ordinance that we may partake of Him. No, “the word is nigh thee,” and Christ in the Word (Rom 10:8; Joh 1:1).

Unworthy receivers—that is, those who resolve to continue in sin because grace has abounded (Rom 6:1)—partake of the guilt of Christ’s body and blood, and have communion with those that crucified Him; for, as much as in them lies, they crucify Him afresh (Heb 6:6). What they do speaks such ill thoughts of Christ that we may conclude: if they had been at Jerusalem when He was put to death, they would have joined with those that cried, “Crucify him, crucify him” (Luk 23:21).

But humble and penitent believers partake of the blessed fruits of Christ's death. His body and blood are their food, their medicine, their cordial, their life, their all. All the riches of the gospel are virtually¹³ in them.

B. Communicated to us

Christ and all His benefits are here communicated to us. Here is not only bread and wine set before us to be looked at, but given to us to be eaten and drunk. Here is not only Christ made known to us, that we may contemplate the mysteries of redemption; but Christ made over to us, that we may participate of the benefits of redemption. God, in this ordinance, not only assures us of the truth of the promise, but, according to our present case and capacity, conveys to us by His Spirit the good things promised.

Receive Christ Jesus the Lord, Christ and pardon, Christ and peace, Christ and grace, Christ and heaven. It is all your own, if you come up to the terms on which it is offered in the gospel. Fountains of life are here broken up, wells of salvation are here opened, the stone rolled away from the well's mouth, and you are called upon to come and draw water with joy. The well is deep, but this ordinance is a bucket by which it is easy to draw.¹⁴ Let us not forsake these living streams for stagnant water. These are wisdom's gates, where we are appointed to wait for wisdom's gifts—and we shall not wait in vain.

C. Received by us

Christ and all His benefits are here to be received by us. If we do indeed answer the intention of the ordinance in receiving the bread and wine, we accept the offer that is made us: Lord, I take Thee at Thy word; be it "according to thy word unto thy servant" (Psa 119:76). We hereby interest ourselves in¹⁵ Christ's mediation between God and man, and take the benefit of it according to the tenor¹⁶ of the everlasting gospel. Christ, in this ordinance, is graciously condescending¹⁷ to show us the print of the nails and the mark of the spear; to show us His pierced hands and His pierced side, those tokens of His love and power as a Redeemer. We, by partaking of it, comply with His intentions. We consent to Him and close with Him, saying, as Thomas did, "My Lord and my God" (Joh 20:28). None but Christ, none but Christ!

We do here likewise set ourselves to participate of that spiritual strength and comfort which, through grace, flows into the hearts of believers from their interest in Christ crucified. The gospel of Christ, here solemnly exhibited, is meat and drink to our souls. It is bread that strengthens man's heart,

¹³ **virtually** – by influence or instrumentality.

¹⁴ Note that the role of the Supper is depicted as that of a vessel to bring near to us the saving and life-giving object of our faith, Christ.

¹⁵ **interest ourselves in** – receive a part.

¹⁶ **tenor** – intention.

¹⁷ **condescending** – descending or stooping to things unworthy.

and is the staff of life. It is wine that makes glad the heart and revives the spirits. Our spiritual life is supported and maintained, and the new man enabled for its work and conflicts, by the spiritual benefits of which we here communicate—as the natural life and the natural body are by our necessary food. From the fullness that is in Christ crucified, we here derive grace for grace, grace for gracious exercises, as the branches derive sap from the root and as the lamps derive oil from the olive trees. And so, like healthful grown children, we are nourished “up in the words of faith and of good doctrine” (1Ti 4:6), till we all come to the perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:13). Thus the Lord’s Supper is our communion with, and communicating of, Christ’s body and blood.

4. A Covenanting Ordinance

The Lord’s Supper is a covenanting ordinance. This cup (that is, this ordinance) our Savior tells us is the “new testament”¹⁸ (Luk 22:20)—not only pertaining to the New Testament, but containing it. It has the whole New Testament in it, the sum and substance of it. It is, in general, an instrument by which a right passes and is conveyed, and a title to some good thing given.¹⁹ The gospel revelation of God’s grace and will is both a testament and a covenant, and the Lord’s Supper has a reference to it as both.

A. Christ’s last will

The everlasting gospel is Christ’s last will, by which He has given and bequeathed a great estate to His family on earth, with certain precepts and injunctions and under certain provisions and limitations. This will is become in force by the death of the Testator and is now unalterable. It is proved in the court of heaven, and administration given to the blessed Spirit, Who is as the executor of the will—for of Him the Testator said, “He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you” (Joh 16:14). Christ having purchased a great estate by the merit of His death, by His testament He left it to all His poor relations that had need enough of it, and for whom He bought it. All those who can prove themselves akin to Christ—by their being born from above, their partaking of a divine nature, and their doing the will of God—may claim the estate by virtue of the will, and shall be sure of a present maintenance and a future inheritance out of it.

B. Seal of the New Testament

The Lord’s Supper is the New Testament; it is not only a memorial of the Testator’s death, but it is the seal of the Testament. A true copy of it, attested

¹⁸ **testament** – will: the legal instrument by which title to property is conveyed from one party to another; covenant: a mutually binding agreement between two parties.

¹⁹ This the Lord’s Supper symbolizes; the blessings of the covenant are ours by the merit of Christ through faith.

by this seal and pleadable, is hereby given into the hands of every believer so that he may have strong consolation (Heb 6:18). The general record of the New Testament, which is common to all, is hereby made particular.

The charge given by the will is hereby applied and enforced to us. The Testator has charged us to remember Him, has charged us to follow Him whithersoever He goes. He has charged us to love one another, and the estate He has left us is so devised as not to give any occasion to quarrel, but rather to be a bond of union. He has charged us to espouse His cause, serve His interest, and concern ourselves in His concerns in the world—to seek the welfare of the great body and all the members of it. He has likewise charged us to expect and prepare for His second coming: His word of command is, “Watch” (Mar 13:37). Now, in the Lord’s Supper we are reminded of this charge, and bound afresh faithfully to observe whatsoever Christ has commanded—as the Rechabites kept the command of their father (Jer 35).

The legacies left by the will are hereby particularly consigned to us, paid in part, and the rest secured to be paid when we come to age, even at the time appointed by the Testator. What is left for us is not only sufficient to answer the full intention of the will, enough for all, enough for each, but is left in good hands, in the hands of the Spirit of truth (Joh 14:17), Who will not deal unfaithfully with us; for, as Christ tells us, “we know him” (Joh 14:17). Nay, Christ Himself is risen from the dead to be the overseer of His own will, and to see it duly executed, so that we are in no danger of losing our legacies, unless by our own fault.²⁰

These are good securities upon which we may with abundant satisfaction rely...

C. God’s covenant

1). *Solemn commitment*

Though God is our sovereign Lord and owner, and we are in His hands as the clay in the hand of the potter (Rom 9:21), yet He condescends to deal with us about our reconciliation and happiness in the way of a covenant, that they which are saved may be the more comforted and they which perish may be rendered the more inexcusable. The tenor of this covenant is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Act 16:31).

Salvation is the great promise of the covenant, believing in Christ the great condition of the covenant; and now, this cup is the covenant—that is, it is the seal of the covenant. There seems to be an allusion to that solemnity

²⁰ Henry appears to use this illustration of benefiting from a legacy left us by Jesus somewhat loosely. Those who are truly recipients of God’s saving purpose of love in Jesus Christ cannot “lose their legacy” through their own fault. However, it is very possible for those who *appear* to be recipients of Christ’s “legacy” to demonstrate by unbelief or disobedience that they never were the objects of His covenant love.

which we read of where Moses read the book of the covenant in the audience of the people, and the people declared their consent to it, saying,

All that the Lord has said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you concerning all these words (Exo 24:7-8).

Thus, the covenant being made by sacrifice, and the blood of the sacrifice being sprinkled both upon the altar of God and upon the representatives of the people, both parties did, as it were, interchangeably put their hands and seals to the articles of agreement.

So the blood of Christ—having satisfied for the breach of the covenant of innocency,²¹ and purchased a new treaty, and being the sacrifice by which the covenant is made—is fitly called the blood of the covenant. Having sprinkled this blood upon the altar in His intercession, as the apostle explains this mystery, when “by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place” (Heb 9:12), He doth in this sacrament [symbolically] sprinkle it upon the people.

A bargain is a bargain, though it be not sealed, but the sealing is the ratification and perfection of it. The internal seal of the covenant, as administered to true believers, is the Spirit of promise whereby we “are sealed to the day of redemption” (Eph 4:30). But the external seals of the covenant, as administered in the visible church, are the sacraments, particularly this of the Lord’s Supper. Sealing ordinances are appointed to make our covenanting with God the more solemn—and consequently the more affecting, and the impressions of it the more abiding. The covenant of grace is a “covenant never to be forgotten.”²² This ordinance, therefore, was instituted to assure us that God will never forget it, and to assist us [so] that we never may forget it.

2). *The seal of the covenant*

It is the seal of the new covenant, in the following ways:

a). God does, in and by this ordinance, seal to us and be to us a God. This article of the covenant is inclusive of all the rest. In giving Himself to us to be ours, He gives us all things, for He is God all-sufficient. This is the grant, the royal grant, that the eternal God here seals and delivers to true believers as His act and deed. He gives Himself to them, and empowers them to call Him theirs.

²¹ **covenant of innocency** – often called the covenant of works. The covenant of works is the covenant God established with Adam in the Garden of Eden before his fall into sin. It established man’s obligation to obey God, with the penalty of death for disobedience (Gen 2:16-17).

²² From “The Solemn League and Covenant” by Rev. Joseph Caryl (1602-1673), English Nonconformist theologian, born in London, educated at Oxford, member of the Westminster Assembly in 1643.

What God is in Himself, He will be to them for their good. His wisdom is theirs, to counsel and direct them; His power is theirs, to protect and support them; His justice is theirs, to justify them; His holiness is theirs, to sanctify them; His goodness is theirs, to love and supply them. His truth is the inviolable security of the promise, and His eternity the perpetuity of their happiness.

God will be to them a Father, and they shall be His sons and daughters, dignified by the privileges of adoption and distinguished by the Spirit of adoption. Their Maker is their husband, and He has said that He is married to them and rejoices in them “as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride” (Isa 62:5). The Lord is their shepherd, and the sheep of his pasture “shall not want” (Psa 23). He is the portion of their inheritance in the other world, as well as of their cup in this. “He has prepared for them a city” and thereby “is not ashamed to be called their God” (Heb 11:16).

b). We do, in and by this ordinance, seal to Him to be to Him a people. We accept the relation by our voluntary choice and consent, and bind our souls with a bond that we will approve ourselves to Him in the relation. We hereby resign, surrender, and give up our whole selves (body, soul, and spirit) to God (the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost)—covenanting and promising that we will, by His strength, serve Him faithfully and walk closely with Him in all manner of gospel obedience all our days. Claiming the blessings of the covenant, we put ourselves under the bonds of the covenant. “O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant—wholly, only, and forever Thine.” And this is the meaning of this service.

Chapter III

AN INVITATION TO THIS ORDINANCE

1. Our Message

We are to tell you that all things are ready, now ready. He that has an ear, let him hear this: All things are now ready in the gospel-feast that are proper for, or will contribute to, the full satisfaction of an immortal soul who knows its own nature and interest, and desires to be truly and eternally happy in the love and favor of its Creator.

A. A noble feast

All things are ready, all things requisite to a noble feast. Let us a little improve the metaphor.¹

1). There is a *house* ready for the entertainment of the guests, the gospel church, Wisdom's house, which she has built upon seven pillars (Pro 9:1). God has set up His tabernacle among men, and the place of His tent is enlarged and made capacious enough. Though the table has been replenished with guests, yet still there is room (Luk 14:22).

2). There is a *table* ready spread in the Word and ordinances, like the table in the Temple on which the show-bread was placed, a loaf for every tribe. The Scripture is written, the canon² of it completed, and in it a full declaration made of God's good-will towards men.

3). There is a *laver* ready for us to wash in. As at the marriage-feast at Cana there were six water-pots set for purification, lest sense of pollutions contracted should deter us from the participation of these comforts, behold, there is "a fountain opened" (Zec 13:1). Come and wash in it so that, being purged from an evil conscience by the blood of Jesus (Heb 9:14), you may with humble confidence compass God's altar.

4). There are *servants* ready to attend you. And those are the ministers, whose work it is to direct you to the table, and to give every one "their por-

¹ **metaphor** – figure of speech.

² **canon** – Greek *kanon*; literally: "measuring stick," then "rule or standard," and finally a "list written in a column." In this sense it was applied to the list of books which the early Christian churches acknowledged to be God-inspired and authoritative for the Christian faith and life. See Free Grace Broadcaster 239, *God-breathed Scripture*.

tion of meat in due season" (Luk 12:42), "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2Ti 2:15). They are not masters of the feast, but only stewards and "your servants for Jesus' sake" (2Co 4:5).

5). There is *much company* already come. Many have accepted the invitation and have found a hearty welcome. Why then should your place be empty? Let the communion of saints invite you into communion with Christ.

6). A *blessing* is ready to be craved. He is ready to bless the sacrifice.³ The great High Priest of our profession, ever living to intercede for us and attending continually to this very thing, is ready to command a blessing upon our spiritual food.

7). The *Master* of the feast is ready to bid you welcome—as ready as the father of the prodigal was to receive his repenting, returning son, whom he saw "when he was yet a great way off" (Luk 15:20). God's ear is open to hear and His hand open to give.

8). The *provision* is ready for your entertainment.⁴

B. What ready for

All things are ready:

1). *For our justification*. Divine justice is satisfied, an everlasting righteousness is brought in, an act of indemnity⁵ has passed the royal assent, and a throne of grace is erected—at which all who can make it appear that they are interested in⁶ the general act, may sue out their particular charter of pardon. There is a plea ready, an advocate ready. "Behold, he is near that justifieth us" (Isa 50:8).

2). *For our sanctification*. There is a fullness of grace in Christ from which we may all receive. The Word of grace is ready as the means, the Spirit of grace is ready as the author; everything ready for the mortification of sin, the confirming of faith, and our furtherance in holiness.

3). *For our consolation*. A well of living water is ready, if we can but see it. Peace is left us for a legacy, which we may claim if we will. Promises are given us for our support, of which, if we have not the benefit, it is our own fault. There is something in the new covenant to obviate⁷ every grief, every challenge, every fear—if we will use it.

4). *For our salvation* ready to be revealed. Angels upon the wing are ready to convey us. Jesus, standing at the Father's right hand, is ready to re-

³ **sacrifice** – Henry is alluding to the Lord's Supper as a sacrificial meal, as he spelled out earlier, not as a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ as in the Roman Mass.

⁴ **entertainment** – use.

⁵ **indemnity** – security or exemption from punishment.

⁶ **are interested in** – have a part in.

⁷ **obviate** – meet.

ceive us. The many mansions are ready prepared for us. “All things are ready” (Mat 22:4).

C. Ready now

All things are now ready, just now, for “behold, now is the accepted time” (2Co 6:2).

1). *All things are now readier than they were under the Law.* Grace then lay more hid than it does now, when life and immortality are brought to so clear a light by the gospel. Christ in a sacrament is much readier than Christ in a sacrifice.

2). *All things are now readier than they will be shortly,* if we trifle away the present season. Now the door of mercy stands open and we are invited to come and enter; but it will shortly be shut. Now the golden sceptre is held out and we are called to come and touch the top of it; but it will be otherwise when the days of our probation⁸ are numbered and finished, and He that now says, “Come for a blessing,” will say, “Depart with a curse.”

2. You Must Come

We must call you to come. This is now the call: “Come, come!” “The Spirit and the bride say, Come” (Rev 22:17). Come to Christ in the first place, and then come to this ordinance. All things are ready, be not you unready.

This exhortation must be directed to three sorts of persons. A. Those who are utterly unmeet⁹ for this ordinance must be exhorted to qualify themselves, and then come. B. Those who, through grace, are in some measure meet for this ordinance, must be exhorted speedily to enter themselves. C. Those who have entered themselves, must be exhorted to be constant in their attendance upon it.

A. The unrepentant

I must apply myself to those that—by their ignorance, profaneness, irreligion, or reigning worldliness—put a bar in their own way and may not be admitted to this ordinance. If these lines should fall under the eye of any such, let them know I have a message to them from God—and I must deliver it, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear.

Do you live a carnal, wicked life, in the service of sin and Satan, “without fear” and “without God in the world” (Jude 1:12; Eph 2:12)? Light is come into the world, and do you love darkness rather, not knowing nor desiring to know the way of the Lord and the judgment of your God? Are you a drunkard, a swearer, a Sabbath-breaker? Are you an adulterer, fornicator, or unclean person? Are you a liar, a deceiver, a railer, or a contentious person? Are you a

⁸ **probation** – testing.

⁹ **unmeet** – unfit; unsuitable.

mere drudge to the world or a slave to any base lust? Does your own conscience tell you, "Thou art the man" (2Sa 12:7); or would it not tell you so if you would suffer it to deal faithfully with yourself?

1). *No part*

Know, then, that you have no part nor lot in this matter. While you continue thus, you are not an invited guest to this feast. If you thrust yourself upon this ordinance while you continue under such a character, instead of doing honor to the Lord Jesus, you put a daring affront upon Him. Your heart will be more hardened, your conscience more seared, Satan's strongholds more fortified, and you eat and drink judgment to yourself, "not discerning the Lord's body" (1Co 11:29).

2). *Very miserable*

Know also that your condition is very miserable while you debar¹⁰ yourself from this ordinance, and are, as polluted, put from this priesthood. If now it be as nothing to you to be separated from the sheep of Christ and excluded from their green pastures, yet it will be something shortly, when you shall accordingly have your place among the goats and your lot with them forever (Mat 25:33). You think it no loss now to want¹¹ the cup of blessing, because you prefer the cup of drunkenness before it; but what do you think of the cup of trembling (Isa 51:17), which will ere long be put into your hand if you repent not? You have no desire to the wine of the love of God, but rather choose the puddle water of sensual pleasures; but can you "drink of the wine of the wrath of God," which shall be poured out without mixture in the presence of the Lamb (Rev 14:10)?

You that join yourself with the sinners in Zion and choose them for your people, can you "dwell with the devouring fire?" Can you inhabit "everlasting burnings" (Isa 33:14)? May God by His grace open your eyes and give you to see your misery and danger before it be too late!

3). *Not desperate yet*

Yet, know that though your condition is very sad, it is not desperate. You have space yet given you to repent, and grace offered to you. Refuse not that grace; slip not that opportunity! Leave your sins and turn unto God in Christ. Give up yourself in sincerity to Jesus Christ, and then come and feast with Him. You shall then have in this ordinance the pledges of His favor, and assurances of your reconciliation to Him and acceptance with Him. And all shall be well, for it shall end everlastingly well.

¹⁰ **debar** – exclude.

¹¹ **want** – lack.

B. Christians who won't come

I must next apply myself to those who—having a competent knowledge in the things of God and making a justifiable¹² profession of Christ's holy religion—cannot be denied admission to this ordinance, and yet deny themselves the benefit and comfort of it. Such are hereby exhorted, without further delay, solemnly to give up their names to the Lord Jesus in and by this sacrament. Hear Hezekiah's summons to the passover: "Yield yourselves unto the Lord" (2Ch 30:8)—that is, give the hand unto the Lord (so is the Hebrew phrase). Join yourselves to Him in the bond of the covenant, and then exchange the ratifications; enter into the sanctuary. First give your own selves unto the Lord, and then confirm the surrender by the solemnity of this ordinance.

1). *The apathetic*

Let me address this exhortation to those whose inclinations [appear to be] good and their conversation¹³ blameless, but their desires are weak and their affections cool and indifferent, and therefore they keep off from this ordinance. This is the character of very many who [appear to be] honest, but they want zeal and resolution enough to bring them under this engagement. They can give no tolerable reason why they do not come to the sacrament. It may be they have bought a piece of ground or a yoke of oxen (Luk 14:18-19); their hands are full of the world and they are too busy. They are unsettled or not settled to their minds, and this makes them uneasy—and they hope that therefore they may be excused. But the true reason is, they are slothful and dilatory,¹⁴ and the things that remain are ready to die (Rev 3:2). They cannot find in their hearts to take pains, the pains they know they must take in a work of this nature. They are not willing to be bound to that strict care and watchfulness to which this sacrament will oblige them. They will be as they are and make no advances. They have hid their "hand in [their] bosom; it grieveth [them] to bring it again to [their] mouth" (Pro 26:15)—that is, they will not be at the pains to feed themselves!

What shall we say to rouse these sluggards, to persuade them to press forward in their profession, forgetting the things that are behind and not resting in them? Hear, ye virgins that slumber and sleep and let your lamps lie by neglected; hear the cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh," that is, comes in this ordinance to espouse you to Himself. Stir up yourselves and "go ye out to meet him" (Mat 25:6).

¹² **justifiable** – credible; reliable.

¹³ **conversation** – lifestyle.

¹⁴ **dilatory** – given to delay.

a). *Affront to Christ*

Consider what an affront you put upon the Lord Jesus while you live in the neglect of this ordinance. You contemn¹⁵ His authority Who has given this command to all His disciples (and among them you reckon yourselves): “This do in remembrance of me” (Luk 22:19). And is it nothing to live in the omission of a known duty and in disobedience to an express precept? Is the law of Christ nothing with you? If you know to do good and do it not, is it not sin? Is not this as much an ordinance of Christ as the Word and prayer? You would not live without them! Nor would you be yourselves...without baptism. Why then is this neglected?

You arraign Christ's wisdom. He instituted this ordinance for your spiritual good, your strength and nourishment; and you think you need it not, you can do as well without it.

b). *Injury to you*

Consider what an injury you hereby do to your own souls. You know not what you lose while you live in the neglect of this ordinance. If you be deprived of opportunities for it, that is an affliction but not a sin. In such a case, while you lament the want¹⁶ of it, keep up desires after it and improve the other helps you have. You may expect that God will make up the want some other way. Though we are tied to ordinances, God is not. But if you have opportunities for it and yet neglect it, and when it is to be administered turn your back upon it, you serve your souls as you would not serve your bodies, for you deny them their necessary food. And the soul that is starved is as certainly murdered as the body that is stabbed, and his blood shall be required at your hands.

Think not to say within yourselves, “We are not clean, surely we are not clean; therefore we come not to the feast.” If you are not, why are you not? Is there not a fountain opened? Have you not been many a time called to wash yourself and make yourself clean? You are not ready, and therefore you excuse yourselves from coming. But is not your unreadiness your sin, and will one sin justify you in another? Can a man's offense¹⁷ be his defense?

You think you are not serious enough—nor devout enough, nor regular enough—in your conversations¹⁸ to come to the sacrament. And perhaps you are not; but why are you not? What hinders you? Is any more required to fit you for the sacrament than is necessary to fit you for heaven? And dare you live a day in that condition in which, if you die, you will be rejected and excluded as unmeet for heaven?

¹⁵ **contemn** – despise.

¹⁶ **want** – lack.

¹⁷ **offense** – sin; that which offends our holy God.

¹⁸ **conversations** – manner of life; lifestyle.

Be persuaded, therefore, to put on the wedding-garment, and then come to the wedding-feast. Instead of making your unreadiness an argument against coming to this ordinance, make the necessity of your coming to this ordinance an argument against your unreadiness.

2). *The fearful*

Let me address this exhortation to those whose desires are strong towards the Lord and towards the remembrance of His name in this ordinance; but they are timorous¹⁹ and are kept from it by prevailing fears. This is the case of many who, we hope, fear the Lord and obey the voice of His servant, but they walk in darkness and have no light (Isa 50:10), who follow Christ, but they follow Him trembling. Ask them why they do not come to this sacrament, and they will tell you they dare not come: they are unworthy, they have no faith, no comfort in God, no hope of heaven—and therefore, if they should come, they should eat and drink damnation to themselves (1Co 11:29). They find not in themselves that fixedness of thought, the flame of pious and devout affections, which they think should be. And because they cannot come as they should, they think it better to stay away. What is said for the conviction and terror of hypocrites and presumptuous sinners, notwithstanding our care to distinguish between the precious and the vile, they misapply to themselves. And so the heart of the righteous is made sad that should not be made sad.

We are commanded, “Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong; fear not” (Isa 35:3-4). But wherewith shall we comfort such, whose souls many times refuse to be comforted? If we tell them of the infinite mercy and goodness of God, the merit and righteousness of Christ, the precious promises of the covenant, their jealous hearts reply, All this is nothing to them. The Lord, they think, has forgotten them; their God has forsaken them and utterly separated them from His people: “As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart” (Pro 25:20).

But, ye of little faith who thus doubt, would you not be made whole? Would you not be strengthened? Is it not a desirable thing to attain to such a peace and serenity of mind, as that you may come with an humble, holy boldness to this precious ordinance? For your help, then, take these two cautions.

a). *Judge not yourself amiss*

Judge not amiss concerning yourselves. As it is a damning mistake, common among the children of men, to think their spiritual state and condition to be good when it is very bad (for “there is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing”)—so it is a disquieting mistake, common among the children

¹⁹ **timorous** – fearful.

of God, to think their spiritual state and condition to be bad when it is very good (for “there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches,” Pro 13:7). But it is a mistake that I hope, by the grace of God, may be rectified.²⁰ Though a full assurance is rarely attained to, and we ought always to keep up a godly jealousy over ourselves, and a holy fear, lest we seem to come short; yet such good hope through grace as will enable us to rejoice in God, and go on cheerfully in our work and duty, is what we should aim at and labor after. Of this we ought not to deny ourselves the comfort, when God by His grace has given us cause for it. Wherever there is such a serious concern about the soul and another world as produces a holy fear, even that gives ground for a lively hope.

You think you have no grace because you are not yet perfect. But why should you look for that on earth which is to be had in heaven only? A child will at length be a man, though as yet he “spake as a child...thought as a child” (1Co 13:11). Blessed Paul himself had not yet attained, nor was already perfect (Phi 3:12). Gold in the ore is truly valuable, though it be not yet refined from its dross.²¹

You think you have no grace, because you have not that sensible joy and comfort which you would have. But those are spiritually enlightened who see their own deformity, as well as those who see Christ's beauty.

Drooping soul, you are under grace and not under the Law; and therefore judge yourself by the measures of grace, and not by those of the Law. You have to do with One that is willing to make the best of you, and will accept the willingness of the spirit, and pardon the weakness of our flesh. Take your work before you, therefore, and let not the penitent, humble sense of your own follies and corruptions eclipse the evidence of God's graces in you, nor let the diffidence²² of yourself shake your confidence in Christ. Thank God for what He has done for you: let Him have the praise of it, and then you shall have the joy of it. And this is certain, either you have an interest in Christ, or you may have. If you doubt, therefore, whether Christ be yours, put the matter out of doubt by a present consent to Him: “I take Christ to be mine, wholly, only, and forever mine; Christ upon His own terms, Christ upon any terms.”

b). Judge not this ordinance amiss

Judge not amiss concerning this ordinance. It was instituted for your comfort: let it not be a terror to you. It was instituted for your satisfaction: let it not be your amazement. Most of the messages from heaven that we meet with in Scripture, delivered by angels, began with “Fear not”—and particu-

²⁰ **rectified** – made right.

²¹ **dross** – impurities in metal.

²² **diffidence** – mistrust.

larly that to the women who attended Christ's sepulchre: "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus" (Mat 28:5). And do not you seek Him? Be not afraid then. Chide yourselves out of these disquieting fears, which steal away your spear and your cruse of water (1Sa 26:12), rob you both of your strength and of your comfort.

You say you are unworthy to come; so were all that ever came, not worthy to be called children, nor to eat of the children's bread. In yourselves there is no worthiness; but is there none in Christ? Is not He worthy, and is not He yours? Have you not chosen Him? Appear therefore before God in Him. Let faith in His mediation silence all your fears; and dismiss their clamors with: But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

You say you dare not come lest you should eat and drink judgment to yourselves; but ordinarily those who most fear that are least in danger of it. That dreadful word was not intended to drive men from the sacrament, but to drive them from their sins. Can you not say, through grace, that you hate sin, you strive against it, you earnestly desire to be delivered from it? Then certainly your league with it is broken; though the Canaanites be in the land, you do not make marriages with them. Come then and seal the covenant with God, and you shall be so far from eating and drinking judgment to yourselves that you shall eat and drink life and comfort to yourselves.

You dare not come to this sacrament; yet you dare pray, you dare hear the Word. I know you dare not neglect either the one or the other; and what is the sacrament but doing the same thing by "a visible sign," which is and ought to be done in effect by the Word and prayer? Nor ought we to put such an amazing distance between this and other ordinances. If we pray in hypocrisy, our prayers are an abomination; if we hear the Word and reject it, it is a savor of death unto death—shall we therefore not pray, not hear? God forbid! Commanded duty must be done; appointed means must be used. And that which unfits and hinders us must be removed. We must in sincerity give up ourselves to serve God: do as well as we can, and be sorry we can do no better. And then, having a High Priest Who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, we may come boldly to the throne of grace (Heb 4:16), and to this table of grace.

You say your faith is weak, pious affections are cool and low, your resolutions unsteady, and therefore you keep away from this ordinance. That is as if a man should say, he is sick, and therefore he will take no physic;²³ he is empty, and therefore will take no food; he is faint, and therefore he will take no cordials.²⁴ This ordinance was appointed chiefly for the relief of such as you are: for the strengthening of faith, the inflaming of holy love, and the con-

²³ **physic** – medicine.

²⁴ **cordials** – medicinal tonics that stimulate the heart or circulation.

firming of good resolutions. In God's name, therefore, use it for these purposes. Pine not away in your weakness, while God has ordained you strength. Perish not for hunger, while there is bread enough in your Father's house and to spare (Luk 15:17). Die not for thirst while there is a well of water by you.

C. Christians who seldom come

This chapter must conclude with an exhortation to those who have given up their name to the Lord in this ordinance, and have sometimes sealed their covenant with God in it; but they come very seldom to it, and allow²⁵ themselves in the neglect and omission of it. Frequent opportunities they have for it, stated meals provided for them, the table spread and furnished. Others come, and they [of whom I speak] are invited; but time after time they let it slip and turn their backs upon it, framing to themselves some sorry excuse or other to shift it off. I desire such to consider seriously the following:

1). *How powerful the encouragements*

How powerful are the engagements that we lie under to be frequent and constant in our attendance on the Lord in this ordinance. It is plainly intimated in the institution that the solemnity is oft to be repeated; for it is said, "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (1Co 11:25). Baptism is to be administered but once because it is the door of admission, and we are but once to enter in by that door. But the Lord's Supper is the table in Christ's family at which we are to eat bread continually...The great Master of the family would have none of His family missing at meal-time.

While we are often sinning, we have need to be often receiving the seal of our pardon; because—though the sacrifice be perfect and able to perfect "for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb 10:14), so that that needs never to be repeated—yet the application of it, being imperfect, has need to be often made afresh. The worshippers, though once purged—having still consciences of sin in this defective state—must oft have recourse to the fountain opened for the purging of their consciences from the pollutions contracted daily by dead works, to serve the living God. Even he that is washed thus needs to wash his feet, or he cannot be easy.

While we are often in temptation, we have need to be often renewing our covenants with God and fetching strength from heaven for our spiritual conflicts. Frequent fresh recruits and fresh supplies are necessary for those that are so closely besieged, and are so vigorously attacked, by a potent adversary. He improves all advantages against us; therefore it is our wisdom not to neglect any advantage against him, and particularly this ordinance.

²⁵ allow – justify.

While we are often laboring under great coldness and deadness of affection towards divine things, we need oft to use those means which are proper to kindle that holy fire and keep it burning. We find, by sad experience, that our coal from the altar is soon quenched. Our thoughts grow flat, low, and unconcerned about the other world by being so much conversant with this. We have therefore need to be often celebrating the memorial of Christ's death and sufferings.

Much of our communion with God is kept up by the renewing of our covenant with Him and the frequent interchanging of solemn assurances. It is not superfluous, but highly serviceable, both to our holiness and our comfort, oft to present ourselves to God as living sacrifices, alive from the dead (Rom 12:1). It is a token of Christ's favor to us, and must not be slighted, that He not only admits, but invites us oft to repeat this solemnity, and is ready again to seal to us, if we be but ready to seal to Him. Jonathan, therefore, "caused David to swear again, because he loved him" (1Sa 20:17). An honest mind will not startle at assurances.

2). *How poor the excuses*

Consider how poor the excuses are with which men commonly justify themselves in this neglect. They let slip many an opportunity of attending upon the Lord in this ordinance. And why do they?

a). *Worldly business.* Perhaps they are so full of worldly business that they have neither time nor heart for that close application to the work of a sacrament which they know is requisite. The shop must be attended, accounts must be kept, debts owing them must be got in, and debts they owe must be paid. It may be some affair of more than ordinary difficulty and importance is upon their hands, of which they are in care about the issue; and till that be over, they think it not amiss to withdraw from the Lord's Supper. And is this your excuse? Weigh it in the balances of the sanctuary,²⁶ then, and consider: is any business more necessary than the doing of your duty to God, and the working out of your own salvation (Phi 2:12)?

You are careful and troubled about many things; but is not this the one thing needful, to which everything else should be obliged to give way (Luk 10:41-42)? Do you not think your worldly business would prosper and succeed the better for your care about the main matter? If it were left while you come hither to worship, might you not return to it with greater hope to speed in it?

And do you not spare time from your business for things of much less moment than this? You will find time, as busy as you are, to eat and drink, and sleep, and converse with your friends. And is not the nourishment of

²⁶ **balances of the sanctuary** – official scales used in the Temple for exchanging money; therefore, absolute honesty before God.

your soul, its repose in God, and communion with Him much more necessary? I dare say, you will own it is!

b). Desiring more time for preparation. If indeed you cannot allow so much time for solemn secret worship in preparation for this ordinance, and reflection upon it, as others do—and as you yourself sometime have done and would do—yet let not that keep you from the ordinance. Your heart may be in heaven when your hands are about the world. A serious Christian may, through God's assistance, do a great deal of work in a little time. If the hours that should be thus employed be trifled away in that which is idle and impertinent, it is our sin. But if they be forced out of our hands by necessary and unavoidable avocations,²⁷ it is but our affliction and ought not to hinder us from the ordinance. The less time we have for preparation, the more close and intent we should be in the ordinance itself, and so make up the loss. A welcome guest never comes unseasonably to one that always keeps a good house.

c). Worldly heart. But if, indeed, your heart is so set upon the world—so filled with the cares of it and so eager in the pursuits of it—that you have no mind to the comforts of this ordinance, no spirit nor life for the business of it; [then] surely you have left your first love. You have most need of all to come to this ordinance for the recovery of the ground you have lost. Do you think that the inordinacy of your affections to the world will be a passable excuse for the coldness of your affections to the Lord Jesus? Make haste and get this matter mended, and conclude that your worldly business then becomes a snare to you. Your concern about it is excessive and inordinate, and an ill symptom when it prevails to keep you back from this ordinance.

d). Unhappy quarrels. Perhaps some unhappy quarrels, with some relations or with neighbors—some vexatious law-suit they are engaged in, or some hot words that have passed—are pleaded as an excuse for withdrawing from the communion. They are not in charity with others, or others are not in charity with them. And they have been told, and it is undoubtedly true, that it is better to stay away than come in malice. But, then, the malice is so far from being an excuse for the staying away, that really the staying away is an aggravation of the malice. The law in this case is very express: If “thy brother hath ought against thee,” that is, if your conscience tells you that you are the party offending, do not therefore leave the altar, but “leave there thy gift before the altar,” as a pawn for your return, and go and “first be reconciled to thy brother” by confessing your fault, begging his pardon and making satisfaction for the wrong done. And then be sure to “come and offer thy gift” (Mat 5:23-24).

²⁷ **avocations** – distractions.

But, on the other hand, if you have ought against any, if you be the party offended, then forgive. Lay aside all uncharitable thoughts, angry resentments, and desire of revenge, and be in readiness to confirm and evidence your love to those that have injured you. And then, if they will not be reconciled to you, yet your being reconciled to them is sufficient to remove that bar in your way to this ordinance.

In short, strife and contention, as far as it is our fault, must be truly repented of—and the sincerity of our repentance evidenced by amendment of life—and then it need not hinder us. As far as it is our cross, it must be patiently borne, and we must not be disturbed in our minds by it—and then it need not hinder us. And that law-suit which cannot be carried on without malice and hatred of our brother, had better be let fall, whatever we lose. Law is costly indeed, when it is followed at the expense of love and charity.

3). *Not willing to restrain*

If the true reason of your absenting yourselves so often from the Lord's Supper be that you are not willing to take pains with your own hearts, and to lay that restraint upon yourselves both before and after, which you know you must if you come; if, indeed, you are not willing to have your thoughts so closely fixed, your consciences so strictly examined, and your engagements against sin so strongly confirmed as they will be by this ordinance—if this be your case, you have reason to fear that “the things which remain...are ready to die” (Rev 3:2), and your works are not found filled up before God. It is a sad sign of spiritual decay, and it is time for you to “remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works” (2:5). Time was when you had a dear love to this ordinance, when you longed for the returns of it, and it was to you “more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12). Such was “the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals” (Jer 2:2).

But it is otherwise now. Do you now sit loose to it? Are you indifferent whether you enjoy the benefit of it or not? Can you live contentedly without it? You have reason to fear lest you are of those that are drawing back to perdition. Having “begun in the Spirit,” will you now end in the “flesh” (Gal 3:3)? What iniquity have you found in this ordinance that you have thus forsaken it? Has it been as a barren wilderness to you, or as “waters that fail” (Jer 15:8)? If ever it were so, was it not your own fault? Return, therefore, ye backsliding children; be persuaded to return. Return to God, return to your duty, to this duty. Be close and constant to it, as you were formerly—for I dare say, “then it was better with...[you] than now” (Hos 2:7).

Those that, by the grace of God, do still keep up a love for this ordinance, should contrive their affairs so as, if possible, not to miss any of their stated opportunities for it. Thomas, by being once absent from a meeting of the disciples, lost that joyful sight of Christ which the rest then had (Joh 20:24). It is good to have a nail in God's holy place. Blessed are they that dwell in His

house—not those that turn aside to tarry but for a night, but those that take it for their home, their rest forever.

Yet, if God prevent our enjoyment of an expected opportunity of this kind, though we must lament it as an afflictive disappointment, yet we may comfort ourselves with this: that though God has tied us to ordinances, He has not tied Himself to them, but by His grace can make providences work for the good of our souls. It is better to be, like David, under a forced absence from God's altar and have our hearts there, than to be, like Doeg, present under a force, "detained before the Lord," and the heart going after covetousness (1Sa 21:7). It is better to be lamenting and longing in the want of ordinances, than loathing in the fullness of them.

Chapter IV

HELPS FOR SELF-EXAMINATION

[Now, to conclude this treatise, to help us prepare to take the Lord's Supper aright, we shall consider several helps for our self-examination.]

1. We Must Examine Ourselves

A. Examination

1). *Our need for examination*

How earnest so ever we are in pressing people to join themselves to the Lord in this ordinance, we would not have them to be "rash with [their] mouth...[nor] hasty to utter any thing before God" (Ecc 5:2). It must be done, but it must be done with great caution and consideration. Bounds must be set [round] about the mount on which God will descend, and we must address ourselves to solemn services with a solemn pause. It is not enough that we seek God in a due ordinance, but we must "seek him...after the due order" (1Ch 15:13)—that is, we must stir up ourselves to take hold on him. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (Amos 4:12). Those that labor under such an habitual indisposition to communion with God, and are liable to so many actual discomposures as we are conscious of to ourselves, have need to take pains with their heart and should, with a very serious thought and steady resolution, engage them to approach unto God.

Now, the duty most expressly required in our preparation for the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, is that of self-examination. The apostle, when he would rectify the abuses that had sullied the beauty of this sacrament in the church of Corinth, prescribes this great duty as necessary to the due management of it, and a preservative against sharing in the guilt of such corruptions: "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup" (1Co 11:28). He that desires the Lord's Supper desires a good work; but let these also first be proved—let them prove their own selves, and so let them come. Let them come upon that condition, and with that preparation, as, "I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar" (Psa 26:6). In this method we must proceed.

"Let a man *examine* himself." The word signifies either to prove or to approve, and appoints such an approbation¹ of ourselves as is the result of a strict and close probation;² and such a probation of ourselves as issues in a comfortable approbation according to the tenor of the new covenant. It is so to prove ourselves, as to approve ourselves to God in our integrity. "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee" (Joh 21:17), so as to appeal to God's inquiry, "Examine me, Lord, and prove me" (Psa 26:2).

2). *Definition*

To examine ourselves is to discourse with our own hearts. It is to converse with ourselves—a very rational, needful, and improving piece of conversation. When we go about this work, we must retire from the world, sitting alone and keeping silence (Lam 3:28). We must retire into our own bosoms, and consider ourselves, reflect upon ourselves, inquire concerning ourselves, enter into a solemn conference with our own souls, and be anxious³ concerning their state. Those who are ignorant and cannot do this, or careless and secure and will not do it, are unmeet for this ordinance.

More particularly, to examine ourselves is to put serious questions to ourselves and to our own hearts, and to prosecute them till a full and true answer be given to them. These six questions (among others) are good for each of us to put to ourselves in our preparation to the Lord's Supper, both at our admission, and in our after approaches to it: "What am I? What have I done? What am I doing? What progress do I make? What do I want? and, What shall I resolve to do?"

2. What Am I?

Inquire, What am I? It needs no inquiry, but it calls for serious consideration that I am a reasonable creature, lower than the angels, higher than the

¹ **approbation** – approval.

² **probation** – testing in order to prove one's nature; trial.

³ **anxious** – concerned.

brutes, capable of knowing, serving, and glorifying God in this world, and of seeing and enjoying Him in a better. I am made for my Creator and am accountable to Him. God grant that I have not such a noble and excellent being in vain! But here this question has another meaning. All the children of men, by the fall of the first Adam, are become sinners; some of the children of men, by the grace of the second Adam, are become saints. Some remain in a state of nature; others are brought into a state of grace. Some are sanctified, others unsanctified. This is a distinction that divides all mankind, and that will last when all other divisions and subdivisions shall be no more—for according to this will the everlasting state be determined.

Now, when I ask, What am I? the meaning is, To which of these two do I belong: Am I in the favor of God, or under His wrath and curse? Am I a servant of God, or a slave to the world and the flesh? Look forward and ask, Whither am I going: to heaven or hell? If I should die this night (and I am not sure to live till tomorrow), whither would death bring me? Where would death lodge me? In endless light or in utter darkness? Am I in the narrow way that leads to life, or in the broad way that leads to destruction? I am called a Christian, but am I a Christian indeed? Have I a nature answerable to the name?

It highly concerns us all to be strict and impartial in this inquiry. What will it avail us to deceive ourselves? God cannot be imposed upon, though men may. It is undoubtedly true, if we be not saints on earth, we shall never be saints in heaven. It is not a small thing about which I am now persuading you to inquire. No, it is your life, your precious life, the life of your soul, your eternal life, which depends upon it. Multitudes have been deceived in this matter, whose way seemed right, but the end of it proved the ways of death. After they had long flattered themselves in their own eyes, they perished at last with a lie in their right hand. We also are in danger of being deceived, and therefore have need to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy. Being told that many who eat and drink in Christ's presence will be disowned and rejected by Him in the great day, we have each of us more reason to suspect ourselves than the disciples had, and to ask, "Lord, is it I?" (Mat 26:22).

But it especially concerns us to insist upon this inquiry when we draw near to God in the Lord's Supper. It is children's bread that is there prepared (Mat 15:26); am I a child? If not, I have no part nor lot in the matter. I am there to seal a covenant with God; but if I never made the covenant, never in sincerity consented to it, I shall put the seal to a blank, nay, to a curse.

That the trial may come to an issue, we must earnestly pray to God to discover us to ourselves, and must be willing to know the truth of our case. And the result must be one of the following:

1). If we find cause to fear that our spiritual state is bad, and that we are yet unsanctified and unregenerate, we must give all diligence to get the mat-

ter mended. If our state be not good, yet, thanks be to God, it may be made good: “There is hope in Israel concerning this thing” (Ezr 10:2). Rest not, therefore, in your former faint purposes and feeble efforts; but consider more seriously than ever the concerns of your soul. Pray more seriously than ever for the sanctifying grace of God...Depend more closely than ever upon the merit and strength of Jesus Christ—and I hope you will soon experience a blessed change.

2). *If we find cause to hope that our spiritual state is good, we must take the comfort of it and give God the praise.* We must not hearken to the tempter when he would disturb our peace and hinder our progress by calling it in question. Though we must always abase⁴ ourselves and be jealous over ourselves, yet we must not derogate⁵ from the honor of God’s grace, nor deny its work in us. God keep us all, both from deceiving ourselves with groundless hopes, and from disquieting ourselves with groundless fears.

3. What Have I Done?

Inquire, What have I done? We come to the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper to receive the remission of our sins according to the tenor of the new covenant.⁶ Now, one thing required of us, in order to peace and pardon, is that we confess our sins. If we do that, “God is faithful and just to forgive” them (1Jo 1:9); but if we cover them, we cannot prosper. Not that we can by our confessions inform God of anything He did not know before, as earthly princes are informed by the confessions of criminals; but thus we must give glory to God, take shame to ourselves, and strengthen our own guard against sin for the future.

In the confession of sin, it is requisite that we be *particular*. The high priest on the Day of Atonement must confess over the scape-goat “all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins” (Lev 16:21). It is not enough to say as Saul, “I have sinned” (1Sa 15:24); but we must say as David, “I have sinned, and done *this* evil” (Psa 51:4); or as Achan, “I have sinned...and *thus and thus* have I done” (Jos 7:20). A broken heart will thereby be more broken and better prepared to be bound up. A burdened conscience will thereby be eased, as David’s was when he said, “I will confess” (Psa 32:5). Commonly, the more particular and free we are in confessing our sins to God, the more comfort we have in the sense of the pardon. Deceit lies in generalities.

⁴ **abase** – humble.

⁵ **derogate** – detract.

⁶ The remission of our sins comes by faith in Christ’s work for us, of which the Lord’s Supper is a sign or symbol.

It is therefore necessary, in order to a particular confession of sin, that we “search and try our ways” (Lam 3:40); that we examine our consciences, look over their records, examine the actions of our past life, and seriously call to mind wherein we have offended God in anything. The putting of this question is spoken of as the first step towards repentance: “No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?” (Jer 8:6). For want of this inquiry duly made, when men are called to return, they baffle the call with that careless question, “Wherein shall we return?” (Mal 3:7).

Let us therefore set ourselves to look back and remember our faults this day. It is better to be minded of them now, when the remembrance of them will open to us a door of hope, than be minded of them in hell, where sin remembered will aggravate an endless despair.

We ought to be *often* calling ourselves to an account. In the close of every day and of every week, the day's work and the week's work should be reviewed. But it is especially necessary that it be done before a sacrament. Former reflections made ought then to be repeated; and with a particular exactness we must consider what our ways have been since we were last renewing our covenants with God at His table. This is so that we may be humbled for the follies to which we have returned since God spoke peace to us, and may be more particular and steady in our resolutions for the future.

We must not do as Pilate did when he asked our Savior, “What is truth?” but would not stay for an answer (Joh 18:38). No, we must take pains to find out what has been amiss, and herein must accomplish a diligent search.

And, as far as we find ourselves not guilty, we must own our obligations to the grace of God and return thanks for that grace, and let the testimony of conscience for us be our rejoicing. “If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God” (1Jo 3:21).

As far as we find ourselves guilty, we must be humbled before God for it, mourn and be in bitterness at the remembrance of it, cry earnestly to God for pardon of it, and be particular in our resolutions, by God's grace, to sin no more. Pray as Job is taught: “That which I see not teach thou me”; and promise as it follows there: “If I have done iniquity, I will do no more” (Job 34:32).

4. What Am I Doing?

Inquire, What am I doing? When we have considered what our way has been, it is time to consider what it *is*. “Ponder the path of thy feet” (Pro 4:26).

1). *What am I doing in the general course of my conversation?* Am I doing anything for God, for my soul, for eternity, anything for the service of my generation—or am I not standing all the day idle? It is the law of God's house as well as of ours: “if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2Th 3:10).

If I find that, according as my capacity and opportunity is, through the grace of Christ, I am going on in the way of God's commandments, this ordinance will be comforting and quickening to me. But if I give way to spiritual sloth and slumber and do not mind my business, let this shame me out of it and humble me for it. How unworthy am I to eat my Master's bread, while I take no care to do my Master's work!

2). *What am I doing in this approach to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper?* I know what is to be done, but am I doing it? Do I apply myself to it in sincerity and with a single eye,⁷ in a right manner and for right ends (Luk 11:34)? Am I by repentance undoing that which I have done amiss? And am I, by renewing my covenant with God, doing that better which I have formerly done well? Am I joining myself unto the Lord with purpose of heart to cleave unto Him to the end? It is the preparation of the passover; am I doing the work of that day in its day? Am I purging out the old leaven, buying such things as I have need of against the feast, without money and without price (Isa 55:1)? Am I engaging my heart to approach unto God, or am I thinking of something else? Am I slothful in this business, or do I make a business of it?

Here it is good to examine whether, beside the common and general intentions of this ordinance, there be not something particular which I should more especially have in my eye in my preparation for it. Do I find my heart at this time more than usually broken for sin and humbled at the remembrance of it? Let me then set in vigorously with those impressions and drive that nail. Or is my heart in a special manner affected with the love of Christ, and enlarged in holy wonder, joy, and praise? Let its outgoings that way be quickened, and those thoughts imprinted deep and improved.

5. What Progress Do I Make?

Inquire, What progress do I make? If, upon examination, there appear some evidences of the truth of grace, I must then examine my growth in grace; for grace, if it be true, will be growing. That well of water will be "springing up" (Joh 4:14), and "he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger" (Job 17:9). There is a spiritual death, or at least some prevailing spiritual disease, where there is not some improvement and progress towards perfection.

By what measures, then, may I try my growth in grace?

1). *Do I find my practical judgment more settled and confirmed in its choice of holiness and heaven?* If so, it is a sign I am getting forward. We cannot judge of ourselves by the pangs of affection. Those may be more sen-

⁷ with a single eye – without deceit or distraction.

sible and vehement at first; and their being less so afterwards ought not to discourage us. The fire may not blaze so high as it did, and yet may burn better and stronger.

2). *Do I find my corrupt appetites and passions more manageable; or are they still as violent and headstrong as ever? Do I find that my desires towards those things that are pleasing to sense are not so eager as they have been, but the body is kept more under and brought into subjection to grace and wisdom?*

And is it not so hard a thing to me, as it has been sometimes, to deny myself? Do I find that my resentments of those things which are displeasing to the flesh, are not so deep and keen as they have been? Can I bear afflictions from a righteous God, and provocations from unrighteous men, with more patience, and better composure and command of myself, than I could have done? Am I not so peevish and fretful, and unable to bear an affront or disappointment, as sometimes I have been? If so, surely He that has begun the good work is carrying it on (Phi 1:6). But if nothing be done towards the suppressing of these rebels, towards the weeding out of these roots of bitterness that spring up and trouble us (Heb 12:15)—though we lament them, yet we do not prevail against them—then, it is to be feared, we stand still or go back.

3). *Do I find the duties of religion more easy and pleasant to me; or am I still as unskillful and unready in them as ever? Do I go dexterously⁸ about a duty, as one that understands it and is used to it, and as a man that is master of his trade goes on with the business of it; or do I go awkwardly about it, as one not versed in it? When God calls, “Seek ye my face,” do I, like the child Samuel, run to Eli and terminate my regards in the outside of the service⁹ (1Sa 2:4-5); or do I, like the man David, cheerfully answer, “Thy face, Lord, will I seek” (Psa 27:8), and so enter into that within the veil (Heb 6:19)? Though, on the one hand, there is not a greater support to hypocrisy than a formal, customary road of external performances; yet, on the other hand, there is not a surer evidence of sincerity and growth than an even, constant, steady course of lively devotion, which by daily use becomes familiar and easy and, by the new nature, natural to us. A growing Christian takes his work before him and sings at it.*

4). *Do I find my heart more weaned from this present life, and more willing to exchange it for a better; or am I still loath to leave it? Are thoughts of death more pleasing to me than they have been, or are they still as terrible as ever?*

5). *If, upon search, we find that we make no progress in grace and holiness, let the ordinance of the Lord's Supper be improved for the furtherance*

⁸ **dexterously** – skillfully.

⁹ **terminate my regards in the outside of the service** – focus on the externals.

of our growth, and the removal of that, whatever it is, which hinders it. If we find we thrive, though but slowly, and though it is not so well with us as it should be, yet, through grace, it is better with us than it has been, and that we are not always babes, let us be encouraged to abound so much the more. “Go and prosper...the Lord is with thee” while you are with Him (1Ki 22:15; Jos 1:9).

6. What Do I Want?

Inquire, What do I want? A true sense of our spiritual necessities is required to qualify us for spiritual supplies. The hungry only are filled with good things (Luk 1:53). It concerns us, therefore, when we come to an ordinance that is as a spiritual market, to consider what we have occasion for, so that we may know what to lay hold on, and may have an answer ready to that question which will be put to us at that banquet of wine: “What is thy petition...and what is thy request?” (Est 5:6)—or that which Christ put to the blind men: “What will ye that I shall do unto you?” (Mat 20:32).

“Grace...and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ” (2Co 1:2) are inclusive of all the blessings we can desire and have in them enough to supply all our needs. Since, therefore, we must ask and receive that our “joy may be full” (Joh 16:24), it concerns us to inquire what particular grace and comfort we need, [so] that we may, by faith and desire, reach forth towards that in a special manner.

1). *What grace do I most want?*¹⁰ Wherein do I find myself most defective, weakest, and most exposed? What corruption do I find working most in me? The grace that is opposite to that, I most need. Am I apt to be proud or passionate? Humility and meekness, then, are the graces I most want. Am I apt to be timorous and distrustful? Faith and hope, then, are the graces I most want. With what temptations am I most frequently assaulted? Which way does Satan get most advantage against me: by my constitution, calling, or company? There I most want help from heaven, and strength to double my guard. Am I in danger of being drawn by my outward circumstances to intemperance or deceit, or oppression or dissimulation?¹¹ Then sobriety, justice, and sincerity are the graces I most want.

What is the nature of the duties I am mostly called out to and employed in? Are they such as oblige me to stoop to that which is mean?¹² Then self-denial is the grace I most want. Are they such as oblige me to struggle with that which is difficult and discouraging? Then courage and wisdom are the graces I most want. Whatever our wants are, there are promises in the new

¹⁰ **want** – need.

¹¹ **dissimulation** – hypocrisy.

¹² **mean** – contemptible; inferior.

covenant adapted to them, which, in this ordinance, we must, in a particular manner, apply to ourselves and claim the benefit of, and receive as sealed to us. If we cannot bethink ourselves of particular promises suited to our case, yet there is enough in the general ones: "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes" (Eze 36:27); "I will put my law in...their hearts" (Jer 31:33); "I will put my fear in their hearts" (Jer 32:40), and many such like. And we know Who has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2Co 12:9)!

2). *What comfort do I most want?* What is the burden that lies most heavy? I must seek for support under that burden. What is the grief that is most grieving? I must seek for a balance to that grief. The guilt of sin is often disquieting to me—oh, for the comfort of a sealed pardon! The power of corruption is very discouraging—oh, for the comfort of victorious grace! I am often tossed with doubts and fears about my spiritual state, as if the Lord had "utterly separated me from his people...[and] I were a dry tree" (Isa 56:3)—oh, for the comfort of clear and unclouded evidences! I am sometimes tempted to say, "The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me" (Isa 49:14)—oh, that He would seal to my soul that precious promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb 13:5)!

But my greatest trouble arises from the sense of my own weakness and tendency to backslide. I am sometimes ready to make that desperate conclusion: "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul" (1Sa 27:1). Oh, that I may have the comfort of that promise: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me" (Jer 32:40)! There is in the covenant of grace a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady, comforts suited to every distress and sorrow. But that we may have the benefit of them, it is requisite that we "know every one his own sore, and his own grief" (2Ch 6:29), so that we may spread it before the Lord and may apply to ourselves that relief which is proper for it—and from the fullness which is in Jesus Christ, may receive "grace for grace," grace for all occasions (Joh 1:16).

Here it may be of use to take cognizance even of our outward condition, and inquire into the cares and burdens, the crosses and necessities of it; for even against those there is comfort provided in the new covenant, and administered in this ordinance. Godliness has the "promise of the life that now is" (1Ti 4:8). When Christ was inviting His disciples to come and dine with Him, He asked them first, "Children, have ye any meat?" (Joh 21:5). Christ's inquiry into our affairs directs us to make known, before Him in particular, the trouble of them. Let every care be cast upon the Lord in this ordinance, lodged in His hands, and left with Him. Let our own spirits be eased of it by the application of that general word of comfort to this particular case, whatever it is: "He careth for you" (1Pe 5:7).

What is the concern I am most thoughtful about, relating to myself, my family, or friends? Let that way be committed to the Lord and to His wise and gracious conduct and disposal; and then let my thoughts concerning it be established. What is the complaint I make most feelingly? Is it of a sickly body, disagreeable relations, a declining estate, the removal of those by death that were very dear? Whatever it is, spread it before the Lord, as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh's letter (2Ki 19:14)...When God came to renew His covenant with Abraham, and to tell him that He was his shield and his exceeding great reward, Abraham presently puts in a remonstrance¹³ of his grievance: "Behold, to me thou hast given no seed" (Gen 15:3). Hannah did so when she came up to worship (1Sa 1:15). And we also must bring with us such a particular sense of our afflictions as will enable us to receive and apply the comforts here offered to us, and no more. Holy David observed how his house was with God, that it was not made to grow, when he was taking the comfort of this, that however it were, God "had made with me an everlasting covenant" (2Sa 23:5).

7. What Shall I Resolve to Do?

Inquire, What shall I resolve to do? This question is equivalent to that of Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Act 9:6). We come to this ordinance solemnly to engage ourselves against all sin and to all duty. Therefore, it is good to consider what that sin is which we should particularly covenant against, and what that duty is to which we should most expressly oblige ourselves. Though the general covenant suffice to bind conscience, yet a particular article will be of use to *remind* conscience, and to make the general engagement the more effectual. It is good to be particular in our pious resolutions, as well as in our penitent reflections.

For our assistance herein let us inquire the following:

1). *Wherein have we hitherto missed it most?* Where we have found ourselves most assaulted by the subtlety of the tempter, and most exposed by our own weakness, there we should strengthen our defense and double our guard. What is the sin that has most easily beset me, the well-circumstanced sin (Heb 12:1)? That is it which I must more particularly resolve against in the strength of the grace of God. What is the duty I have most neglected, have been most backward¹⁴ to, and most careless in? To that I must most solemnly bind my soul with this bond.

2). *Wherein may we have the best opportunity of glorifying God?* What can I do in my place for the service of God's honor and the interests of His kingdom among men? "The liberal deviseth liberal things" (Isa 32:8), and so the pious devises pious things, that he may both engage and excite himself to

¹³ **remonstrance** – earnest protest.

¹⁴ **backward** – reluctant; hesitant.

those liberal, pious things in and by this ordinance. What is the talent I am entrusted with the improvement of? What are my Lord's goods I am made steward of? What is it that is expected from one in my capacity? What fruit is looked for from me? That is it that I must especially have an eye to in my covenants with God. To that I must bind my soul. For that I must fetch in help from heaven, so that, having sworn, I may perform it.



So Matthew Henry ends his treatise on the Lord's Supper. Let us understand the fullness of its God-ordained meaning and purposes, and put into practice such a self-examination that brings, by God's grace, both a more consistent victory over sin and abounding joy in Jesus Christ, the Lord of His Supper.