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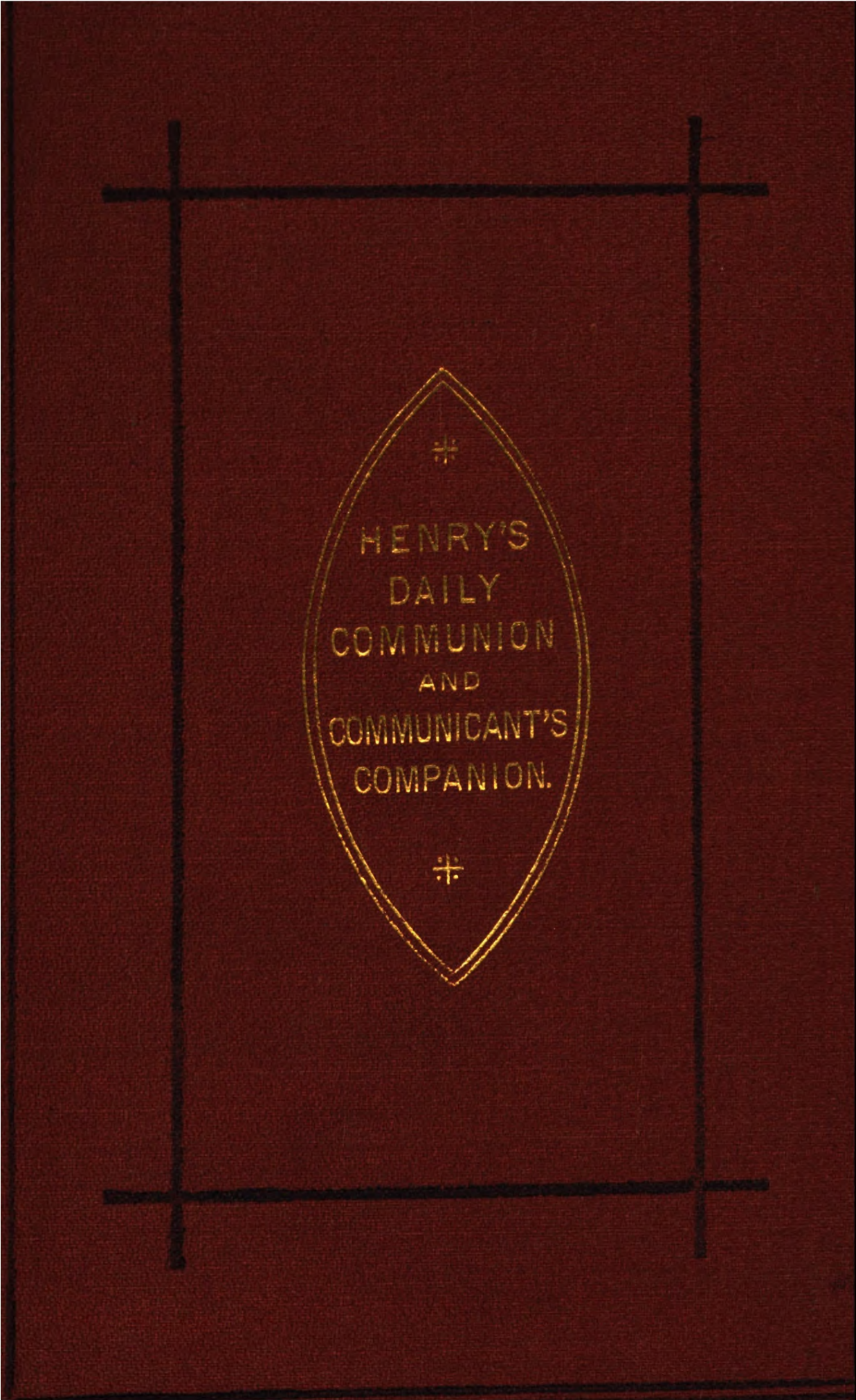
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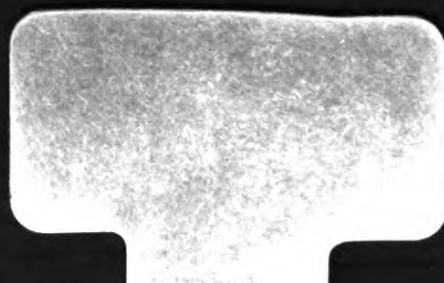
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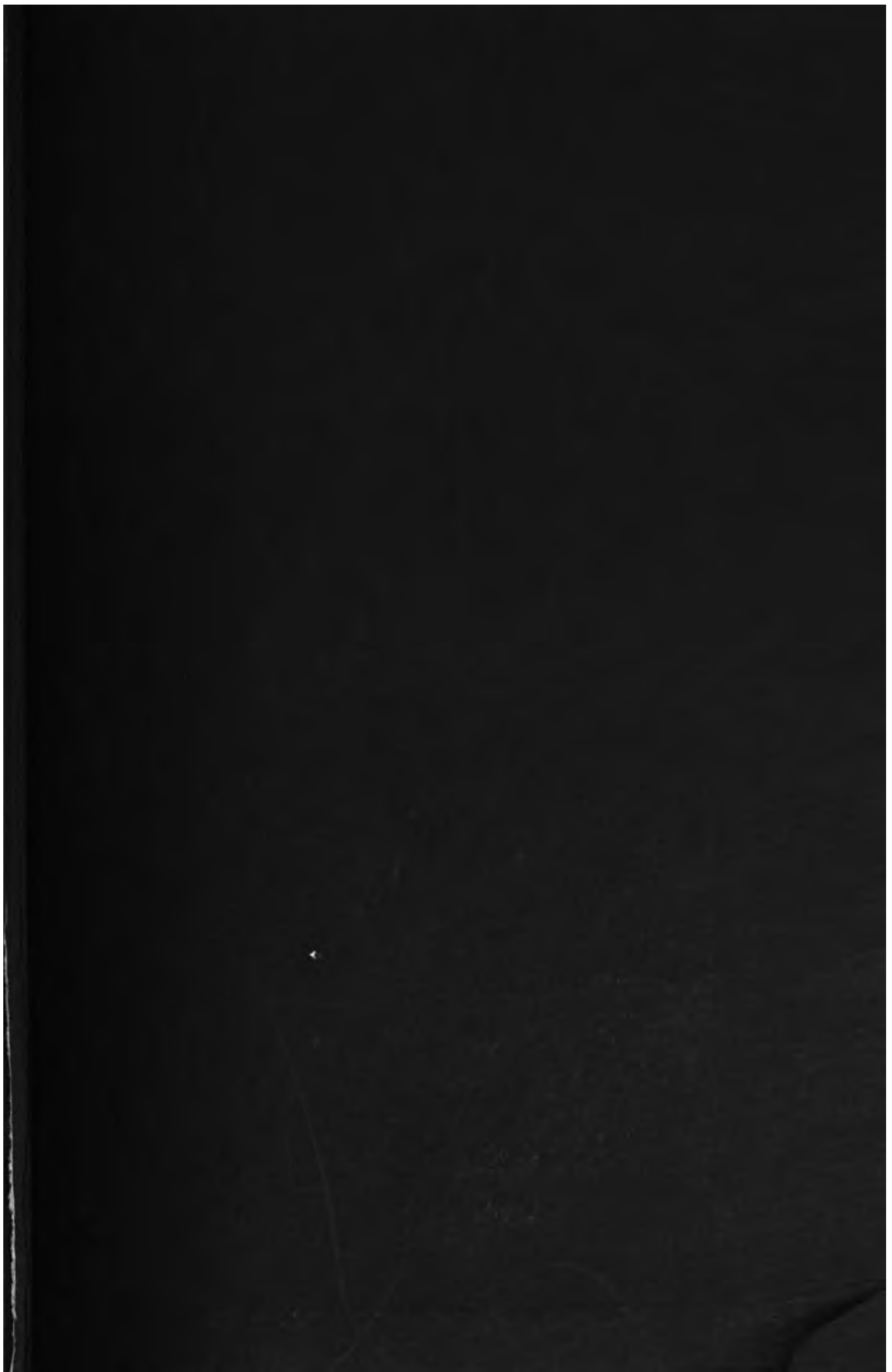


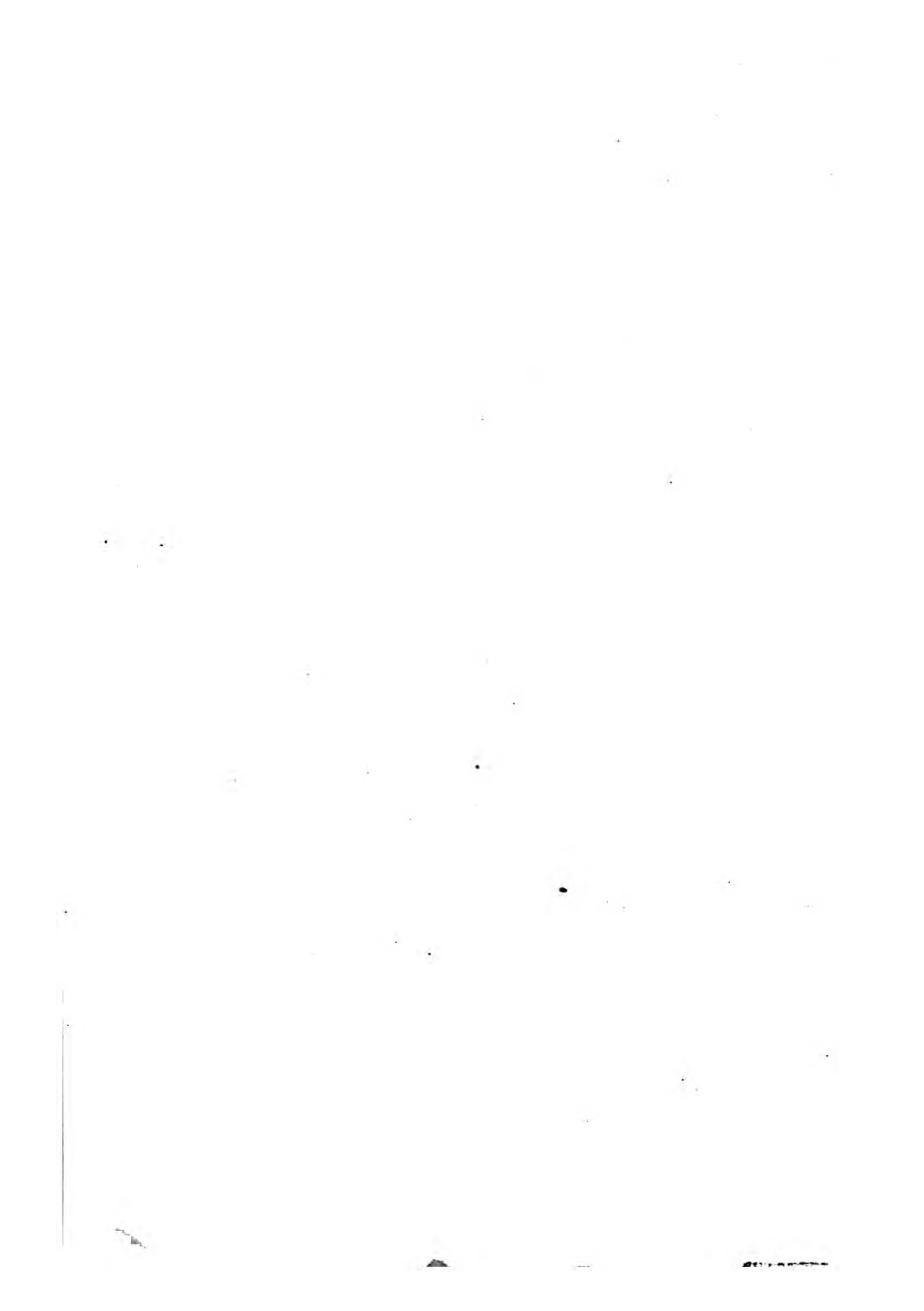
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HENRY'S  
DAILY  
COMMUNION  
AND  
COMMUNICANT'S  
COMPANION.  
#



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*Edginghead 1817*

*Examine thyself & repent before thou presume  
to eat of that bread and drink of that cup.*

LONDON WILLIAM TILG

GOD;

EVERY DAY

VISION:

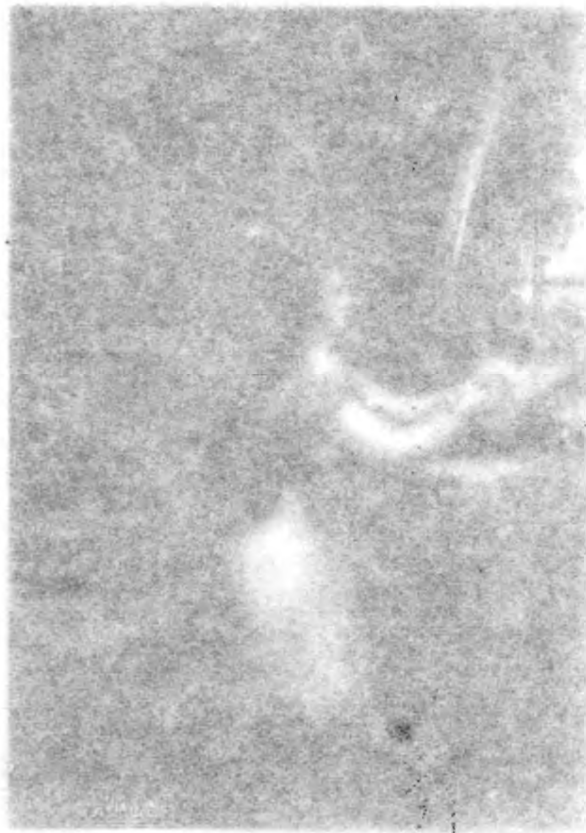
OF THE

HENRY.



138. f. 50.





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# DIRECTIONS

FOR

## DAILY COMMUNION WITH GOD;

IN THREE DISCOURSES:

SHOWING

HOW TO BEGIN, HOW TO SPEND, AND HOW TO CLOSE EVERY DAY  
WITH GOD:

AND THE

## COMMUNICANT'S COMPANION:

OR,

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE RIGHT RECEIVING OF THE  
LORD'S SUPPER.

BY THE

REV. MATTHEW HENRY,

AUTHOR OF A COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE.

LONDON:

WILLIAM TEGG.

1866.



*138. f. 50.*

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**DIRECTIONS**

**FOR**

**DAILY COMMUNION WITH GOD.**

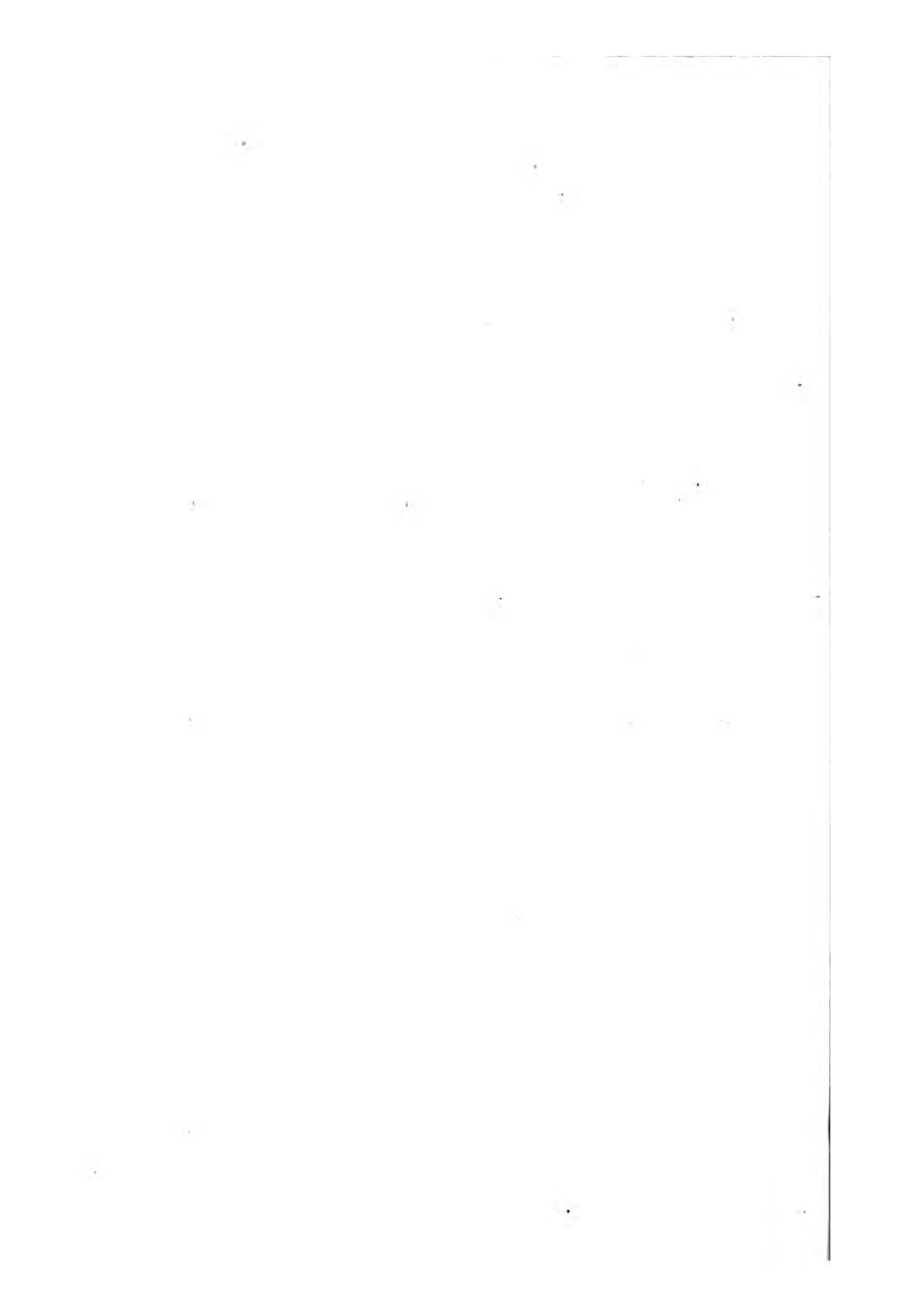
**IN THREE DISCOURSES.**

**SHOWING**

**HOW TO BEGIN, HOW TO SPEND, AND HOW TO CLOSE  
EVERY DAY WITH GOD.**

**BY THE**

**REV. MATTHEW HENRY.**



**DIRECTIONS**  
**FOR**  
**DAILY COMMUNION WITH GOD.**  
**IN THREE DISCOURSES.**

**SHOWING HOW TO BEGIN, HOW TO SPEND, AND HOW TO CLOSE  
EVERY DAY WITH GOD.**

---

**TO THE READER.**

**T**HE two first of these discourses were preached (that is, the substance of them) at the morning lecture at Bethnal-Green, the former, Aug. 13, the other, Aug. 20, 1712. The latter of them I was much importuned to publish by many who heard it; which I then had no thoughts at all of doing, because in divers practical treatises, we have excellent directions given, of the same nature and tendency, by better hands than mine. But upon second thoughts I considered, that both those sermons of beginning and spending the day with God, put together, might perhaps be of some use to those into whose hands those larger treatises do not fall. And the truth is, the subject of them is of such a nature, that if they may be of any use, they may be of general and lasting use; whereupon I entertained the thought of writing them over, with very large additions throughout, as God should enable me, for the press. Communicating this



thought to some of my friends, they very much encouraged me to proceed in it, but advised me to add a third discourse of closing the day with God, which I thereupon took for my subject at an evening lecture, September 3rd, and have likewise much enlarged and altered that. And so this came to be what it is.

I am not without hopes, that something may hereby be contributed among plain people, by the blessing of God upon the endeavour, and the working of his grace with it, to the promoting of serious godliness, which is the thing I aim at. And yet I confess that I should not have published it, had I not designed it for a present to my dearly beloved friends in the country, whom I have lately been rent from.

And to them, with the most tender affection, and most sincere respects, I dedicate it, as a testimony of my abiding concern for their spiritual welfare; hoping and praying, that their conversation may be in everything as becomes the Gospel of Christ, that whether I come and see them, or else be absent, I may hear comfortably of their affairs, that they may stand fast in one spirit with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel.

I am,

Their cordial and affectionate Well-wisher,

MATTHEW HENRY.

*Sept. 8th, 1712.*

THE  
FIRST DISCOURSE,  
SHEWING  
HOW TO BEGIN EVERY DAY WITH GOD.

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PSALM V. 3.

*My voice shalt thou hear in the Morning, O Lord; in the morning  
will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.*

**Y**OU would think it a rude question, if I should ask you, and yet I must entreat you seriously to ask yourselves, What brings you hither so early this morning? and what is your business here? Whenever we are attending on God in holy ordinances, (nay, wherever we are) we should be able to give a good answer to the question which God put to the Prophet, *What dost thou here Elijah?* As when we return from holy ordinances, we should be able to give a good answer to the question, which Christ put to those who attended on John Baptist's ministry, *What went ye out into the wilderness to see?*

It is surprising to see so many assembled together here; surely the fields are white unto the harvest; and I am willing to hope it is not merely for a walk this pleasant morning, that you are come hither; or for curiosity, because the morning lecture was never here before; that it is not for company, or to meet your friends here, but that you are come with a pious design to give glory to God, and to receive grace from him, and in both to keep up your communion with him. And if you ask us, who are ministers, what our business is, we hope we can truly say, it is (as God shall enable us) to assist and further you herein. *Comest thou peaceably?* said the elders of Bethlehem to Samuel; and so, perhaps you will say to us: to which we answer as the Prophet did, *Peaceably*, we come to sacrifice unto the Lord and invite you to the sacrifice.

While the lecture continues with you, you have an opportunity of more than doubling your morning devotions; besides your worshipping of God in secret, and in your families, which this

must not supersede, or jostle out, you here call upon God's name in the solemn assembly ; and it is as much your business in all such exercises to pray a prayer together, as it is to hear a sermon ; and it is said, the original of the morning exercise was a meeting for prayer, at the time when the nation was groaning under the dreadful desolating judgment of a civil war. You have also an opportunity of conversing with the word of God ; you have *precept upon precept, and line upon line* : O that as the opportunity awakens you morning by morning, (so as the Prophet speaks) your *ears may be wakened to hear as the learned*, Isa. l. 4.

But this is not all ; we desire that such impressions may be made upon you by this cluster of opportunities, as you may always abide under the influence of ; that this morning-lecture may leave you better disposed to morning-worship ever after ; that these frequent acts of devotion may so confirm the habit of it, as that henceforward your daily worship may become more easy, and if I may so say, in a manner natural to you.

For your help herein, I would recommend to you holy David's example in the text, who having resolved in general (v. 2.) that he would abound in the duty of prayer, and abide by it, *Unto thee will I pray*, here fixes one proper time for it, and that is the morning : *My voice shalt thou hear in the morning* ; not in the morning only, David solemnly addressed himself to the duty of prayer three times a day, as Daniel did ; *Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud*, Ps. lv. 17. Nay he does not think that enough, but *Seven times a day will I praise thee*, Ps. cxix. 164. But particularly in the morning.

But it is our wisdom and duty, to begin every day with GOD.

Let us observe in the text.

I. The good work itself that we are to do. God must hear our voice, we must direct our prayer to him, and we must look up.

II. The special time appointed and observed for the doing of this good work ; and that is in the morning, and again in the morning, that is, every morning, as duly as the morning comes.

I. The good work which by the example of David we are here taught to do, is in one word to pray ; a duty dictated by the light and law of nature, which plainly and loudly speaks, *Should not a people seek unto their God?* But which the Gospel of Christ gives us much better instructions in and encouragements to, than any that nature furnishes us with ; for it tells us what we must pray for, in whose name we must pray, and by whose assistance,

and invites us to come boldly to the throne of grace, and to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. This work we are to do, not in the morning only, but at other times, at all times; we read of preaching the word out of season, but we do not read of praying out of season, for that is never out of season; the throne of grace is always open, and humble supplicants are always welcome, and cannot come unseasonably.

But let us see how David here expresses his pious resolutions to abide by this duty.

1. *My voice shalt thou hear.* Two ways David may here be understood; either,

(1.) As promising himself a gracious acceptance with God, *Thou shalt*, that is, thou wilt hear my voice, when in the morning I direct my prayer to thee; so it is the language of his faith, grounded upon God's promise, that his ear shall be always open to his people's cry. He had prayed, v. 1. *Give ear to my words, O Lord*; and v. 2. *Hearken unto the voice of my cry*; and here he receives an answer to that prayer, *Thou wilt hear*, I doubt not but thou wilt; and though I have not presently a grant of the thing I prayed for, yet I am sure my prayer is heard, is accepted, and comes up for a memorial, as the prayer of Cornelius did; it is put upon the file, and shall not be forgotten. If we look inward, and can say by experience, that GOD has prepared our heart, we may look upward, may look forward, and say with confidence, that he will cause his ear to hear.

We may be sure of this, and we must pray in the assurance of it, in a full assurance of this faith, that wherever God finds a praying heart, he will be found a prayer-hearing God; though the voice of prayer be a low voice, a weak voice, yet, if it come from an upright heart, it is a voice that God will hear, that he will hear with pleasure, it is his delight, and that he will return a gracious answer to; he has heard thy prayers, he has seen thy tears. When therefore we stand praying, this ground we must stand upon, this principle we must stand to, nothing doubting, nothing wavering, that whatever we ask of God as a Father in the name of Jesus Christ the Mediator, according to the will of God revealed in the scripture, it shall be granted us either in kind or kindness; so the promise is, (John xvi. 23.) and the truth of it is sealed to by the concurring experience of the saints in all ages, ever since man began to call upon the name of the Lord, that Jacob's God never yet said to Jacob's seed, *Seek ye me in vain*, and he will not begin now. When we come to God by

prayer, if we come aright we may be confident of this, that notwithstanding the distance between heaven and earth, and our great unworthiness to have any notice taken of us, or any favour shewed us ; yet God does hear our voice, and will not turn away our prayer, or his mercy. Or,

(2.) It is rather to be taken, as David's promising God a constant attendance on him, in the way he has appointed. *My voice shalt thou hear*, that is, I will speak to thee : because thou hast inclined thy ear unto me many a time, therefore, I have taken up a resolution to call upon thee at all times, even to the end of my time. Not a day shall pass, but thou shalt hear from me. Not that the voice is the thing that God regards, as they seemed to think, who in prayer made their voice to be heard on high, Isa. lviii. 4. Hannah prayed and prevailed, when her voice was not heard ; but it is the voice of the heart that is here meant : God said to Moses, *Wherefore criest thou unto me?* when we do not find that he said one word, Exod. xiv. 15. Praying is lifting up the soul to God, and pouring out the heart before him ; yet, as far as the expressing of the devout affections of the heart by words may be of use to fix the thoughts, and to excite and quicken the desires, it is good to draw near to God, not only with a pure heart but with an humble voice ; so must we *render the calves of our lips*.

However, God understands the language of the heart, and that is the language in which we must speak to God ; David prays here, v. 1, not only *give ear to my words*, but *consider my meditation* ; and Ps. xix. 14. *Let the words of my mouth, proceeding from the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight*.

This therefore we have to do in every prayer, we must speak to God, we must write to him ; we say we hear from a friend whom we receive a letter from ; we must see to it that God hears from us daily.

1. He expects and requires it. Though he has no need of us, or our services, nor can be benefited by them ; yet he has obliged us to offer the sacrifice of prayer and praise to him continually.

(1.) Thus he will keep up his authority over us, and keep us continually in mind of our subjection to him, which we are apt to forget. He requires that by prayer we solemnly pay our homage to him, and give honour to his name, that by this act and deed of our own, thus frequently repeated, we may strengthen the obligations we lie under to observe his statutes, and keep his laws, and be more and more sensible of the weight of them. *He*

*is thy Lord, and worship thou him*, that by frequent humble adorations of his perfections, thou mayest make a constant humble compliance with his will the more easy to thee. By doing obedience, we are learning obedience.

(2.) Thus he will testify his love and compassion towards us. It would have been an abundant evidence of his concern for us, and his goodness to us, if he had only said, "let me hear from you as often as there is occasion; call upon me in the time of trouble or want, and that is enough;" but to shew his complacency in us, as a father does his affection to his child when he is sending him abroad, he gives us this charge, "Let me hear from you every day, by every post, though you have no particular business;" which shews, that the prayer of the upright is his delight; it is music in his ears. Christ says to his dove, *let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely*, Cant. ii. 14. And it is to the spouse the church, that Christ speaks in the close of that song of songs, *O thou that dwellest in the gardens (in the original it is feminine), the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it*. What a shame is this to us, that God is more willing to be prayed to, and more ready to hear prayer, than we are to pray!

2. We have something to say to God every day. Many are not sensible of this, and it is their sin and misery: they live without God in the world; they think they can live without him, are not sensible of their dependance upon him, and their obligations to him, and, therefore, for their parts they have nothing to say to him: he never hears from them, no more than the father did from his prodigal son, when he was upon the ramble, from one week's end to another. They ask scornfully, *What can the Almighty do for them?* And then no marvel if they ask next, *What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?* And the result is, they say to the Almighty, *Depart from us*, and so shall their doom be. But I hope better things of you, my brethren, and that you are not of those who cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God; you are all ready to own that there is a great deal that the Almighty can do for you, and that there is profit in praying to him, and therefore resolve to draw nigh to God, that he may draw nigh to you.

We have something to say to God daily:

(1.) As to a friend we love and have freedom with, such a friend we cannot go by without calling on, and never want something to say to, though we have no particular business with him;

to such a friend we unbosom ourselves, we profess our love and esteem, and with pleasure communicate our thoughts: Abraham is called the *Friend of God*, and this honour have all the saints: *I have not called you servants* (says Christ) *but friends; his secret is with the righteous*; we are invited to acquaint ourselves with him, and to walk with him, as one friend walks with another; the fellowship of believers is said to be *with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*; and have we nothing to say to him then?

Is it not errand enough to the throne of his grace to admire his infinite perfections, which we can never fully comprehend, and yet never sufficiently contemplate, and take complacency in? To please ourselves in beholding the beauty of the Lord, and giving him the glory due to his name? Have we not a great deal to say to him in acknowledgment of his condescending grace and favour to us, in manifesting himself to us and not to the world; and in profession of our affection and submission to him: *Lord! thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.*

God has something to say to us as a friend every day, by the written word, in which we must hear his voice, by his providences, and by our own consciences; and he hearkens and hears whether we have any thing to say to him by way of reply, and we are very unfriendly if we have not. When he says to us, *Seek ye my face*, should not our hearts answer, as to one we love, *Thy face, Lord, will we seek.* When he says to us, "Return, ye backsliding children," should not we readily reply, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God?" If he speak to us by way of conviction and reproof, ought not we to return an answer by way of confession and submission? If he speak to us by way of comfort, ought not we to reply in praise? If you love God, you cannot be to seek for something to say to him, something for your hearts to pour out before him, which his grace has already put there.

(2.) As to a master we serve, and have business with. Think how numerous and important the concerns are that lie between us and God, and you will readily acknowledge that you have a great deal to say to him. We have a constant dependance upon him, all our expectation is from him; we have constant dealings with him; he is the God with whom we have to do, Heb. iv. 13.

Do we not know that our happiness is bound up in his favour; it is life, the life of our souls; it is better than life, than the life of our bodies: and have we not business with God to seek his

**favour, to intreat it with our whole hearts, to beg as for our lives that he would lift up the light of his countenance upon us, and to plead Christ's righteousness, as that only through which we can hope to obtain God's loving-kindness?**

**Do we not know that we have offended God, that by sin we have made ourselves obnoxious to his wrath and curse, and that we are daily contracting guilt? And have we not then business enough with him to confess our fault and folly, to ask for pardon in the blood of Christ, and in him who is our peace to make our peace with God, and renew our covenants with him in his own strength, to go and sin no more?**

**Do we not know that we have daily work to do for God, and our own souls, the work of the day that is to be done in its day? And have we not then business with God to beg of him to show us what he would have us to do, to direct us in it, and strengthen us for it? To seek to him for assistance and acceptance, that he will work in us both to will and to do that which is good, and then countenance and own his own work? Such business as this the servant has with his master.**

**Do we not know that we are continually in danger? Our bodies are so, and their lives and comforts; we are continually surrounded with diseases and deaths, whose arrows fly at midnight, and at noon-day; and have we not then business with God, going out and coming in, lying down, and rising up, to put ourselves under the protection of his providence, to be the charge of his holy angels? Our souls much more are so, and their lives and comforts; it is those our adversary the Devil, a strong and subtle adversary, wars against, and seeks to devour; and have we not then business with God to put ourselves under the protection of his grace, and clothe ourselves with his armour, that we may be able to stand against the wiles and violences of Satan; so as we may neither be surprised into sin by a sudden temptation, nor overpowered by a strong one?**

**Do we not know that we are dying daily, that death is working in us, and hastening towards us; and that death fetches us to judgment, and judgment fixes us in our everlasting state? And have we not then something to say to God in preparation of what is before us? Shall we not say, Lord, make us to know our end; Lord, teach us to number our days! have we not business with God to judge ourselves that we may not be judged, and to see that our matters be right and good?**

**Do we not know that we are members of that body whereof**



Christ is the head; and are we not concerned to approve ourselves living members? Have we not then business with God upon the public account to make intercession for his church? Have we nothing to say for Zion? Nothing in behalf of Jerusalem's ruined walls? Nothing for the peace and welfare of the land of our nativity? Are we not of the family, or but babes in it, that we concern not ourselves in the concerns of it?

Have we no relations, no friends who are dear to us, whose joys and griefs we share in? and have we nothing to say to God for them? no complaints to make, no requests to make known? Are none of them sick or in distress? none of them tempted or disconsolate? And have we not errands at the throne of grace, to beg relief and succour for them?

Now lay all this together, and then consider whether you have not something to say to God every day; and particularly in days of trouble, when it is meet to be said unto God, "I have borne chastisement;" and when, if you have any sense of things, you will say unto God, "Do not condemn me."

3. If you have all this to say to God, what should hinder you from saying it? from saying it every day? Why should not he hear your voice, when you have so many errands to him?

(1.) Let not distance hinder you from saying it. You have occasion to speak with a friend, but he is a great way off, you cannot reach him, you know not where to find him, nor how to get a letter to him, and therefore your business with him is undone; but this needs not keep you from speaking to God; for though it is true, God is in heaven, and we are upon earth, yet he is nigh to his praying people in all that they call upon him for; he hears their voice wherever they are. *Out of the depths have I cried unto thee*, says David, Ps. cxxx. 1. *From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee*, Ps. lxi. 2. Nay, *Jonah* says, *Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. Undique ad Cælos tantundem est Viæ—In all places we may find a way open heavenward*: thanks be to him who by his own blood has consecrated for us a new and living way into the holiest, and settled a correspondence between heaven and earth.

(2.) Let not fear hinder you from saying what you have to say to God. You have business with a great man it may be; but he is so far above you, or so stern and severe toward all his inferiors, that you are afraid to speak to him, and you have none to introduce you, or to speak a good word for you, and therefore you choose rather to drop your cause: but there is no occasion for

your being thus discouraged in speaking to God ; you may come boldly to the throne of his grace, you have there a *παρρησία*, a *Liberty of speech* ; leave to pour out your whole souls. And such are his compassions to humble supplicants, that even his terror need not make them afraid. It is against the mind of God that you should frighten yourselves, he would have you encourage yourselves, *for you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption*, by which you are brought into this among other the glorious liberties of the children of God. Nor is this all, we have one to introduce us, and to speak for us, an advocate with the Father. Did ever children need an advocate with a father ? But that by those two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, we have not only the relation of the father to depend upon, but the interest and intercession of an Advocate ; a *High Priest over the house of God*, in whose name we have access with confidence.

(3.) Let not his knowing what your business is, and what you have to say to him, hinder you ; you have business with such a friend, but you think you need not put yourselves to any trouble about it, for he is already apprized of it ; he knows what you want, and what you desire, and therefore it is no matter for speaking to him : it is true all your desire is before God, he knows your wants and burthens, but he will know them from you ; he has promised you relief, but his promise must be put in suit, and he will for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. Though we cannot by our prayers give him any information, yet we must by our prayers give him honour. It is true, nothing we can say can have any influence upon him, or move him to shew us mercy, but it may have an influence upon ourselves, and help to put us into a frame fit to receive mercy. It is a very easy and reasonable condition of his favours, *Ask and it shall be given you*. It was to teach us the necessity of praying, in order to our receiving favour, that Christ put that strange question to the blind men, *What would ye that I should do unto you ?* He knew what they would have, but those that touch the top of the golden sceptre must be ready to tell, *What is their petition, and what is their request*.

(4.) Let not any other business hinder our saying what we have to say to God. We have business with a friend perhaps, but we cannot do it because we have not leisure ; we have something else to do which we think more needful ; but we cannot say so concerning the business we have to do with God ; for that is

without doubt the one thing needful, to which every thing else must be made to give way. It is not at all necessary to our happiness that we be great in the world, or raise estates to such a pitch : but it is absolutely necessary that we make our peace with God, that we obtain his favour, and keep ourselves in his love. Therefore no business for the world will serve to excuse our attendance upon God ; but on the contrary, the more important our worldly business, the more need we have to apply ourselves to God by prayer for his blessing upon it, and so to take him along with us in it. The closer we keep to prayer, and to God in prayer, the more will all our affairs prosper.

Shall I prevail with you now to let God frequently hear from you ? let him hear your voice, though it be but the voice of your breathing, (Lam. iii. 56.) that is a sign of life ; though it be the voice of your groanings, and those so weak that they cannot be uttered, Rom. viii. 26. Speak to him, though it be in a broken language, as Hezekiah did ; *Like a crane or a swallow, so I did chatter*, Isaiah xxxviii. 14. Speak often to him ; he is always within hearing. Hear him speaking to you, and have an eye to that in every thing you say to him ; as when you write an answer to a letter of business you lay it before you, God's word must be the guide of your desires, and the ground of your expectations in prayer ; nor can we expect that he should give a gracious ear to what you say to him, if you turn a deaf ear to what he says to you.

You see that you have frequent occasion to speak with God, and therefore are concerned to grow in your acquaintance with him, to take heed of doing any thing to displease him ; and to strengthen your interest in the Lord Jesus, through whom alone it is that you have access with boldness to him. Keep your voice in tune for prayer, and let all your language be a pure language, that you may be fit to call on the name of the Lord. And in every prayer remember you are speaking to God, and make it to appear you have an awe of him upon your spirit : let us not be rash with our mouth, nor hasty to utter any thing before God, but let every word be well weighed, because *God is in heaven and we upon earth*, Ecc. v. 2. And if he had not invited and encouraged us to do it, it had been unpardonable presumption for such sinful worms as we are to speak to the Lord of glory, Gen. xviii. 27. And we are concerned to speak from the heart, heartily, for it is for our lives and for the lives of our souls that we are speaking to him.

2. We must direct our prayer unto God. He must not only

hear our voice, but we must with deliberation and design address ourselves to him. In the original it is only *I will direct unto thee*: it might be supplied, *I will direct my soul unto thee*, agreeing with Ps. xxv. 1. *Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul*. Or, *I will direct my affections to thee*; having set my love upon thee, I will let out my love to thee. Our translation supplies it very well, *I will direct my prayer unto thee*. That is,

(1.) When I pray to thee I will direct my prayers; and then it denotes a fixedness of thought, and a close application of mind, to the duty of prayer. We must go about it solemnly, as those who have something of moment much at heart, and much in view therein, and therefore dare not trifle in it. When we go to pray we must not give the sacrifice of fools, who think not either what is to be done, or what is to be gained, but speak the words of the wise, who aim at some good end in what they say, and suit it to that end: we must have in our eye God's glory, and our own true happiness; and so well ordered is the covenant of grace, that God has been pleased therein to twist interests with us, so that in seeking his glory we really and effectually seek our own true interests. This is directing the prayer, as he that shoots an arrow at a mark directs it, and with a fixed eye and steady hand takes aim right. This is engaging the heart to approach to God, and in order to that disengaging it from every thing else. He who takes aim with one eye shuts the other; if we would direct a prayer to God, we must look off all other things, must gather in our wandering thoughts, must summon them all to draw near and give their attendance, for here is work to be done that needs them all; and is well worthy of them all; thus we must be able to say with the Psalmist, *O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed*.

2. When I direct my prayer, I will *direct it to thee*. And so it speaks,

[1.] The sincerity of our habitual intention in prayer. We must not direct our prayer to men, that we may gain praise and applause with them, as the Pharisees did, who proclaimed their devotions as they did their alms, that they might gain a reputation which they knew how to make a hand of: *Verily they have their reward*, men commend them, but God abhors their pride and hypocrisy. We must not let our prayers run at large, as they did who said, *Who will shew us any good?* nor direct them to the world, courting its smiles, and pursuing its wealth, as those who are therefore said not to *cry unto God with their heart*, because they *assembled themselves for corn and wine*, Hos. vii. 14. Let not self,

carnal self, be the spring and centre of your prayers, but God; let the eye of the soul be fixed upon him as your highest end in all your applications to him; let this be the habitual disposition of your souls, to be to your God for a name and a praise; and let this be your design in all your desires, that God may be glorified, and by this let them all be directed, determined, sanctified, and when need is, over-ruled. Our Saviour has plainly taught us this, in the first petition of the Lord's prayer; which is *Hallowed be thy name*: in that we fix our end, and other things are desired in order to that; in that the prayer is directed to the glory of God, in all that whereby he has made himself known, the glory of his holiness; and it is with an eye to the sanctifying of his name, that we desire his kingdom may come, and his will be done, and that we may be fed, and kept, and pardoned. An habitual aim at God's glory is that sincerity which is our gospel perfection, that single eye, which where it is, the whole body, the whole soul is full of light. Thus the prayer is directed to God.

[2.] It speaks the steadiness of our actual regard to God in prayer. We must direct our prayer to God, that is, we must continually think of him, as one with whom we have to do in prayer. We must direct our prayer, as we direct our speech to the person we have business with. The Bible is a letter God has sent to us, prayer is a letter we send to him; now you know it is essential to a letter that it be directed, and material that it be directed right; if it be not, it is in danger of miscarrying, which may be of ill consequence; you pray daily, and therein send letters to God; you know not what you lose if your letters miscarry: will you therefore take instructions how to direct to him?

Give him his titles, as you do when you direct to a person of honour; address yourselves to him as the great Jehovah, God *over all, blessed for evermore; the King of kings; and Lord of lords; as the Lord God, gracious and merciful*; let your hearts and mouths be filled with holy adorings and admirings of him, and fasten upon those titles of his, which are proper to strike a holy awe of him upon your minds, that you may worship him with reverence and godly fear. Direct your prayer to him as the God of glory, with whom is terrible Majesty, and whose greatness is unsearchable, that you may not dare to trifle with him, or to mock him in what you say to him.

Take notice of your relation to him, as his children, and let not that be overlooked and lost in your awful adorations of his glories.

I have been told of a good man, among whose experiences, which he kept a record of, after his death, this among other things was found; that such a time at secret prayer, his heart at the beginning of the duty was much enlarged, in giving to God those titles which are awful and tremendous, in calling him the *Great*, the *Mighty*, and the *Terrible* God; but going on thus he checked himself with this thought, "And why not my Father?" Christ has both by his precept and by his pattern taught us to address ourselves to God as *Our Father*; and the spirit of adoption teaches us to cry *Abba, Father*: a son, though a prodigal, when he returns and repents, may go to his father, and say unto him, *Father, I have sinned*; and though no more worthy to be called a son, yet humbly bold may call him "Father." When Ephraim bemoans himself *as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke*, God bemoans him as a *dear son*, as a *pleasant child*, (Jer. xxxi. 18, 20.) and if God is not ashamed, let us not be afraid to own the relation.

Direct your prayer to him in heaven; this our Saviour has taught us in the preface to the Lord's Prayer, *Our Father, which art in Heaven*. Not that he is confined to the Heavens, or as if the Heaven, or the Heaven of Heavens could contain him; but there he is said to have prepared his throne, not only his throne of government by which his kingdom ruleth over all, but his throne of grace to which we must by faith draw near. We must eye him as God in Heaven, in opposition to the gods of the heathens, which dwelt in temples made with hands. Heaven is a high place, and we must address ourselves to him as a God infinitely above us; it is the fountain of light, and to him we must address ourselves as the Father of lights; it is a place of prospect, and we must see his eye upon us, from thence beholding all the children of men; it is a place of purity, and we must in prayer eye him as a holy God, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness: it is the firmament of his power, and we must depend upon him as one to whom power belongs. When our Lord Jesus prayed, he lifted up his eyes to Heaven, to direct us whence to expect the blessings we need.

Direct this letter to be left with the Lord Jesus, the only Mediator between God and man; it will certainly miscarry if it be not put into his hand, who is that other angel who puts much incense to the prayers of saints, and so perfumed presents them to the Father, Rev. viii. 3. What we ask of the Father must be in his name, what we expect from the Father must be by his hand; for he is the High Priest of our profession, who is ordained for

men, to offer their gifts, Heb. v. 1. Direct the letter to be left with him, and he will deliver it with care and speed, and will make our service acceptable. Mr. George Herbert, in his Poem called "The Bag," having pathetically described the wound in Christ's side as he was hanging on the cross, makes him speak thus to all believers as he was going to heaven :—

"If you have any thing to send or write,  
I have no bag, but here is room,  
Unto my Father's hands and sight,  
Believe me it shall safely come ;  
That I shall mind what you impart,  
Look, you may put it very near my heart.  
Or if hereafter any of my friends  
Will use me in this kind, the door  
Shall still be open, what he sends  
I will present, and something more,  
Not to his hurt ; sighs will convey  
Anything to me ; hark, despair, away."

3. We must look up. That is,

(1.) We must look up in our prayers, as those who speak to one above us, infinitely above us, the *High and Holy one that inhabiteth eternity* ; as those who expect every good and perfect gift to come from above, from the Father of lights ; as those who desire in prayer to enter into the holiest, and to draw near with a true heart. With an eye of faith we must look above the world and every thing in it, must look beyond the things of time. What is this world, and all things here below, to one that knows how to put a due estimate upon spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ Jesus? The spirit of a man at death goes upward, (Ecc. iii. 21.) for it returns to God who gave it, and therefore, as mindful of its original, it must in every prayer look upward towards its God, towards its home, as having set its affections on things above, wherein it has laid up its treasure. Let us, therefore, in prayer lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens. It was anciently usual in some churches for the minister to stir up the people to pray with this word, *Sursum Corda—Up with your hearts ; unto thee, O Lord, do we lift up our souls.*

(2.) We must look up after our prayers,

[1.] With an eye of satisfaction and pleasure ; looking up is a sign of cheerfulness, as a down look is a melancholy one. We must look up as those who, having by prayer referred ourselves to God, are easy and well pleased, and with an entire confidence in his wisdom and goodness patiently expect the issue. Hannah, when she had prayed, looked up, looked pleasant : she went her

way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad, 1 Sam. i. 18. Prayer is heart's-ease to a good Christian; and when we have prayed we should look up, as those who through grace have found it so.

[2.] With an eye of observation, what returns God makes to our prayers. We must look up as one who has shot an arrow, looks after it to see how near it comes to the mark; we must look within us, and observe what the frame of our spirits is after we have been at prayer, how well satisfied they are in the will of God, and how well disposed to accommodate themselves to it; we must look about us, and observe how providence works concerning us, that if our prayers be answered, we may return to give thanks; if not, that we may remove what hinders, and may continue waiting. Thus we must set ourselves upon our watch-tower to see what God will say unto us, and must be ready to hear it, (Ps. lxxxv. 8.) expecting that God will give us an answer of peace, and resolving that we will return no more to folly. Thus must we keep up our communion with God; hoping that whenever we lift up our hearts unto him, he will lift up the light of his countenance upon us. Sometimes the answer is quick, *While they are yet speaking I will hear*; quicker than the return of any of your posts, but if it be not, when we have prayed we must wait.

Let us learn thus to direct our prayers, and thus to look up; to be inward with God in every duty, to make heart-work of it, or we make nothing of it. Let us not worship in the outward court, when we are commanded and encouraged to enter within the vail.

II. The particular time fixed in the text for this good work is the morning; and the Psalmist seems to lay an emphasis upon this in the morning, and again in the morning; not then only, but then to begin with; let that be one of the hours of prayer. Under the law we find that every morning there was a lamb offered in sacrifice, (Exod. xxix. 39.) and every morning the priests burned incense, (Exod. xxx. 7.) and the singers stood every morning to thank the Lord, 1 Chron. xxiii. 30. And so it was appointed in Ezekiel's temple, Ezek. xlvi. 13, 14, 15. By which intimation was plainly given, that the spiritual sacrifices should be offered by the spiritual priests every morning, as duly as the morning comes. Every Christian should pray in secret, and every master of a family, with his family, morning by morning; and there is good reason for it.



1. The morning is the first part of the day, and it is fit that he that is first should have the first, and be first served. The Heathen could say, *A Jove Principium—Let your beginning be with Jupiter.* Whatever you do, begin with God. The world had its beginning from him, we had ours, and therefore whatever we begin, it concerns us to take him along with us in it. The days of our life, as soon as ever the sun of reason rises in the soul, should be devoted to God, and employed in his service; *From the womb of the morning, let Christ have the dew of thy youth,* Ps. cx. 3. The first-fruits were always to be the Lord's and the firstlings of the flock. By morning and evening prayer we give glory to him who is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last; with him we must begin and end the day, begin and end the night, who is the beginning and the end, the first cause and the last end.

Wisdom has said, *Those that seek me early shall find me;* early in their lives, early in the day; for hereby we give to God that which he ought to have, the preference above other things. Hereby we shew that we are in care to please him, and to approve ourselves to him, and that we seek him diligently. What we do earnestly we are said in Scripture to do early, Ps. ci. 8. Industrious men rise betimes; David expresses the strength and warmth of his devotion, when he says, *O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee,* Ps. lxiii. 1.

2. In the morning we are fresh and lively, and in the best frame. When our spirits are revived with the rest and sleep of the night, and we live a kind of new life; and the fatigues of the day before are forgotten; the God of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; yet, when he exerts himself more than ordinary on his people's behalf, he is said to *awake as one out of sleep,* Ps. lxxviii. 65. If ever we be good for anything, it is in the morning; it is therefore become a proverb, *Aurora Musis Amica—The morning is a friend to the muses;* and if the morning be a friend to the muses, I am sure it is no less so to the graces. As he that is the first should have the first; so he that is the best should have the best; and when we are fittest for business we should apply ourselves to that which is the most needful business.

Worshipping God is work that requires the best powers of the soul, when they are at the best; and it well deserves them; how can they be better bestowed, or so as to turn to a better account? Let *all that is within me bless his holy name,* says David, and all little enough. If there be any gift in us by which God may be honoured, the morning is the time to stir it up, (2 Tim. i. 6.)

when our spirits are refreshed, and have gained new vigour ; then *Awake up, my glory, awake, psaltery and harp; I myself will awake early*, Ps. lvii. 8. Then let us stir up ourselves to take hold on God.

3. In the morning we are most free from company and business, and ordinarily have the best opportunity for solitude and retirement ; unless we be of those sluggards who lie in bed with *yet a little sleep, a little slumber*, till the work of their calling calls them up, with, *How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?* It is the wisdom of those who have much to do in the world, that they have scarce a minute to themselves of all day, to take time in the morning before business crowds in upon them, for the business of their religion ; that they may be entire for it, and therefore the more intent upon it.

As we are concerned to worship God, when we are least burthened with deadness and dulness within, so also when we are least exposed to distraction and diversion from without ; the Apostle intimates how much it should be our care to attend upon the Lord without distraction, 1 Cor. vii. 35. And therefore that one day in seven (and it is the first day, too, the morning of the week) which is appointed for holy work, is appointed to be a day of rest from other work. Abraham leaves all at the bottom of the hill, when he goes up into the mount to worship God. In the morning, therefore, let us converse with God, and apply ourselves to the concerns of the other life, before we are entangled in the affairs of this life. Our Lord Jesus has set us an example of this, who, because his day was wholly filled up with public business for God and the souls of men, rose up in the morning a great while before day, and before company came in, and went out into a solitary place, and there prayed, Mark i. 35.

4. In the morning we have received fresh mercies from God, which we are concerned to acknowledge with thankfulness to his praise. He is continually doing us good, and loading us with his benefits. Every day we have reason to bless him, for every day he is blessing us ; in the morning particularly ; and, therefore, as he is giving out to us the fruits of his favour, which are said to be *new every morning*, (Lam. iii. 23.) because though the same we had the morning before, they are still forfeited, and still needed, and upon that account may be called still new ; so we should be still returning the expressions of our gratitude to him, and of other pious and devout affections, which, like the fire on the altar, must be new every morning, Lev. vi. 12. •

Have we had a good night? and have we not an errand to the throne of grace to return thanks for it? How many mercies concurred to make it a good night! Distinguishing mercies granted to us, but denied to others; many have not where to lay their heads, our Master himself had not; *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head*; but we have houses to dwell in, quiet and peaceable habitations, perhaps stately ones; we have beds to lie on, warm and easy ones, perhaps beds of ivory, fine ones, such as they stretched themselves upon who were at ease in Zion; and are not put to wander in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth, as some of the best of God's saints have been forced to do, of whom the world was not worthy. Many have beds to lie on, yet dare not, or cannot lie down on them, being kept up either by the sickness of their friends, or the fear of their enemies. But we have laid us down, and there has been none to make us afraid; no alarms of the sword, either of war or persecution. Many lay them down and cannot sleep, but are full of tossings to and fro, until the dawning of the day, through pain of body, or anguish of mind. Wearisome nights are appointed to them, and their eyes are held waking; but we have laid us down and slept without any disturbance, and our sleep was sweet and refreshing, the pleasant parenthesis of our cares and toils: it is God who has given us sleep, has given it us as he gives it to his beloved. Many lay them down and sleep and never rise again, they sleep the sleep of death, and their beds are their graves; but we have slept and waked again, have rested, and are refreshed, we shake ourselves, and it is with us as at other times, because the Lord has sustained us; and if he had not upheld us, we had sunk with our own weight when we fell asleep, Ps. iii. 5.

Have we a pleasant morning? is the light sweet to us, the light of the sun, the light of the eyes, do these rejoice the heart? and ought we not to own our obligations to him who opens our eyes, and opens the eye-lids of the morning upon us? Have we clothes to put on in the morning, garments that are warm upon us, Job xxxvii. 17. Change of raiment, not for necessity only, but for ornament? We have them from God: it is his wool and his flax that is given to cover our nakedness, and the morning when we dress ourselves is the proper time of returning him thanks for it: yet, I doubt, we do it not so constantly as we do for our food when we sit down to our tables, though we have as much reason to do it. Are we in health and at ease? Have we been long so?

We ought to be thankful for a constant series of mercies, as for particular instances of it, especially considering how many are sick and in pain, and how much we have deserved to be so.

Perhaps we have experienced some special mercy to ourselves or our families, in preservation from fire or thieves, from dangers we have been aware of, and many more unseen ; weeping perhaps endured for a night, and joy came in the morning, and that calls aloud upon us to own the goodness of God. The destroying angel perhaps has been abroad, and the arrow that flies at midnight, and wastes in darkness, has been shot in at others' windows, but our houses have been passed over, thanks be to God for the blood of the covenant sprinkled upon our door-posts, and for the ministration of the good angels about us, to which we owe it that we have been preserved from the malice of the evil angels against us, those rulers of the darkness of this world, who, perhaps, creep forth like the beasts of prey, when he makes darkness and it is dark. All the glory be to the God of the angels.

5. In the morning we have fresh matter ministered to us for the adoration of the greatness and glory of God. We ought to take notice, not only of the gifts of God's bounty to us, which we have the comfort and benefit of, they are little narrow souls that confine their regards to them ; but we ought to observe the more general instances of his wisdom and power in the kingdom of providence which redound to his honour, and the common good of the universe. The 19th Psalm seems to have been a morning meditation, in which we are directed to observe how *the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work* ; and to own not only the advantage we receive from their light and influence, but the honour they do to him who stretched out the heavens like a curtain, fixed their pillars, and established their ordinances, according to which they continue to this day, for they are all his servants. *Day unto day utters this speech, and night unto night sheweth this knowledge*, even the eternal power and godhead of the great Creator of the world, and its great Ruler. The regular and constant succession and revolution of light and darkness, according to the original contract made between them, that they should reign alternately, may serve to confirm our faith, in that part of divine revelation which gives us the history of the creation, and the promise of God to Noah and his sons, Gen. viii. 22. *His covenant with the day and with the night*, Jer. xxxiii. 20.

Look up in the morning, and see how exactly the day-spring

knows its place, knows its time, and keeps them : how the morning light takes hold of the ends of the earth, and of the air which is turned to it as clay to the seal, instantly receiving the impressions of it, Job xxxviii. 12, 13, 14. I was pleased with an expression of a worthy good minister I heard lately in his thanksgivings to God, for the mercies of the morning : “ How many thousand miles ” (said he) “ has the sun travelled this last night to bring the light of the morning to us poor sinful wretches, that justly might have been buried in the darkness of the night.” Look up and see the sun as a bridegroom richly dressed, and greatly pleased, coming out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race : observe how bright his beams are, how sweet his smiles, how strong his influences ; and if there be no speech or language where their voice is not heard, the voice of these natural preachers, proclaiming the glory of God, it is pity there should be any speech or language where the voice of his worshippers should not be heard echoing to the voice of those preachers, and ascribing glory to him who thus makes the morning and evening to rejoice. But whatever others do, let him hear our voice to this purpose in the morning, and in the morning let us direct our praises unto him.

6. In the morning we have, or should have had, fresh thoughts of God, and sweet meditations on his name, and those we ought to offer up to him in prayer. Have we been, according to David’s example, *remembering God upon our beds, and meditating upon him in the night-watches?* When we awake, can we say as he did, *We are still with God?* If so, we have a good errand to the throne of grace by the words of our mouths, to offer up to God the meditations of our hearts, and it will be to him a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour. If the heart has been inditing a good matter, let the tongue be as the pen of a ready writer, to pour it out before God, Ps. xlv. 1.

We have the word of God to converse with, and we ought to read a portion of it every morning : by it God speaks to us, and in it we ought to meditate day and night, which, if we do, that will send us to the throne of grace, and furnish us with many a good errand there. If God in the morning by his grace direct his word to us, so as to make it reach our hearts, that will engage us to direct our prayer to him.

7. In the morning it is to be feared, we find cause to reflect upon many vain and sinful thoughts that have been in our minds in the night season ; and upon that account it is necessary that

we address ourselves to God by prayer in the morning, for the pardon of them. The Lord's prayer seems to be calculated primarily in the letter of it for the morning: for we are taught to pray *for our daily bread this day*: and yet we are then to pray, *Father, forgive us our trespasses*: for as in the hurry of the day we contract guilt by our irregular words and actions, so we do in the solitude of the night by our corrupt imaginations, and the wanderings of an unsanctified ungoverned fancy. It is certain, *The thought of foolishness is sin*, Pro. xxiv. 9. Foolish thoughts are sinful thoughts; the first-born of the old man, the first beginnings of all sin; and how many of these vain thoughts lodge within us wherever we lodge? their name is Legion, for they are many: who can understand their errors? They are more than the hairs of our head. We read of those who work evil upon their beds, because there they devise it; and when the morning is light they practise it, Mic. ii. 1. How often in the night-season is the mind disquieted and distracted with distrustful careful thoughts; polluted with unchaste and wanton thoughts; intoxicated with proud aspiring thoughts; soured and leavened with malicious revengeful thoughts; or, at the best, diverted from devout and pious thoughts by a thousand impertinences: out of the heart proceed evil thoughts which lie down with us, and rise up with us, for out of that corrupt fountain, which, wherever we go, we carry about with us, the streams naturally flow. Yea, and in the multitude of dreams, as well as in many words, there are also divers vanities, Ecc. v. 2.

And dare we go abroad till we have renewed our repentance, which we are every night as well as every day thus making work for? Are we not concerned to confess to him who knows our hearts, their wanderings from him, to complain of them to him as revolting and rebellious hearts, and bent to backslide; to make our peace with the blood of Christ, and to pray, that the thought of our heart may be forgiven us? we cannot with safety go into the business of the day under the guilt of any sin unrepented of or unpardoned.

8. In the morning we are addressing ourselves to the work of the day, and therefore are concerned by prayer to seek unto God for his presence and blessing. We come, and are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace, not only for mercy to pardon what has been amiss, but for grace to help in every time of need: and what time is it that is not a time of need with us? And therefore, what morning should pass without morning-prayer?

We read of that which the duty of every day requires, (Ezr. iii. 4.) and in reference to that we must go to God every morning to pray for the gracious disposal of his providence concerning us, and the gracious operations of his Spirit upon us.

We have families to look after, it may be, and to provide for, and are in care to do well for them; let us then every morning by prayer commit them to God, put them under the conduct and government of his grace, and then we effectually put them under the care and protection of his providence. Holy Job rose up early in the morning to offer burnt-offerings for his children, and we should do so to offer up prayers and supplications for them, according to the number of them all, Job i. 5. Thus we cause the blessing to rest on our houses.

We are going about the business of our callings perhaps, let us look up to God in the first place for wisdom and grace to manage them well, in the fear of God, and to abide with him in them; and then we may in faith beg of him to prosper and succeed us in them, to strengthen us for the services of them, to support us under the fatigues of them, to direct the designs of them, and to give us comfort in the gains of them. We have journies to go, it may be, let us look up to God for his presence with us, and go no whither, where we cannot in faith beg of God to go with us.

We have a prospect perhaps of opportunities of doing or getting good, let us look up to God for a heart to every price in our hands, for skill, and will, and courage to improve it, that it may not be a price in the hand of a fool. Every day has its temptations too, some perhaps we foresee, but there may be many more that we think not of, and are therefore concerned to be earnest with God, that we may not be led into any temptation, but guarded against every one; that whatever company we come into, we may have wisdom to do good, and no hurt to them; and to get good, and no hurt by them.

We know not what a day may bring forth; little think in the morning what tidings we may hear, and what events may befall us before night, and should therefore beg of God, grace to carry us through the duties and difficulties which we do not foresee, as well as those which we do; that in order to our standing complete in all the will of God, as the day is, so the strength may be. We shall find that sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, and that, therefore, as it is folly to take thought for to-morrow's event, so it is wisdom to take thought for to-day's duty, that sufficient unto this day, and the duty of it, may be the supplies.

of the divine grace, thoroughly to furnish us for every good word and work, and thoroughly to fortify us against every evil word and work; that we may not think, or speak, or do any thing in all the day, which we may have cause upon any account to wish unthought, unspoken, and undone at night.

#### THE APPLICATION.

I. Let this word put us in mind of our omissions; for omissions are sins, and must come into judgment: how often has our morning-worship been either neglected or negligently performed. The work has been either not done at all, or done deceitfully; either no sacrifice at all brought, or it has been the torn, and the lame, and the sick; either no prayer, or the prayer not directed aright, nor lifted up. We have had the morning's mercies, God has not been wanting in the compassion and care of a Father for us, yet we have not done the morning's service, but have been shamefully wanting in the duty of children to him.

Let us be truly humbled before God this morning for our sin and folly herein, that we have so often robbed God of the honour, and ourselves of the benefit of our morning-worship. God has come into our closets seeking this fruit, but has found none, or next to none; has hearkened and heard, but either we spake not to him at all, or spake not right. Some trifling thing or other has served for an excuse to put it by once, and when once the good usage has been broken in upon, conscience has been wounded, and its bonds weakened, and we have grown more and more cool to it, and perhaps by degrees it has been quite left off.

2. I beseech you, suffer a word of exhortation concerning this. I know what an influence it would have upon the prosperity of your souls to be constant and sincere in your secret worship, and, therefore give me leave to press it upon you with all earnestness; let God hear from you every morning, every morning let your prayer be directed to him, and look up.

(1.) Make conscience of your secret worship; keep it up, not only because it has been a custom you have received by tradition from your fathers, but because it is a duty, concerning which you have received commandments from the Lord. Keep up stated times for it, and be true to them. Let those who have hitherto lived in the total neglect, or in the frequent omission of secret prayer, be persuaded henceforward to look upon it as the most needful part of their daily business, and the most delightful part



of their daily comfort, and do it accordingly with a constant care, and, yet, with a constant pleasure.

No persons who have the use of their reason, can pretend to an exemption from this duty; what is said to some is said to all, "Pray, pray, continue in prayer, and watch in the same." Rich people are not so much bound to labour with their hands as the poor; poor people are not so much bound to give alms as the rich, but both are equally bound to pray. The rich are not above the necessity of the duty, nor the poor below acceptance with God in it. It is not too soon for the youngest to begin to pray; and those whom the multitude of years has taught wisdom, yet at their end will be fools, if they think they have no further occasion for prayer.

Let none plead they cannot pray; for if you are ready to perish with hunger, you could beg and pray for food; and if you see yourselves undone by reason of sin, can you not beg and pray for mercy and grace? Art thou a christian? Never for shame say, thou canst not pray, for that is as absurd as for a soldier to say, he knows not how to handle a sword, or a carpenter an axe. What are you called for into the fellowship of Christ, but that by him you may have fellowship with God? You cannot pray so well as others, pray as well as you can, and God will accept of you.

Let none plead that they have not time in a morning for prayer; I dare say you can find time for other things that are less needful; you had better take time from sleep, than want time for prayer; and how can you spend time better, and more to your satisfaction and advantage? All the business of the day will prosper the better, for your beginning it thus with God.

Let none plead that they have not a convenient place to be private in for this work; Isaac retired into the field to pray; and the Psalmist could be alone with God in a corner of the house-top. If you cannot perform it with so much secrecy as you would, yet perform it; it is doing it with ostentation that is the fault, not doing it under observation, when it cannot be avoided. I remember, when I was a young man, coming up hither to London in the stage-coach, in King James' time, there happened to be a gentleman in the company, who then was not afraid to own himself a Jesuit; many rencounters he and I had upon the road, and this was one; he was praising the custom in popish countries of keeping the church doors always open, for people to go into at any time to say their prayers: I told him it looked too much like the practice of the Pharisees, that prayed in the synagogues; and did not agree with Christ's command, *Thou, when thou prayest thy-*

self, *enter* not into the church with the doors open, but *into thy closet and shut thy door*; when he was pressed with that argument, he replied with some vehemence, "I believe you Protestants say your prayers no where; for" (said he) "I have travelled a great deal in the coach in company with Protestants, have often lain in inns in the same room with them, and have carefully watched them, and could never perceive that any of them said his prayers, night or morning, but one, and he was a presbyterian." I hope there was more malice than truth in what he said: but I mention it as an intimation, that though we cannot be so private as we would be in our devotions, yet we must not omit them, lest the omission should prove not a sin only but a scandal.

(2) Make a business of your secret worship, and be not slothful in this business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Take heed lest it degenerate into a formality, and you grow customary in your accustomed services. Go about the duty solemnly: be inward with God in it; it is not enough to say your prayers, but you must pray your prayers, must pray in praying, as Elijah did, James v. 17. Let us learn to labour fervently in prayer, as Ephraim did, (Col. iv. 12.) and we shall find that it is the hand of the diligent in this duty that makes rich. God looks not at the length of your prayers, nor shall you be heard for your much speaking, or fine speaking; but God requires truth in the inward part, and it is the prayer of the upright that is his delight. When you have prayed look upon yourselves as thereby engaged and encouraged, both to serve God and to trust in him; that the comfort and benefit of your morning devotions may not be as the morning cloud which passes away, but as the morning light which shines more and more.

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THE

SECOND DISCOURSE,

SHEWING

HOW TO SPEND THE DAY WITH GOD.

PSALM XXV. 5. *On thee do I wait all the day.*

WHICH of us is there that can truly say this? Who lives this life of communion with God, which is so much our business and so much our blessedness? How far short do we

come of the spirit of holy David, though we have much better assistances for our acquaintance with God, than the saints then had, by the clearer discoveries of the mediation of Christ. Yet that weak christians, who are sincere, may not therefore despair, be it remembered, that David himself was not always in such a frame that he could say so ; he had his infirmities, and yet was a *man after God's own heart* ; we have ours, which if they be sincerely lamented and striven against, and the habitual bent of our souls be toward God and Heaven, we shall be accepted through Christ, for we are not under the law, but under grace.

However, David's profession in the text shows us what should be our practice, on God we must wait all the day. That denotes two things, a patient expectation, and a constant attendance.

1. It speaks a patient expectation of his coming to us in a way of mercy ; and then all the day must be taken figuratively, for all the time that the wanted and desired mercy is delayed. David, in the former part of the verse, prayed for divine conduct and instruction, *Lead me in thy truth, and teach me.* He was at a loss, and very desirous to know what God would have him to do, and was ready to do it ; but God kept him in suspense, he was not yet clear what was the mind and will of God, what course he should steer, and how he should dispose of himself ; will he therefore proceed without divine direction ? No, *On thee do I wait all the day*, as Abraham attended on the sacrifice from morning till the sun went down, before God gave him an answer to his inquiries concerning his seed, (Gen. xv. 5, 13.) and as Habakkuk stood upon his watch-tower to see what answer God would give him, when he consulted his oracle ; and though it do not come presently, yet at the end it shall speak and not lie.

David, in the words before the text, had called God, *The God of my salvation*, the God on whom he depended for salvation, temporal and eternal salvation, from whom he expected deliverance out of his present distresses, those troubles of his heart that were enlarged, (ver. 17.) and out of the hands of those enemies who were ready to triumph over him (ver. 2.) and who hated him with a cruel hatred, (ver. 19.) Hoping that God will be his Saviour, he resolves to wait on him all the day, like a genuine son of Jacob, whose dying profession was, (Gen. xlix. 18.) *I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.* Sometimes God precedes his people with the blessings of his goodness, before they call he answers them, is in the midst of his Church, to help her, and that right early, Ps. xli. 5. But at other times he seems to stand afar off, he

delays the deliverance, and keeps them long in expectation of it, nay, and in suspense about it; the light is neither clear nor dark; it is day, and that is all; it is a cloudy and dark day, and it is not till evening time that it is light, that the comfort comes which they have been kept all the day waiting for; nay, perhaps it comes not till far in the night, it is at midnight that the cry is made, *Behold the bridegroom cometh*. The deliverance of the Church out of her troubles, the success of her struggles and rest from them, a rescue from under the rod of the wicked, and the accomplishment of all that which God has promised concerning it, is what we must continue humbly waiting upon God for, without distrust or impatience; we must wait all the day,—

(1.) Though it be a long day; though we be kept waiting a great while, quite beyond our own reckoning: though when we have waited long, we are still obliged to wait longer, and are bid with the prophet's servant to *go yet seven times*, (1 Kin. xviii. 43.) before we perceive the least sign of mercy coming. *We looked that this and the other had been he that should have delivered Israel*, but are disappointed; *The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved*, Jer. viii. 20. The time is prolonged, nay the opportunities are let slip, the summer time, and harvest time, when we thought to have reaped the fruit of all our prayers and pains, and patience, is past and ended, and we are as far as ever from salvation; the time that the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, was long, much longer than it was thought it would have been, when it was first lodged there; it was twenty years, so that the whole house of Israel lamented after the Lord, and began to fear it would abide for ever in that obscurity, 1 Sam. vii. 2.

But though it be a long day, it is but a day, but one day, and it is known to the Lord, Zec. xiv. 7. It seems long while we are kept waiting, but the happy issue will enable us to reflect upon it as short, and but for a moment. It is no longer than God has appointed, and we are sure his time is the best time; and his favours are worth waiting for. The time is long, but it is nothing to the days of eternity, when those who had long patience shall be recompensed for it with an everlasting salvation.

(2.) Though it be a dark day, yet let us wait upon God all the day. Though while we are kept waiting for what God will do, we are kept in the dark concerning what he is doing, and what is best for us to do, yet, let us be content to wait, in the dark. Though we see not our signs, though there is none to tell us how long, yet let us resolve to wait, how long soever it be;

for though what God does we know not now, yet we shall know hereafter, when the mystery of God shall be finished.

Never was man more at a loss concerning God's dealings with him than poor Job was ; *I go forward, but he is not there ; backward, but I cannot perceive him ; on the left hand, on the right hand, but I cannot see him,* (Job xxiii. 8, 9.) yet he sits down, ver. 10, resolving to wait on God all the day with a satisfaction in this, that though he know not the way that he takes, *he knoweth the way that I take,* and *when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold,* approved and improved. He sits by as a refiner, and will take care that the gold be in the furnace, no longer than is needful for the refining of it. When God's way is in the sea, so that he cannot be traced, yet we are sure his way is in the sanctuary, so that he may be trusted ; see Ps. lxxvii. 13, 19. And when *clouds and darkness are round about him,* yet even then *justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.*

(3.) Though it be a stormy day, yet we must wait upon God all the day. Though we are not only becalmed, and do not get forward, but though the wind be contrary, and drive us back, nay, though it be boisterous, and the church be tossed with tempests, and ready to sink, yet we must hope the best ; yet we must wait, and weather the storm by patience. It is some comfort, that Christ is in the ship, the church's cause is Christ's cause, he has espoused it, and he will own it ; he is embarked in the same vessel with his people, and therefore, *Why are you fearful ?* Doubt not but the ship will come safe to land ; though Christ seem for the present to be asleep, the prayers of his disciples will awake him, and he will rebuke the winds and the waves ; though the bush burn, if God be in it, it shall not be consumed. Yet this is not all, Christ is not only in the ship, but at the helm, whatever threatens the church is ordered by the Lord Jesus, and shall be made to work for its good. It is excellently expressed by Mr. George Herbert :

Away, despair ! My Gracious God doth hear,  
When winds and waves assault my keel,  
He doth preserve it, he doth steer,  
E'en when the boat seems most to reel,  
Storms are the triumph of his art,  
Well may he close his eyes but not his heart.

It is a seasonable word at this day ; what God will do with us we cannot tell ; but this we are sure of, that he is a God of judgment, infinitely wise and just, and therefore *Blessed are all they*

*that wait for him*, Isa. xxx. 18. He will do his own work in his own way and time; and though we be hurried back into the wilderness, when we thought we had been upon the borders of Canaan, we suffer justly for our unbelief and murmurings, but God acts wisely, and will be found faithful to his promise; his time to judge for his people, and to repent himself concerning his servants, is when he sees that their strength is gone. This was seen of old in the mount of the Lord, and shall be again. And therefore let us continue in a waiting frame. Hold out faith and patience, for *It is good that a man should both hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.*

2. It speaks a constant attendance upon him in a way of duty. And so we understand the day literally; it was David's practice to wait upon God all the day, the Hebrew signifies both *every day* and all *the day long*; it is the same with that command, (Pro. xxiii. 17.) *Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.*

*Doct.* It is not enough for us to begin every day with God, but on him we must wait every day, and all the day long.

For the opening of this I must shew you, I. What it is to wait upon God: II. That we must do this every day, and all the day long.

I. Let us inquire, what it is to wait upon God. You have heard how much it is our duty in the morning to speak to him in solemn prayer. But have we then done with him for all day? No, we must still be waiting on him; as one to whom we stand very nearly related, and very strongly obliged. To wait on God is to live a life of desire toward him, delight in him, dependance on him, and devotedness to him.

1. It is to live a life of desire toward God; to wait on him, as the beggar waits on his benefactor, with earnest desire to receive supplies from him; as the sick and sore in Bethesda's pool waited for the stirring of the water, and attended in the porches with desire to be helped in and healed. When the Prophet had said, *in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee*, he explained himself thus in the next words, *The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee*; and *With my soul have I desired thee*, Isa. xxvi. 8, 9. Our desire must be not only toward the good things that God gives, but toward God himself, his favour and love, the manifestation of his name to us, and the influence of his grace upon us. Then we wait on God, when our souls pant after him, and his favour, when we thirst for God, for

the living God ; O that I may behold the beauty of the Lord ! O that I may taste his goodness ! O that I may bear his image, and be entirely conformed to his will ! for there is none in heaven or earth that I can desire in comparison of him. O that I may know him more, and love him better, and be brought nearer to him, and made fitter for him. Thus upon the wings of holy desire should our souls be still soaring upward toward God, still pressing forward, forward toward heaven.

We must not only pray solemnly in the morning, but that desire which is the life and soul of prayer, like the fire upon the altar, must be kept continually burning, ready for the sacrifices that are to be offered upon it. The bent and bias of the soul in all its motions must be toward God, the serving of him in all we do, and the enjoying of him in all we have. And this is principally intended in the commands given us to pray always, to pray without ceasing, to continue in prayer. Even when we are not making actual addresses to God, we must have habitual inclinations toward him ; as a man in health, though he is not always eating, yet has always a disposition in him, toward the nourishment and delights of the body. Thus must we be always waiting on God, as our chief good, and moving toward him.

2. It is to live a life of delight in God, as the lover waits on his beloved. Desire is love in motion, as a bird upon the wing ; delight is love at rest, as a bird upon the nest ; now though our desire must still be so toward God, that we must be wishing for more of God, yet our delight must be so in God, that we must never wish for more than God. Believing him to be a God All-sufficient, in him we must be entirely satisfied ; let him be mine, and I have enough. Do we love to love God ? Is it a pleasure to us to think that there is a God ? that he is such a one as he has revealed himself to be ? that he is our God by creation to dispose of us as he pleases ? Our God in covenant to dispose of us all for the best to us ? this is waiting on our God, always looking up to him with pleasure.

Something or other the soul has that it values itself by, something or other that it reposes itself in ; and what is it ? God or the world ? What is it that we pride ourselves in, which we make the matter of our boasting ? it is the character of worldly people that they boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, (Ps. xlix. 6.) and of their own might, and the power of their own hands, which they think have gotten them this wealth ; it is the character of godly people, that *in God they boast all the day long,*

Ps. xliv. 8. That is waiting on God ; having our eye always upon him with a secret complacency, as men have upon that which is their glory, and which they glory in.

What is it that we please ourselves with, which we embrace with the greatest satisfaction, in the bosom of which we lay our heads, and in having which we hug ourselves, as having all we would have? the worldly man, when his barns are full of corn, says, *Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry* ; the godly man can never say so till he finds his heart full of God and Christ, and grace ; and then, *Return unto thy rest, O my soul*, here repose thyself ; the gracious soul dwells in God, is at home in him, and there dwells at ease, is in him perpetually pleased ; and whatever he meets with in the world to make himself uneasy, he finds enough in God to balance it.

3. It is to live a life of dependance on God, as the child waits on his father, whom he has a confidence in, and on whom he casts all his care. To wait on God is to expect all good to come to us from him, as the worker of all good for us and in us, the giver of all good to us, and the protector of us from all evil. Thus David explains himself, (Ps. lxxii. 5.) *My soul, wait thou only upon God*, and continue still to do so, *for my expectation is from him*, I look not to any other for the good I need ; for I know that every creature is that to me, and no more than he makes it to be, and from him every man's judgment proceeds. Shall we lift up our eyes to the hills? Does our help come thence? Does the dew that waters the vallies come no further than from the tops of the hills? Shall we go higher, and lift up our eyes to the heavens, to the clouds? Can they of themselves give rain? No, if God hear not the heavens, they hear not the earth ; we must therefore look above the hills, above the heavens, for all our help cometh from the Lord ; it was the acknowledgment of a king, and no good one neither, *If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress?*

And our expectations from God, as far as they are guided by and grounded upon the word which he has spoken, ought to be humbly confident, and with a full assurance of faith. We must know and be sure that no word of God shall fall to the ground, that the expectation of the poor shall not perish. Worldly people say to their gold, *Thou art my hope* ; and to the fine gold, *Thou art my confidence*, and the rich man's wealth is his strong city : but God is the only refuge and portion of the godly man here in the land of the living ; it is to him only that he says, and



he says it with a holy boldness, *Thou art my hope and my confidence.* The eyes of all things wait on him, for he is good to all; but the eyes of his saints especially, for he is in a peculiar manner good to Israel, good to them. They know his name, and therefore will trust and triumph in him, as those who know they shall not be made ashamed of their hope.

4. It is to live a life of devotedness to God, as the servant waits on his master, ready to observe his will, and to do his work, and in every thing to consult his honour and interest. To wait on God is entirely and unreservedly to refer ourselves to his wise and holy directions and disposals, and cheerfully to acquiesce in them, and comply with them. The servant that waits on his master chooses not his own way, but follows his master, step by step: thus must we wait on God as those who have no will of our own, but what is wholly resolved into his; and must therefore study to accommodate ourselves to his. It is the character of the redeemed of the Lord, that they follow the Lamb wheresoever he goes, with an implicit faith and obedience. As the eyes of a servant are to the hand of his master, and the eyes of a maiden to the hand of her mistress, so must our eyes wait on the Lord, to do what he appoints us, to take what he allots us; *Father thy will be done; Master thy will be done.*

The servant waits on his master, not only to do him service, but to do him honour; and thus must we wait on God that we may be to him for a name, and for a praise. His glory must be our ultimate end, to which we, and all we are, have, and can do, must be dedicated; we wear his livery, attend in his courts, and follow his motions as his servants, for this end, that he may in all things be glorified.

To wait on God is to make his will our rule.

(1) To make the will of his precept the rule of our practice, and to do every duty with an eye to that. We must wait on him to receive his commands, with a resolution to comply with them, how much soever they may contradict our corrupt inclinations or secular interests. We must wait on him as the holy angels do, who always behold the face of their Father, as those who are at his beck, and are ready to go upon the least intimation of his will, though but by a wink of his eye, wherever he sends them. Thus must we do the will of God, as the angels do it who are in heaven, those ministers of his that do his pleasure, and are always about his throne in order to do it, and never out of the way.

David here prays that God would shew him his way, and lead him, and teach him, and keep him, and forward him in the way of his duty : and so the text comes in as a plea to enforce that petition, for *on thee do I wait all the day* ; ready to receive the law from thy mouth, and in every thing to observe thy orders. And then it intimates this, that those, and those only, can expect to be taught of God, who are ready and willing to do as they are taught. If any man will do his will, be steadfastly resolved in the strength of his grace to comply with it, he shall know what his will is. David prays, Lord, *Give me understanding*, and then promises himself, *I shall keep thy law, yea, I shall observe it* ; as the servant that waits on his master. They that go up to the house of the Lord, with an expectation that he will teach them his ways, it must be with an humble resolution that they will walk in his paths, Isa. ii. 3. Lord let the pillar of cloud and fire go before me, for I am determined with full purpose of heart to follow it, and thus to wait on my God all the day.

(2.) To make the will of his providence the rule of our patience, and to bear every affliction with an eye to that. We are sure it is God who performs all things for us, and he performs the thing that is appointed for us ; we are sure that all is well that God does, and shall be made to work for good to all that love him ; and in order to that we ought to acquiesce in, and accommodate ourselves to the whole will of God. To wait on the Lord is to say, It is the Lord, let him do to me as *seemeth good* to him, because nothing seemeth good to him but what is really good ; and so we shall see, when God's work appears in a full light ; it is to say, *Not as I will, but as thou wilt*, for, *should it be according to my mind?* It is to bring our mind to our condition in everything, so as to keep it calm and easy, whatever happens to make us uneasy.

And we must therefore bear the affliction, whatever it is, because it is the will of God ; it is what he has allotted us, who does all according to the counsel of his own will. This is Christian patience ; I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, not because it was to no purpose to complain, but because thou didst it, and therefore I had no reason to complain. And this will reconcile us to every affliction, one as well as another, because whatever it is, it is the will of God, and in compliance with it we must not only be silent, because of the sovereignty of his will, *Woe unto him that strives with his Maker*, but we must be satisfied because of the wisdom and goodness of it. Whatever the disposals of God's providence may be concerning those who wait on him, we

may be sure that as he does them no wrong, so he means them no hurt: nay, they may say as the Psalmist did, even when he was plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning, however it be yet God is good, and therefore *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, yet will I wait on him.*

I might open this duty of waiting on God by other Scripture expressions which speak the same thing, and are, as this, comprehensive of a great part of that homage which we are bound to pay to him, and that communion which it is our interest to keep up with him. *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

It is to set God always before us, Ps. xvi. 8. To look upon him as one always near us, always at our right hand, and who has his eye upon us wherever we are, and whatever we are doing; nay, as one in whom we live and move, and have our being, with whom we have to do, and to whom we are accountable. This is pressed upon us, as the great principle of gospel obedience; *Walk before me, and be thou upright*; herein consists that uprightness which is our evangelical perfection, in walking at all times as before God, and studying to approve ourselves to him.

It is to have our eyes ever toward the Lord, as it follows here, Ps. xxv. 15. Though we cannot see him by reason of our present distance and darkness, yet we must look toward him, toward the place where his honour dwells; as those who desire the knowledge of him and his will, and direct all to his honour as the mark we aim at, labouring in this, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him. To wait on him, is to follow him with our eye in all those things wherein he is pleased to manifest himself and to admit the discoveries of his being and perfections.

It is to acknowledge God in all our ways, (Pro. iii. 6.) in all the actions of life, and in all the affairs of life, we must walk in his hand, and set ourselves in the way of his steps. In all our undertakings, we must wait upon him for direction and success, and by faith and prayer commit our way to him to undertake for us, and him we must take with us wherever we go; *If thy presence go not up with me, carry us not up hence.* In all our comforts we must see his hand giving them out to us, and in all our crosses we must see the same hand laying them upon us, that we may learn to receive both good and evil, and to bless the name of the Lord both when he gives and when he takes.

It is to follow the Lord fully, as Caleb did, Num. xiv. 24. It is to *fulfil after the Lord*, so the word is; to have respect to all his

commandments, and to study to stand complete in his whole will. Wherever God leads us, and goes before us, we must be *followers of him as dear children*, must follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes, and take him for our guide whithersoever we go.

This is to wait on God, and those who do so may cheerfully wait for him, for he will without fail appear in due time to their joy, and that word of *Solomon* shall be made good to them, *He that waiteth on his master shall be honoured*, for Christ has said, *Where I am, there shall also my servant be*, Pro. xxvii. 18.

II. Having shewed you what it is to wait on God, I come next to shew, that this we must do every day, and all the day long.

1. We must wait on our God, *Omni Die—every day*, so some. This is the work of every day which is to be done in its day, for the duty of every day requires it. Servants in the courts of princes have their weeks or months of waiting appointed them, and are obliged to attend only at certain times. But God's servants must never be out of waiting; all the days of our appointed time, the time of our work and warfare here on earth we must be waiting, (Job xiv. 14.) and not desire or expect to be discharged from this attendance, till we come to heaven, where we shall wait on God, as angels do, more nearly and constantly.

We must wait on God every day.

(1.) Both on sabbath-days, and on week-days. The Lord's Day is instituted and appointed on purpose for our attendance on God in the courts of his house, there we must wait on him to give glory to him, and to receive both commands and favours from him. Ministers must then wait on their ministry, (Rom. xii. 7.) and people must wait on it too, saying as Cornelius for himself and his friends, *Now are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God*, Acts x. 33. It is for the honour of God to help to fill up the assemblies of those who attend at the foot-stool of his throne, and to add to their number. The whole Sabbath-time; except what is taken up in works of necessity and mercy, must be employed in waiting on our God. Christians are spiritual priests, and as such it is their business to wait in God's house at the time appointed.

But that is not enough; we must wait upon our God on week-days too, for every day of the week we want mercy from him, and have work to do for him. Our waiting upon him, in public ordinances on the first day of the week is designed to fix us to, and fit us for, communion with him all the week after; so that we answer not the intentions of the Sabbath, unless the impressions

of it abide upon us, and go with us into the business of the week, and be kept always in the imagination of the thought of our heart. Thus from one Sabbath to another, and from one new moon to another, we must keep in a holy gracious frame; must be so in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, as to walk in the Spirit all the week.

(2.) Both on idle days and busy days we must be found waiting on God. Some days of our lives are days of labour and hurry, when our particular calling calls for our close and diligent application; but we must not think that will excuse us from our constant attendance on God. Even when our hands are working about the world, our hearts may be waiting on our God, by an habitual regard to him, to his providence as our guide, and his glory as our end in our worldly business; and thus we must abide with him in them. Those who rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness in pursuit of the world, yet are concerned to wait on God, because otherwise all their care and pains will signify nothing; it is labour in vain (Ps. cxxvii. 1, 2.) nay, it is labour in the fire.

Some days of our lives we relax from business, and take our ease. Many of you have your time for diversion, but then when you lay aside other business, this of waiting upon God must not be laid aside. When you prove yourselves with mirth as Solomon did, and say, you will enjoy pleasure a little, yet let this wisdom remain with you, (Ecc. ii. 1, 3.) let your eye be then up to God, and take heed of dropping your communion with him, in that which you call an agreeable conversation with your friends. Whether it be a day of work, or a day of rest, we shall find nothing like waiting upon God, both to lighten the toil of our work, and to sweeten the comfort of our repose. So that whether we have much to do, or little to do in the world, still we must wait upon God, that we may be kept from the temptation that attends both the one and the other.

(3.) Both in days of prosperity, and in days of adversity, we must be found waiting upon God. Does the world smile upon us, and court us? yet let us not turn from attending on God to make our court to it: if we have ever so much of the wealth of the world, yet we cannot say we have no need of God, no further occasion to make use of him, as David was ready to say, when in his prosperity he said he should never be moved; but soon saw his error, when God hid his face, and he was troubled, Ps. xxx. 6. When our affairs prosper, and into our hands God brings plentifully, we must wait upon God as our great landlord,

and own our obligations to him ; must beg his blessing on what we have, and his favour with it, and depend upon him both for the continuance, and for the comfort of it. We must wait upon God for wisdom and grace, to use what we have in the world for the ends for which we are intrusted with it, as those who must give account, and know not how soon. And how much soever we have of this world, and how richly soever it is given us to enjoy it, still we must wait upon God for better things, not only than the world gives, but than he himself gives in this world. "Lord put me not off with this for a portion."

And when the world frowns upon us, and things go very cross, we must not so fret ourselves at its frowns, or so frighten ourselves with them, as thereby to be driven off from waiting on God, but rather let us thereby be driven to it. Afflictions are sent for this end, to bring us to the throne of grace, to teach us to pray, and to make the word of God's grace precious to us. In the day of our sorrow we must wait upon God for those comforts which are sufficient to balance our griefs; Job, when in tears, fell down and worshipped God, taking away, as well as giving. In the day of our fear we must wait upon God for those encouragements that are sufficient to silence our fears; Jehoshaphat in his distress waited upon God, and it was not in vain, his heart was established by it; and so was David's often, which brought him to this resolution, which was an anchor to his soul, *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.*

(4.) Both in the days of youth, and in the days of old age, we must be found waiting on God. Those who are young cannot begin their attendance on God too soon: the child Samuel ministered to the Lord, and the Scripture story puts a particular mark of honour upon it; and Christ was wonderfully pleased with the hosannas of the children who waited on him, when he rode in triumph into Jerusalem: when Solomon in his youth, upon his accession to the throne waited upon God for wisdom, it is said, *The saying pleased the Lord. I remember thee* (says God to Israel) *even the kindness of thy youth, when thou wentest after me, and didst wait upon me in a wilderness, Jer. ii. 2.* To wait upon God is to be mindful of our Creator, and the proper time for that is in the days of our youth, Ecc. xii. 1. Those who would wait upon God aright, must learn betimes to do it; the most accomplished courtiers are those who are brought up at court.

And may the old servants of Jesus be dismissed from waiting on him? No, their attendance is still required, and shall be still

accepted ; they shall not be cast off by their master in the time of old age, and therefore, let not them desert his service. When through the infirmities of age they can no longer be working servants in God's family, they may be waiting servants. These who, like Barzillai, are unfit for the entertainments of the courts of earthly princes, may relish the pleasures of God's courts as well as ever. The Levites, when they were past the age of fifty, and were discharged from the toilsome part of their ministration, yet still must wait on God, must be quietly waiting to give honour to him, and to receive comfort from him. Those who have done the will of God, and their doing work is at an end, have need of patience to enable them to wait till they inherit the promise ; and the nearer the happiness is which they are waiting for, the dearer should the God be they are waiting on, and hope shortly to be with, to be with eternally.

2. We must wait on our God, *Toto Die—all the day*, so we read it. Every day from morning to night we must continue waiting on God ; whatever change there may be of our employment, this must be the constant disposition of our souls, we must attend upon God, and have our eyes ever toward him ; we must not at any time allow ourselves to wander from God, or to attend on anything beside him, but what we attend on for him ; in subordination to his will, and in subserviency to his glory.

(1.) We must cast our daily cares upon him. Every day brings with it its fresh cares, more or less, these awake with us every morning, and we need not go so far forward as to-morrow to fetch in care, *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof* ; you who are great dealers in the world, have your cares attending you all the day ; though you keep them to yourselves, yet they sit down with you, and rise up with you ; they go out and come in with you, and are more a load upon you than those you converse with are aware of. Some through the weakness of their spirits, can scarce determine anything but with fear and trembling.

Let this burthen be cast upon the Lord, believing that his providence extends itself to all your affairs, to all events concerning you, and to all the circumstances of them, even the most minute and seemingly accidental : that your times are in his hand, and all your ways at his disposal : believe his promise that all things shall be made to work for good to those that love him, and then refer it to him in everything, to do with you and your's as seemeth good in his eyes, and rest satisfied in having done so, and

resolve to be easy. Bring your cares to God by prayer in the morning, spread them before him, and then make it to appear all the day, by the composedness and cheerfulness of your spirits, that you left them with him as Hannah did, who, when she had prayed, went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad, 1 Sam. i. 18. Commit your way to the Lord, and then submit to his disposal of it, though it may cross your expectations; and bear up yourselves upon the assurances God has given you, that he will care for you as the tender father for the child.

(2.) We must manage our daily business for him, with an eye to his providence, putting us into the calling and employment wherein we are; and to his precept, making diligence in our duty; with an eye to his blessing, as that which is necessary to make it comfortable and successful; and to his glory as our highest end in all. This sanctifies our common actions to God, and sweetens them, and makes them pleasant to ourselves. If Gaius brings his friends whom he is parting with a little way on their journey, it is but a piece of common civility; but let him do it after a godly sort; let him in it pay respect to them, because they belong to Christ, and for his sake; let him do it that he may have an opportunity of so much more profitable communication with them, and then it becomes an act of Christian piety, 3 John 6. It is a general rule by which we must govern ourselves in the business of every day, *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*, (Col. iii. 17.) and, thus, in and by the Mediator we wait on our God.

This is particularly recommended to servants, though their employments are but mean, and they are under the command of their masters according to the flesh, yet, let them do their servile work as the servants of Christ, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; let them do it with singleness of heart as unto Christ, and they shall be accepted of him, and from him shall receive the reward of the inheritance, Eph. vi. 5—8; Col. iii. 22, 24. Let them wait on God all the day, when they are doing their day's work, by doing it faithfully and conscientiously, that they may adorn the doctrine of God, our Saviour, by aiming at his glory even in common business: they work that they may get bread, they would get bread that they may live, they would not live that they may live to themselves, and please themselves, but that they may live to God, and please him. They work that they may fill up time, and fill up a place in the world, and because that



God who made and maintained us, has appointed us with quietness to work and mind our own business.

(3.) We must receive our daily comforts from him ; we must wait upon him as our benefactor, as the eyes of all things wait upon him, to give them their food in due season, and what he gives them, that they gather. To him we must look as to our Father for our daily bread, and from him we are appointed to ask it, yea though we have it in the house, though we have it upon the table. We must wait upon him for a covenant right to it, for leave to make use of it, for a blessing upon it, for a nourishment by it, and for comfort in it. It is in the word and prayer that we wait on God, and keep up communion with him, and by these every creature of God is sanctified to us (1 Tim. iv. 4, 5.) and the property of it is altered, *To the pure all things are pure* ; they have them from the covenant, and not from common providence, which makes a little that the righteous man has, better than the riches of many wicked, and much more valuable and comfortable.

No inducement can be more powerful to make us see to it, that what we have we get honestly, and use it soberly, and give God his due out of it, than this consideration, that we have our all from the hand of God, and are intrusted with it as stewards, and consequently are accountable. If we have this thought as a golden thread running through all the comforts of every day, these are God's gifts, every bit we eat and every drop we drink is his mercy, every breath we draw, and every step we take, his mercy ; this will keep us continually waiting upon him, as the ass on his master's crib, and will put a double sweetness into all our enjoyments. God will have his mercies taken fresh from his compassions, which for this reason are said to be new every morning ; and, therefore, it is not once a week that we are to wait upon him, as people go to market to buy provisions for the whole week, but we must wait on him every day, and all the day, as those who live from hand to mouth, and yet live very easy.

(4.) We must resist our daily temptation, and do our daily duties in the strength of his grace. Every day brings its temptation with it ; our master knew that when he taught us, as duly as we pray for our daily bread, to pray, *Lead us not into temptation*. There is no business we engage in, no enjoyment we partake of, but it has its snares attending it ; Satan by it assaults us, and endeavours to draw us into sin ; now sin is the great evil we should be continually upon our guard against, as Nehemiah was,

(chap. vi. 13.) *That I should be afraid, and do so, and sin.* And we have no way to secure ourselves but by waiting on God all the day, we must not only in the morning put ourselves under the protection of his grace, but we must all the day keep ourselves under the shelter of it; must not only go forth, but go on in dependence upon that grace which he has said shall be sufficient for us, that care which will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able. Our waiting upon God will furnish us with the best arguments to make use of in resisting temptations, and with strength according to the day. *Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,* and then we wait on the Lord all the day.

We have duty to do, many an opportunity of speaking good words, and doing good works, and we must see and own that we are not sufficient of ourselves for anything that is good, not so much as to think a good thought; we must therefore wait upon God, must seek to him, and depend upon him, for that light and fire, that wisdom and zeal which is necessary to the due discharge of our duty; that by his grace we may not only be fortified against every evil word and work, but furnished for every good word and work. From the fulness that is in Jesus Christ, we must by faith be continually drawing *grace for grace*: grace for all gracious exercises; grace to help in every time of need: we must wait on his grace, must follow the conduct of it, comply with the operations of it, and must be turned to it as wax to the seal.

(5) We must bear our daily afflictions with submission to his will: we are bid to expect trouble in the flesh, something or other happens every day that grieves us, something in our relations, something in our callings, events concerning ourselves, our families, or friends, that are causes of sorrow: perhaps, we have every day some bodily pain or sickness; or, some cross and disappointment in our affairs; now in these we must wait upon God. Christ requires it of all his disciples, that they take up their cross daily, Mat. xvi. 24. We must not wilfully pluck the cross down upon us, but must take it up when God lays it in our way, and not go a step out of the way of duty, either to meet it or to miss it. It is not enough to bear the cross, but we must take it up, we must accommodate ourselves to it, and acquiesce in the will of God in it. Not, "This is an evil, and I must bear it," because I cannot help it, but "This is an evil, and I will bear it," because it is the will of God.

We must see every affliction allotted us by our heavenly

Father, and in it must discover his correcting hand, and therefore, must wait on him to know the cause wherefore he contends with us, what the fault is for which we are in this affliction chastened, what the distemper is which is to be by this affliction cured, that we may answer God's end in afflicting us, and so may be made partakers of his holiness. We must attend the motions of Providence, keep our eye upon our Father when he frowns, that we may discover what his mind is, and what the obedience is which we are to learn, by the things that we suffer.

We must wait on God for support under our burthens; must put ourselves into, and stay ourselves upon the everlasting arms which are laid under the children of God to sustain them, when the rod of God is upon them. And him we must attend for deliverance; must not seek to extricate ourselves by any sinful indirect methods, nor look to creatures for relief, but still wait on the Lord until he have mercy on us; well content to bear the burthen till God ease us of it, and ease us in mercy, Ps. cxxiii. 2. If the affliction be lengthened out, yet we must wait upon the Lord, even when he hides his face (Isa. viii. 17.) hoping it is but in a little wrath, and for a small moment, Isa. liv. 7, 8.

(6.) We must expect the tidings and events of every day, with a cheerful and entire resignation to the divine Providence. While we are in this world we are still expecting, hoping well, fearing ill; we know not what a day or a night, or an hour will bring forth, (Pro. xxvii. 1.) but it is big with something, and we are too apt to spend our thoughts in vain about things future, which happen quite differently from what we imagined. Now in all our prospects we must wait upon God.

Are we in hopes of good tidings, a good issue? let us wait on God as the giver of the good we hope for, and be ready to take it from his hand; and to meet him with suitable affections when he is coming towards us in a way of mercy. Whatever good we hope for, it is God alone, and his wisdom, power and goodness that we must hope in. And therefore our hopes must be humble and modest, and regulated by his will; what God has promised us, we may with assurance promise ourselves, and no more. If thus we wait on God in our hopes, should the hope be deferred, it would not make the heart sick; no, nor if it should be disappointed, for the God we wait on, will over-rule all for the best: but when the desire comes, in prosecution of which we have thus waited on God, we may see it coming from his love, and it will be *a tree of life*, Pro. xiii. 12.

Are we in fear of evil tidings, of melancholy events, and a sad issue of the depending affairs? Let us wait on God to be delivered from all our fears, from the things themselves we are afraid of, and from the amazing tormenting fears of them, Ps. xxxiv. 4. When Jacob was with good reason afraid of his brother Esau, he waited on God, brought his fears to him, wrestled with him, and prevailed for deliverance. *What time I am afraid*, says David, *I will trust in thee*, and wait on thee; and that shall establish the heart, shall fix it, so as to set it above the fear of evil tidings.

Are we in suspense between hope and fear? sometimes one prevails, and sometimes the other; let us wait on God, as the God to whom belong the issues of life and death, good and evil, from whom our judgments, and every man's proceed, and compose ourselves into a quiet expectation of the event, whatever it may be, with a resolution to accommodate ourselves to it: hope the best, and get ready for the worst, and then take what God sends.

#### THE APPLICATION.

1. Let me further urge upon you this duty of waiting upon God all the day, in some more particular instances, according to what you have to do all the day, in the ordinary business of it. We are weak and forgetful, and need to be put in mind of our duty in general, upon every occasion for the doing of it; and therefore I choose to be thus particular, that I may be your remembrancer.

(1.) When you meet with your families in the morning, wait upon God for a blessing upon them, and attend him with your thanksgivings for the mercies you and yours have jointly received from God the night past: you and your houses must serve the Lord, must wait on him. See it owing to his goodness, who is the Founder and Father of the families of the righteous, that you are together, that the voice of rejoicing and salvation is in your tabernacles, and therefore wait upon him to continue you together, to make you comforts to one another, to enable you to do the duty of every relation, and to lengthen out the days of your tranquillity. In all the conversation we have with our families, the provision we make for them, and the orders we give concerning them, we must wait upon God, as the God of all the families of Israel, (Jer. xxxi. 1.) and have an eye to Christ, as he in whom all the families of the earth are blessed.

Every member of the family sharing in family mercies, must

wait on God for grace to contribute to family duties. Whatever disagreeableness there may be in any family relation, instead of having the spirit either burthened with it, or provoked by it, let it be an inducement to wait on God, who is able either to redress the grievance, or to balance it, and give grace to bear it.

(2.) When you are pursuing the education of your children, or the young ones under your charge, wait upon God for his grace to make the means of their education successful. When you are yourselves giving them instruction in things pertaining either to life or godliness, their general or particular calling; when you are sending them to school in a morning, or ordering them the business of the day, wait upon God to give them an understanding, and a good capacity for their business; especially their main business, for it is God that giveth wisdom. If they are but slow, and do not come on as you could wish, yet wait on God to bring them forward, and to give them his grace in his own time; and while you are patiently waiting on him, that will encourage you to take pains with them, and will likewise make you patient and gentle towards them.

And let children and young people wait on God in all their daily endeavours, to fit themselves for the service of God and their generation; you desire to be comforts to your relations, to be good for something in this world, do you not? Beg of God then a wise and an understanding heart, as Solomon did, and wait upon him all the day for it, that you may be still increasing in wisdom, as you do in stature, and in favour with God and man.

(3.) When you go to your shops, or apply yourselves to the business of your particular calling, wait upon God for his presence with you. Your business calls for your constant attendance every day, and all the day; keep the shop, and thy shop will keep thee; but let your attendance on God in your calling be as constant as your attendance on your callings. Eye God's providence in all the occurrences of them. Open shop with this thought, I am now in the way of my duty, and I depend upon God to bless me in it. When you are waiting for customers, wait on God to find you something to do in that calling to which he has called you; those you call chance customers, you should rather call providence customers, and should say of the advantage you make by them, *The Lord my God brought it to me.*

When you are buying and selling, see God's eye upon you to observe, whether you are honest and just in your dealings, and do no wrong to those you deal with: and let your eye then be up

to him, for that discretion to which God does instruct not only the husbandman, but the tradesman, (Isa. xxviii. 26.) that prudence which directs the way, and with which it is promised the good man shall order his affairs; for that blessing which makes rich, and adds no sorrow with it; for that honest profit which may be expected in the way of honest diligence.

Whatever your employment be, in country-business, city-business, or sea-business, or only in the business of the house, go about them in the fear of God, depending upon them to make them comfortable and successful, and to prosper the work of your hands unto you. And hereby you will arm yourselves against the many temptations you are compassed about with in your worldly business; by waiting on God you will be freed from the care and cumber which attends much serving, will have your minds raised above the little things of sense and time, will be serving God when you are most busy about the world, and will have God in your hearts, when your hands are full of the world.

(4.) When you take a book into your hands, God's book or any other useful good book, wait upon God for his grace to enable you to make a good use of it. Some of you spend a deal of time every day in reading, and I hope none of you let a day pass without reading some portion of scripture, either alone or with your families; take heed that the time you spend in reading be not lost time; it is so, if you read that which is idle and vain, and unprofitable; it is so, if you read that which is good, even the word of God itself, and do not mind it, or observe it, or aim to make it of any advantage to you; wait upon God, who gives you those helps for your souls, to make them helpful indeed to you. The Eunuch did so, when he was reading the book of the Prophet Isaiah in his chariot, and God presently sent him one, who made him understand what he read.

You read perhaps now and then the histories of former times; in acquainting yourselves with them, you must have an eye to God, and to that wise and gracious providence which governed the world before we were born, and preserved the church in it, and therefore may be still depended upon to do all for the best, for he is Israel's King of old.

(5.) When you sit down to your tables, wait on God, see his hand spreading and preparing a table before you in despite of your enemies, and in the society of your friends; often review the grant which God made to our first father Adam, and in him to us, of the products of the earth, (Gen. i. 29.) *Behold, I have given*

*you every herb bearing seed, bread-corn especially, to you it shall be for meat.* And the grant he afterwards made to Noah our second father, and in him to us, (Gen. ix. 3.) *Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you, even as the green herb; and see in those what a bountiful Benefactor he is to mankind, and wait upon him accordingly.*

We must eat and drink to the glory of God, and then we wait on him in eating and drinking. We must receive nourishment for our bodies, that they may be fitted to serve our souls in the service of God, to his honour in this world. We must taste covenant love in common mercies, and enjoy the Creator while we are using the creature; we must depend upon the word of blessing from the mouth of God, to make our food nourishing to us; and if our provisions be mean and scanty, we must make up the want of them by faith in the promise of God, and rejoice in him, as the *God of our salvation, though the fig-tree doth not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine.*

(6.) When you visit your friends, or receive their visits, wait upon God; let your eye be to him with thankfulness for your friends and acquaintance, that you have comfort in; that the wilderness is not made your habitation, and the solitary and desert-land your dwelling; that you have comfort not only in your own houses, but in those of your neighbours, with whom you have freedom of converse; and that you are not driven out from among men, and made a burthen and terror to all about you. That you have clothing not only for necessity but for ornament, to go abroad in, is a mercy, which, that we may not pride ourselves in, we must take notice of God in, *I decked thee with ornaments, says God, and put earrings in thine ears, Ezek. xvi. 11, 12.* That you have houses, furniture, and entertainment, not only for yourselves but for your friends, is a mercy in which God must be acknowledged.

And when we are in company, we must look up to God for wisdom to carry ourselves so that we may do much good to, and get no harm by those with whom we converse. Wait on God for that grace with which our speech should be always seasoned, by which all corrupt communication may be prevented, and we may abound in that which is good, and to the use of edifying, and which may minister grace to the hearers, that our lips may feed many.

(7.) When you give alms, or do any act of charity, wait on God, do it as unto him, give to a disciple in the name of a disciple, to the poor because they belong to Christ; do it not for the

praise of men, but for the glory of God, with a single eye, and an upright heart, direct it to him, and then your alms as well as your prayers, like those of Cornelius, come up for a memorial before God, Acts x. 4. Beg of God to accept what you do for the good of others, that your alms may indeed be offerings, Acts xxiv. 17, may be an *odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God*, Phil. iv. 18.

Desire of God a blessing upon what you give in charity, that it may be comfortable to those to whom it is given, and that though what you are able to give is but a little, like the widow's two mites, yet that by God's blessing it may be doubled, and made to go a great way, like the widow's meal in the barrel, and oil in the cruise.

Depend upon God to make up to you what you lay out in good works, and to recompense it abundantly in the resurrection of the just; nay, and you are encouraged to wait upon him, for a return of it even in this life; it is bread cast upon the waters, which you shall find again after many days; and you should carefully observe the providence of God, whether it do not make you rich amends for your good works, according to the promise that you may understand the loving kindness of the Lord, and his faithfulness to the word which he has spoken.

(8.) When you inquire after public news, in that wait upon God; do it with an eye to him; for this reason, because you are truly concerned for the interests of his kingdom in the world, and lay them near your hearts; because you have a compassion for mankind, for the lives and souls of men, and especially of God's people; ask, "*What news?*" not as the Athenians, only to satisfy a vain curiosity, and to pass away an idle hour or two, but that you may know how to direct your prayers and praises, and how to balance your hopes and fears, and may gain such an understanding of the times, as to learn what you and others ought to do.

If the face of public affairs be bright and pleasing, wait upon God to carry on and perfect his own work; and depend not upon the wisdom or strength of any instruments; if it be dark and discouraging wait upon God to prevent the fears of his people, and to appear for them when he sees that their strength is gone. In the midst of the greatest successes of the church, and the smiles of second causes, we must not think it needless to wait on God: and in the midst of its greatest discouragements, when its affairs are reduced to the last extremity, we must not think it fruitless to



wait upon God ; the creatures cannot help without him, but he can help without them.

(9.) When you are going journeys wait on God, put yourselves under his protection, commit yourselves to his care, and depend upon him to give his angels a charge concerning you, to bear you up in their arms when you move, and to pitch their tents about you where you rest. See how much you are indebted to the goodness of his providence for all the comforts and conveniences you are surrounded with in your travels. It is he who has cast our lot in a land where we wander not in wildernesses, as in the deserts of Arabia, but have safe and beaten roads; and that through the terrors of war the highways are not unoccupied ; to him we owe it that the inferior creatures are serviceable to us; and that our going out and coming in are preserved ; that when we are abroad we are not in banishment, but have liberty to come home again ; and when we are at home, we are not under confinement, but have liberty to go abroad.

We must, therefore, have our eyes up to God at our setting out, "Lord go along with me where I go;" under his shelter we must travel, confiding in his care of us, and encouraging ourselves with that in all the dangers we meet with ; and in our return must own his goodness ; all our bones must say, *Lord who is like unto thee for he keepeth all our bones, not one of them is broken.*

(10.) When we retire into solitude, to be alone walking in the fields, or alone reposing ourselves in our closets, still we must be waiting on God ; still we must keep up our communion with him, when we are communing with our own hearts. When we are alone we must not be alone, but the Father must be with us, and we with him. We shall find temptations even in solitude, which we have need to guard against ; Satan set upon our Saviour when he was alone in a wilderness ; but there also we have opportunity, if we know but how to improve it, for that devout, for that divine contemplation, which is the best conversation, so that we may never be less alone than when alone. If when we sit alone and keep silence, withdrawn from business and conversation, we have but the art, I should say the heart, to fill up those vacant minutes with pious meditations of God and divine things, we then gather up the fragments of time which remain, that nothing may be lost, and so are we found waiting on God all the day.

2. Let me use some motives to persuade you thus to live a life of communion with God, by waiting on him the all day.

(1.) Consider, the eye of God is always upon you. When we

are with our superiors, and observe them to look upon us, that engages us to look upon them; and shall we not then look up to God, whose eyes always behold, and whose eye-lids try the children of men? He sees all the motions of our hearts, and sees with pleasure the motions of our hearts towards him, which should engage us to set him always before us.

The servant, though he be careless at other times, yet when he is under his master's eye, will wait in his place and keep close to his business; we need no more to engage us to diligence, than to do our work with eye-service, while our master looks on, and because he does so, for then we shall never look off.

(2.) The God you are to wait on, is one with whom you have to do, Heb. iv. 13. *All things, even the thoughts and intents of the heart, are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do; πρὸς ὃν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος, with whom we have business, or word; who has something to say to us, and to whom we have something to say; or, as some read it, To whom for us there is an account; there is a reckoning, a running account between us and him: and we must every one of us shortly give account of ourselves to him, and of everything done in the body, and therefore, are concerned to wait on him; that all may be made even daily, between us and him in the blood of Christ, which balances the account. Did we consider how much we have to do with God every day, we would be more diligent and constant in our attendance on him.*

(3.) The God we are to wait upon, continually waits to be gracious to us; he is always doing us good, precedes us with the blessings of his goodness, daily loads us with his benefits, and slips no opportunity of shewing his care of us when we are in danger; his bounty to us when we are in want; and his tenderness for us when we are in sorrow. His good providence waits on us all the day, to preserve our going out and our coming in, (Isa. xxx. 18.) to give us relief and succour in due season, to be seen in the mount of the Lord. Nay, his good grace waits on us all the day, to help us in every time of need; to be strength to us according as our day is, and all the occurrences of the day. Is God thus forward to do us good, and shall we be backward and remiss in doing him service?

(4.) If we attend upon God, his holy angels shall have a charge to attend upon us. They are all appointed to be ministering spirits, to minister for the good of them who shall be heirs of salvation, and more good offices they do us every day than we

are aware of. What an honour, what a privilege is it to be waited on by holy angels, to be borne up in their arms, to be surrounded by their tents! What a security is the ministration of those good spirits against the malice of evil spirits! This honour have all they that wait on God all the day.

(5.) This life of communion with God, and constant attendance upon him is a heaven upon earth. It is doing the work of heaven, and the will of God, as they do it who are in heaven; whose business it is always to behold the face of our Father. It is an earnest of the blessedness of heaven, it is a preparative for it, and a prelude to it; it is having our conversation in heaven; whence we look for the Saviour. Looking for him as our Saviour, we look to him as our director; and by this we make it to appear, that our hearts are there, which will give us good ground to expect that we shall be there shortly.

3. Let me close all with some directions, what you must do, that you may thus wait upon God all the day.

(1.) See much of God in every creature. Of his wisdom and power in the making and placing of it, and of his goodness in its serviceableness to us. Look about you, and see what a variety of wonders, what an abundance of comforts you are surrounded with; and let them all lead you to him, who is the fountain of being, and the giver of all good; all our springs are in him, and from him are all our streams; this will engage us to wait upon him, since every creature is that to us, that he makes it to be. Thus the same things which draw a carnal heart from God, will lead a gracious soul to him; and since all his works praise him, his saints will thence take continual occasion to bless him.

It was (they say) the custom of the pious Jews of old, whatever delight they took in any creature, to give to God the glory of it; when they smelled a flower they said, "Blessed be he that made this flower sweet;" if they ate a morsel of bread, "Blessed be he that appointed bread to strengthen man's heart." If thus we taste in every thing that the Lord is gracious, and suck all satisfaction from the breasts of his bounty (and some derive his name from the Hebrew *Mamma*—*a breast*) we shall thereby be engaged constantly to depend upon him, as the child is said to hang on the mother's breast.

(2.) See every creature to be nothing without God; the more we discern of the vanity and emptiness of the world, and all our enjoyments in it, and their utter insufficiency to make us happy, the closer we shall cleave to God, and the more intimately we shall

converse with him, that we may find that satisfaction in the Father of spirits, which we have in vain sought for in the things of sense. What folly is it to make our court to the creatures, and to dance attendance at their door, whence we are sure to be sent away empty, when we have the Creator himself to go to, who is rich in mercy to all that call upon him, is full, and free, and faithful? What can we expect from lying vanities? Why then should we observe them, and neglect our own mercies? Why should we trust to broken reeds, when we have a *Rock of Ages*, to be the foundation of our hopes? And why should we draw from broken cisterns, when we have the *God of all Consolation* to be the fountain of our joys?

(3.) Live by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot with any confidence wait upon God, but in and through a mediator, for it is by his Son that God speaks to us, and hears from us: all that passes between a just God and poor sinners, must pass through the hands of that blessed *Days-man, who has laid his hand upon them both*, every prayer passes from us to God, and every mercy from God to us by that hand; it is in the face of the anointed that God looks upon us; and in the face of Jesus Christ, that we behold the glory and grace of God shining; it is by Christ that we have access to God, and success with him in prayer, and, therefore, must make mention of his righteousness, even of his only; and in that habitual attendance we must be all the day living upon God, we must have an habitual dependence on him, who always appears in the presence of God for us; always gives attendance to be ready to introduce us.

(4.) Be frequent and serious in pious ejaculations. In waiting upon God we must often speak to him, must take all occasions to speak to him; and when we have not opportunity for a solemn address to him, he will accept of a sudden address, if it come from an honest heart. In these David waited on God all day, as appears by ver. 1. *Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul; to thee do I dart it, and all its gracious breathings after thee.* We should in a holy ejaculation ask pardon for this sin, strength against this corruption, victory over this temptation, and it shall not be in vain. This is to pray always, and without ceasing; it is not the length or language of the prayer that God looks at, but the sincerity of the heart in it; and that shall be accepted, though the prayer be very short, and the groanings such as cannot be uttered.

(5.) Look upon every day, as those who know not but it may be your last day, at such an hour as we think not, the Son of

Man comes: and therefore we cannot any morning be sure that we shall live till night; we hear of many lately who have been snatched away very suddenly: *What manner of persons therefore ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?* Though we cannot say, we ought to live as if we were sure this day would be our last, yet, it is certain, we ought to live as those who do not know but it may be so; and the rather, because we know the day of the Lord will come first or last; and, therefore, we are concerned to wait on him. For on whom should poor dying creatures wait, but on a living God?

Death will bring us all to God, to be judged by him: it will bring all the saints to him, to the vision and fruition of him: and one we are hastening to, and hope to be for ever with, we are concerned to wait upon, and to cultivate an acquaintance with. Did we think more of death, we would converse more with God; our dying daily is a good reason for our worshiping daily; and, therefore, wherever we are, we are concerned to keep near to God, because we know not where death will meet us; this will alter the property of death; Enoch, who walked with God, was translated that he should not see death; and this will furnish us with that which will stand us in need on the other side death and the grave. If we continue waiting on God every day, and all the day long, we shall grow more experienced, and consequently more expert in the great mystery of communion with God, and thus our last days will become our best days, our last works our best works, and our last comforts our best and sweetest comforts; in consideration of which take the prophet's advice, (Hos. xii. 6.) *Turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.*

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THE  
THIRD DISCOURSE,  
SHEWING  
HOW TO CLOSE THE DAY WITH GOD.

PSALM IV. 8.

*I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep : for thou, Lord, only  
makest me dwell in safety.*

THIS may be understood either figuratively, of the repose of the soul, in the assurances of God's grace ; or literally, of the repose of the body, under the protection of his providence ; I love to give Scripture its full latitude, and therefore take in both.

I. The Psalmist having given the preference to God's favour above any good, having chosen that, and portioned himself in that, here expresses his great complacency in the choice he had made ; while he saw many making themselves perpetually uneasy with that fruitless inquiry, *Who will show us any good ?* wearying themselves for very vanity : he had made himself perfectly easy, by casting himself upon the divine good will, *Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us ;* any good short of God's favour will not serve our turn, but that is enough, without the world's smiles. The moon, and stars, and all the fires and candles in the world will not make day without the sun ; but the sun will make day without any of them. These are David's sentiments, and all the saints agree with him ; finding no rest, therefore, like Noah's dove in a deluged defiled world, he flies to the ark, that type of Christ, *Return unto thy rest, unto thy Noah* (so the word is in the original, for Noah's name signifies rest) *O my soul, Ps. cxvi. 7.*

If God lift up the light of his countenance upon us, as it fills us with a holy joy, it puts gladness into the heart more than they have, whose corn and wine increase, (ver. 7.) so it fixes us in a holy rest, I will lay me down and sleep. God is my God and I am pleased, I am satisfied, I look no further, I desire no more, I dwell in safety, or in confidence ; while I walk in the light of the

Lord, as I want no good, nor am sensible of any deficiency, so I fear no evil, nor am apprehensive of any danger. The Lord God is to me both a *Sun* and a *Shield*; a sun to enlighten and comfort me, a shield to protect and defend me.

Hence learn, that those who have the assurances of God's favour toward them, may enjoy, and should labour after, a holy serenity, and security of mind. We have both these put together in that precious promise, (Is. xxxii. 17.) *But the work of righteousness shall be peace*; there is at present satisfaction in doing good; and in the issue, *the effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance for ever*; quietness in the enjoyment of good, and assurance in a freedom from evil.

(1.) A holy serenity is one blessed fruit of God's favour; *I will now lay me down in peace, and sleep*. While we are under God's displeasure, or in doubt concerning his favour, how can we have any enjoyment of ourselves? while this great concern is unsettled, the soul cannot but be unsatisfied. Has God a controversy with thee? Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eye-lids, till thou hast got the controversy taken up; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend, thy best friend, and when thou hast made thy peace with him, and hast some comfortable evidence that thou art accepted of him, then say, wisely and justly, what that carnal worldling said foolishly and without ground, *Soul, take thine ease*, for in God, and in the covenant of grace, *thou hast goods laid up for many years*, goods laid up for eternity, Luke xii. 19. Are thy sins pardoned? Hast thou an interest in Christ's mediation? Does God now in him accept thy works? *Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart*, Ecc. ix. 7. Let this still every storm, and command and create a calm in my soul.

Having God to be our God in covenant, we have enough, we have all; and though the gracious soul still desires more of God, it never desires more than God; in him it reposes itself with a perfect complacency; in him it is at home, it is at rest; if we be but satisfied of his loving kindness, we may be satisfied with his loving kindness, abundantly satisfied; there is enough in this to satiate the weary soul, and to replenish every sorrowful soul, (Jer. xxxi. 25.) to fill even the hungry with good things, with the best things; and being filled they should be at rest, at rest for ever, and their sleep here should be sweet.

(2.) A holy security is another blessed fruit of God's favour. Thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety; when the light of thy

countenance shines upon me I am safe, and I know I am so, and I am therefore easy, for *with thy favour wilt thou compass me as with a shield*, Ps. v. 12. Being taken under the protection of the divine favour, though an host of enemies should encamp against me yet my heart shall not fear, in this I will be confident, (Ps. xxvii. 3.) Whatever God has promised me I can promise myself, and that is enough to indemnify me, and save me harmless, whatever difficulties and dangers I may meet with in the way of my duty. *Though the earth be removed, yet will not we fear*, (Ps. xlvi. 2.) not fear any evil, no not in the valley of the shadow of death, in the territories of the king of terrors himself; for there thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. What the rich man's wealth is to him, in his own conceit, a strong city and a high wall, that the good man's God is to him, Prov. xviii. 10, 11. *The Almighty shall be thy gold, thy defence*, Job xxii. 25, *marg.*

Nothing is more dangerous than security in a sinful way, and men crying peace, peace to themselves, while they continue under the reigning power of a vain and carnal mind: O that the sinners that are at ease were made to tremble! Nothing is more foolish than a security built upon the world, and its promises, for they are all vanity and a lie; but nothing more reasonable in itself, or more advantageous to us, than for good people to build with assurance upon the promises of a good God; for those who keep in the way of duty, to be quiet from the fear of evil; as those who know no evil shall befall them, no real evil, no evil but what shall be made to work for their good; as those who know, while they continue in their allegiance to God as their King, that they are under his protection, under the protection of Omnipotence itself, which enables them to bid defiance to all malignant powers; *If God be for us, who can be against us?* This security even the heathen looked upon every honest virtuous man to be entitled to, that is,

*Integer vitæ, scelerisque purus,  
He whose life was upright and free from iniquity.*

And thought that

*Et si fractus illabatur orbis,  
Impavidum ferient ruine.*

*If the world should fall in pieces about his ears, he needed not fear being lost in the desolations of it.*

Much more reason have christians, who hold fast their integrity,



to lay claim to it, for who is he, or what is it that shall harm us, if we be followers of him that is good, in his goodness?

[1.] It is the privilege of good people, that they may be thus easy and satisfied; this holy serenity and security of mind is allowed them, God gives them leave to be cheerful; nay, it is promised them, *God will speak peace to his people and to his saints*: he will fill them with joy and peace in believing; his peace shall keep their hearts and minds, keep them safe, keep them calm. Nay, there is a method appointed for their obtaining this promised serenity and security. The scriptures are written to them that their joy may be full, and that through patience and comfort of them they may have hope. Ordinances are instituted to be wells of salvation, out of which they may draw water with joy. Ministers are ordained to be their comforters, and the helpers of their joy. Thus willing has God been to show the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, that that they might have strong consolation, Heb. vi. 17, 18.

[2.] It is the duty of good people to labour after this holy security and serenity of mind, and to use the means appointed for the obtaining it. Give not way to the disquieting suggestions of Satan, and to those tormenting doubts and fears that arise in your own souls. Study to be quiet, chide yourselves for your distrusts, charge yourselves to believe, and to hope in God, that you shall yet praise him. You are in the dark concerning yourselves, do as Paul's mariners did; cast anchor, and wish for the day. Poor trembling christian, that art tossed with tempests and not comforted, try to lay thee down in peace and sleep; compose thyself into a sedate and even frame. In the name of him whom winds and seas obey, command down thy tumultuous thoughts and say *Peace be still*; lay that aching trembling head of thine where the beloved disciple laid his, in the bosom of the Lord Jesus; or, if thou has not yet attained such boldness of access to him, lay that aching trembling heart of thine at the feet of the Lord Jesus by an entire submission and resignation to him saying, *If I perish, I will perish here*; put it into his hand by an entire confidence in him; submit it to his operation and disposal, who knows how to speak to the heart. And if thou art not yet entered into this Sabbatism, as the word is (Heb. iv. 9.) this present rest that remaineth for the people of God, yet look upon it to be a land of promise, and therefore though it tarry, wait for it, for the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and shall not lie. *Light is sown for the righteous,*

and what is sown shall come up again at last in a harvest of joy.

2. The Psalmist having done his day's work, and perhaps fatigued himself with it, it being now bed-time, and having given good advice to those to whom he had wished a good night, to commune with their own hearts upon their beds, and to offer the evening sacrifices of righteousness (ver. 4, 5.) now retires to his chamber with this word, *I will lay me down in peace and sleep.* That which I chose this text for will lead me to understand it literally, as the disciples understood their Master when he said, *Lazarus sleepeth, of taking rest in sleep,* John xi. 12, 13. And so we have here David's pious thoughts when he was going to bed. As when he awakes he is still with God, he is still so when he goes to sleep and concludes the day as he opened it, with meditations on God, and sweet communion with him.

It should seem David penned this Psalm when he was distressed and persecuted by his enemies; perhaps it was penned on the same occasion with the foregoing Psalm, when he fled from Absalom his son; without were fightings, and then no wonder that within were fears; yet then he puts such a confidence in God's protection, that he will go to bed at his usual time, and with his usual quietness and cheerfulness, will compose himself as at other times: he knows that his enemies have no power against him, but what is given them from above; and they shall have no power given them but what is still under the divine check and restraint; nor shall their power be permitted to exert itself so far as to do him any real mischief, and therefore he retires into the secret place of the most High, and abides under the shadow of the Almighty, and is very quiet in his own mind. That will break a worldly man's heart which will not break a godly man's sleep; let them do their worst, says David, *I will lay me down and sleep, the will of the Lord be done.* Now observe here,

(1.) His confidence in God; *Thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety;* not only makest me safe, but makest me know that I am so; makest me to dwell with a good assurance. It is the same word that is used concerning him who walks uprightly, that he walks surely, Prov. x. 9. He goes boldly in his way, so David here goes boldly to his bed. He does not dwell carelessly as the men of Laish, (Judg. xviii. 7.) but dwells at ease in God as the sons of Zion, in the city of their solemnities, when their eyes see it a quiet habitation, Isa. xxxiii. 20.

There is one word in this part of the text that is observable;

thou, Lord, *only* dost secure me. Some refer it to David; "even when I am alone, have none of my privy-counsellors about me to advise me, none of my life-guards to fight for me, yet I am under no apprehension of danger while God is with me." The Son of David comforted himself with this, that when all his disciples forsook him, and left him alone, yet he was not alone, for the Father was with him. Some weak people are afraid of being alone, especially in the dark, but a firm belief of God's presence with us in all places, and that divine protection which all good people are under, would silence those fears, and make us ashamed of them. Nay, our being alone a peculiar people, whom God has set apart for himself, (as it is here, ver. 6.) will be our security. A sober singularity will be our safety and satisfaction, as Noah's was in the old world; Israel is a people that shall dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations, and therefore may set them all at defiance till they foolishly mingle themselves among them, *Israel then shall dwell in safety alone*, Deut. xxxiii. 28. The more we dwell alone, the more safe we dwell. But our translation refers it to God; *Thou alone makest me to dwell safely*. It is done by thee only; God in protecting his people needs not any assistance; though he sometimes make use of instruments; the earth helped the woman, yet he can do it without them; and when all our refuges fail, his own arm works salvation; *so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him*, Deut. xxxii. 12. Yet that is not all, I depend on thee only to do it; therefore I am easy, and think myself safe, not because I have hosts on my side, but purely because I have the Lord of Hosts on my side.

*Thou makest me to dwell in safety*; it may look either backward or forward, or rather both: thou hast made me to dwell in safety all day, so that the sun has not smitten me by day; and then it is the language of his thankfulness for the mercies he had received; or, thou wilt make me to dwell in safety all night, that the moon shall not smite me by night; and then it is the language of his dependence upon God for further mercies; and both these should go together; and our eye must be to God as ever the same, who was, and is, and is to come; who has delivered, and does, and will.

(2.) His composedness in himself inferred hence, *Simul*, or *pariter in pace cubabo*—*I will both lay me down and sleep*. They who have their corn and wine increasing, who have abundance of the wealth and pleasure of this world, lay them down and sleep

contentedly, as Boaz at the end of the heap of corn, Ruth iii. 7. But though I have not what they have, I can lay me down in peace, and sleep as well as they. We make it to join, his lying down and his sleeping: I will not only lay me down, as one that desires to be composed, but will sleep as one that really is so. Some make it to intimate his falling asleep presently after he had laid him down: so well wearied was he with the work of the day, and so free from any of those disquieting thoughts which would keep him from sleeping.

Now these are words put into our mouths with which to compose ourselves when we retire at night to our repose; and we should take care so to manage ourselves all day, especially, when it draws towards night, that we may not be disfitted, and put out of frame for our evening devotions; that our hearts may not be overcharged either on the one hand with surfeiting and drunkenness, as theirs often are who are men of pleasure; or on the other hand with the cares of this life, as theirs often are who are men of business; but that we may have such a command both of our thoughts and of our time, that we may finish our daily work well; which will be an earnest of our finishing our life's work well; and all is well indeed that ends everlastingly well.

*Doct.* As we must begin the day with God, and wait upon him all the day, so we must endeavour to close it with him.

This duty of closing the day with God, and in a good frame, I know not how better to open to you, than by going over the particulars in the text in their order; and recommending to you David's example.

I. Let us retire to lay us down. Nature calls for rest as well as food! *Man goes forth to his work and labour*, and goes to and fro about it, but it is only till evening, and then it is time to lie down. We read of Ishbosheth, that he lay on his bed at noon, but death met him there, (2. Sam. iv. 5, 6.) and of David himself, that he came off from his bed at evening-tide, but sin, a worse thing than death, met him there. We must work the works of him that sent us while it is day, it will be time enough to lie down when the night comes and no man can work; and it is then proper and seasonable to lie down. It is promised, (Zeph. ii. 7.) *They shall lie down in the evening*; and with that promise we must comply, and rest in the time appointed for rest; and not turn day into night, and night into day, as many do upon some ill account or other.

1. Some sit up to do mischief to their neighbours; to kill, and steal, and to destroy: *In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the daytime*, Job xxiv. 16. David complains of his enemies, that at evening they go round about the city, Ps. lix. 6. They that do evil hate the light. Judas the traitor was in quest of his Master, with his band of men, when he should have been in his bed. And it is an aggravation of the wickedness of the wicked, when they take so much pains to compass an ill design; and have their hearts so much upon it, that they *sleep not except they have done mischief*, Prov. iv. 16. It is a shame to those who profess to make it their business to do good, that they cannot find in their hearts to intrench upon any of the gratifications of sense in pursuance of it;

*Ut jugulent homines surgunt de nocte Latrones;  
Tuque ut te serves non expergisceris?*

Robbers arise in the night that they may slay men;  
And will not you awake that you may preserve yourself?

Say then, while others sit up watching for an opportunity to be mischievous, *I will lay me down* and be quiet, and do nobody any harm.

2. Others sit up in the pursuit of the world, and the wealth of it. They not only rise up early, but they sit up late, in the eager prosecution of their covetous practices, (Ps. cxxvii. 2.) and, either to get or save, deny themselves their most necessary sleep; and this their way is their folly, for hereby they deprive themselves of the comfortable enjoyment of what they have, which is the end, under pretence of care and pains to obtain more, which is but the means. Solomon speaks of those who *neither day nor night see sleep with their eyes*, (Eccl. viii. 16.) who make themselves perfect slaves and drudges to the world, than which there is not a more cruel task-master: and thus, they make that which of itself is vanity, to be to them vexation of spirit, for they weary themselves for very vanity, (Heb. iv. 3.) and are so miserably in love with their chain, that they deny themselves not only the spiritual rest God has provided for them, as the God of grace, but the natural rest, which, as the God of nature, he has provided; and it is a specimen of the wrong sinners do to their own bodies, as well as their own souls. Let us see the folly of it, and never labour thus for the meat that perisheth, and that abundance of the rich, which will not suffer him to sleep; but let us labour for that meat which endureth.

to eternal life, that grace which is the earnest of glory, the abundance of which will make our sleep sweet to us.

3. Others sit up in the indulgence of their pleasures. They will not lay them down in due time, because they cannot find in their hearts to leave their vain sports and pastimes, their music, and dancing, and plays, their cards and dice; or, which is worse, their rioting and excess; for they that are drunk are drunk in the night. It is bad enough when these gratifications of a base lust, or at least of a vain mind, are suffered to devour the whole evening, and then to engross the whole soul, as they are apt enough to do insensibly; so that there is neither time nor heart for the evening devotions, either in the closet, or in the family: but it is much worse when they are suffered to go far into the night too, for then of course they trespass upon the ensuing morning, and steal away the time that should then also be bestowed upon the exercises of religion. Those who can of choice, and with so much pleasure, sit up till I know not what time of night, to make, as they say, "a merry night of it," to spend their time in filthiness and foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient, would think themselves hardly dealt with, if they should be kept one half hour past their sleeping time, engaged in any good duties; and would have called blessed Paul himself a tedious preacher, and have censured him as very indiscreet, when, upon a particular occasion, he continued his speech till midnight, Acts xx. 7. And how loth would they be, with David, at midnight to rise and give thanks to God; or with their Master, to continue all night in prayer to God.

Let the corrupt affections which run out thus and transgress, be mortified, and not gratified. Those who have allowed themselves in such irregularities, if they have allowed themselves an impartial reflection, cannot but have found the inconvenience of them, and they have been a prejudice to the prosperity of the soul, and should therefore deny themselves for their own good. One rule for the closing of the day well is to keep good hours; *Every thing is beautiful in its season.* I have heard it said long since, and I beg leave to repeat it now, that

"Early to bed, and early to rise,  
Is the way to be healthy, and wealthy, and wise."

We shall now take it for granted, that unless some necessary business, or some work of mercy, or some more than ordinary act of devotion keep you up beyond your usual time, you are disposed

to lay you down. And let us lay us down with thankfulness to God, and with thoughts of dying; with penitent reflections upon the sins of the day, and with humble supplications for the mercies of the night.

(1.) Let us lie down with thankfulness to God. When we retire to our bed-chambers or closets, we should lift up our hearts to God, the God of our mercies, and make him the God of our praises; whenever we go to bed, I am sure we do not want matter for praise, if we did not want a heart. Let us therefore address ourselves then to that pleasant duty, that work which is its own wages. The evening sacrifice was to be a sacrifice of praise.

[1.] We have reason to be thankful for the many mercies of the day past, which we ought particularly to review, and to say, *Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits.* Observe the constant series of mercies, which has not been interrupted or broken in upon any day. Observe the particular instance of mercy with which some days have been signalized and made remarkable. It is he who has granted us life and favour; it is his visitation that preserves our spirits. Think how many are the calamities which we are every day preserved from; the calamities which we are sensibly exposed to, and perhaps have been delivered from the imminent danger of; and those which we have not been apprehensive of; many of which we have deserved, and, which others, better than we are, groan under. All our bones have reason to say, *Lord, who is like unto thee?* For it is God keepeth all our bones, not one of them is broken; it is of his mercies that we are not consumed.

Think how many are the comforts we are every day surrounded with, all which we are indebted to the bounty of the divine Providence for; every bit we eat, and every drop we drink, is mercy; every step we take, and every breath we draw, mercy. All the satisfaction we have in the agreeableness and affections of our relations, and in the society and serviceableness of our friends; all the success we have in our callings and employments, and the pleasure we take in them; all the joy which Zebulun has in his going out, and Issachar in his tents, is what we have reason to acknowledge with thankfulness, to God's praise.

Yet it is likely that the day has not passed without some cross accidents, something or other has afflicted and disappointed us, and if it has, yet that must not indispose us for praise; however it be, yet God is good; and it is our duty in everything to give

thanks, and to bless the name of the Lord when he takes away, as well as when he gives; for our afflictions are but few, and a thousand times deserved; our mercies are many, and a thousand times forfeited.

[2.] We have reason to be thankful for the shadows of the evening, which call us to retire and lie down. The same wisdom, power, and goodness which make the morning, make the evening also, to rejoice; and give us cause to be thankful for the drawing of the curtains of the night about us in favour to our repose, as well as for the opening of the eye-lids of the morning upon us in favour to our business. When God divided between the light and the darkness, and allotted to both of them their time successively, he saw that it was good, it should be so; in a world of mixtures and changes, nothing more proper. Let us therefore give thanks to that God who forms the light and creates the darkness; and believe, that as in the revolutions of time, so in the revolutions of the events of time, the darkness of affliction may be as needful for us in its season, as the light of prosperity. If the hireling longs till the shadow comes, let him be thankful for it when it does come, that the burthen and heat of the day is not perpetual.

[3.] We have reason to be thankful for a quiet habitation to lie down in; that we are not driven out from among men as Nebuchadnezzar, to lie down with the beasts of the field; that though we were born like the wild ass's colt, yet we have not with the wild ass the wilderness for our habitation, and the desolate and barren land for our dwelling. That we are not put to wander in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth, as many of God's dear saints and servants have been forced to do, of whom the world was not worthy; but the good Shepherd makes us to lie down in green pastures. That we have not, as Jacob, the cold ground for our bed, and a stone for our pillow, which yet one would be content with, and covet, if, with it, one could have his dream.

[4.] We have reason to be thankful that we are not forced to sit up; that our Master not only gives us leave to lie down, but orders that nothing shall prevent our lying down. Many go to bed, but cannot lie down there, by reason of painful and languishing sicknesses, of that nature, that if they lie down they cannot breathe: our bodies are of the same mould, and it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not so afflicted. Many are kept up by sickness in their families; children are ill, and



they must attend them. If God takes sickness away from the midst of us, and keeps it away, so that no plague comes near our dwellings, a numerous family, perhaps, and all well, it is a mercy we are bound to be very thankful for, and to value in proportion to the greatness of the affliction where sickness prevails. Many are kept up by the fear of enemies, of soldiers, of thieves. The good man of the house watches that his house may not be broken through; but our lying down is not prevented or disturbed by the alarms of war, we are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of our repose; there therefore should we rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, even his righteous acts toward the inhabitants of his villages in Israel, which under his protection are as safe as walled cities with gates and bars. When we lie down, let us thank God that we may lie down.

(2.) Let us lie down with thoughts of death, and of that great change which at death we must pass under. The conclusion of every day should put us in mind of the conclusion of all our days; when our night comes, our long night, which will put a period to our work, and bring the honest labourer both to take his rest and receive his penny. It is good for us to think frequently of dying, to think of it as often as we go to bed; it will help to mortify the corruptions of our own hearts, which are our daily burthens, to arm us against the temptations of the world, which are our daily snares; it will wean us from our daily comforts, and make us easy under our daily crosses and fatigues. It is good for us to think familiarly of dying, to think of it as our going to bed, that by thinking often of it, and thinking thus of it, we may get above the fear of it.

[1.] At death we shall retire, as we do at bed-time; we shall go to be private for a while, till the public appearance at the great day; *Man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, till then they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep*, Job xiv. 12. Now we go abroad to see and be seen, and to no higher purpose do some spend their day, spend their life; but when death comes, there is an end of both; we shall then see no more in this world, *I shall behold man no more*, (Isa. xxxviii. 11.) we shall then be seen no more; *The eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more*, (Job vii. 8.) we shall be hid in the grave, and cut off from all living. To die is to bid good night to all our friends, to put a period to our conversation with them; we bid them farewell, but, blessed be God, it is not an

eternal farewell. We hope to meet them again in the morning of the resurrection, to part no more.

[2.] At death we shall put off the body, as we put off our clothes when we lie down. The soul is the man, the body is but the clothes; at death we shall be unclothed, the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, the garment of the body shall be laid aside; death strips us and sends us naked out of the world as we came into it; strips the soul of all the disguises wherein it appeared before men, that it may appear naked and open before God. Our grave-clothes are night-clothes.

When we are weary and hot, our clothes are a burthen, and we are very willing to throw them off; are not easy till we are undressed; thus *we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened*; but when death frees the soul from the load and incumbrance of the body, which hinders its repose in its spiritual satisfactions, how easy will it be! Let us think then of putting off the body at death with as much pleasure as we do of putting off our clothes at night; be as loose to them, as we are to our clothes; and comfort ourselves with this thought, that though we are unclothed at death, if we be clothed with Christ and his grace, we shall not be found naked, but be clothed upon with immortality. We have new clothes a making, which shall be ready to put on next morning; a glorious body like Christ's, instead of a vile body like the beasts.

[3.] At death we shall lie down in the grave, as on our bed, shall lie down in the dust, Job xx. 11. To those who die in sin and impenitence, the grave is a dungeon, their iniquities which are upon their bones, and which lie down with them, make it so; but to those who die in Christ, who die in faith, it is a bed, a bed of rest, where there are no tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day, as sometimes there are upon the easiest beds we have in this world; where there is no danger of being scared with dreams, and terrified with visions of the night; there is no being chastened with pain on that bed, or the multitude of the bones with strong pain. It is the privilege of those, who while they live walk in their uprightness, that when they die they enter into peace, and rest in their beds, Isa. lvii. 2. Holy Job comforts himself with this, in the midst of his agonies, that he shall shortly make his bed in the darkness and be easy there. It is a bed of roses, a bed of spices to all believers ever since he lay in it, who is the *Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the valleys*.

Say then of thy grave, as thou dost of thy bed at night, *There*

*the weary are at rest*; with this further consolation, that thou shalt not only rest there, but rise thence shortly, abundantly refreshed; shalt be called up to meet the beloved of thy soul, and to be for ever with him; shalt rise to a day which will not renew thy cares, as every day on earth does, but secure to thee unmixed and everlasting joys. How comfortably may we lie down at night, if such thoughts as these lie down with us; and how comfortably may we lie down at death, if we have accustomed ourselves to such thoughts as these.

(3.) Let us lie down with penitent reflections upon the sins of the day past. Praising God and delighting ourselves in him is such pleasant work, and so much the work of angels, that methinks it is a pity that we should have anything else to do; but the truth is, we make other work for ourselves by our own folly, that is not so pleasant, but absolutely needful, and that is, repentance. While we are at night solacing ourselves in God's goodness, we must intermix therewith the afflicting of ourselves for our own vileness; both must have their place in us, and they will very well agree together; for we must take our work before us.

[1.] We must be convinced of it, that we are still contracting guilt; we carry corrupt natures about with us, which are bitter roots that bear gall and wormwood, and all we say or do is embittered by them. *In many things we offend all*, insomuch that *there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not*. We are in the midst of a defiling world, and cannot keep ourselves perfectly unspotted from it. If we say we have no sin, or that we have passed a day and have not sinned, we deceive ourselves; for if we know the truth by ourselves, we shall see cause to cry, *Who can understand his errors? cleanse us from our secret faults*; faults which we ourselves are not aware of. We ought to aim at a sinless perfection, with as strict a watchfulness as if we could attain it: but, after all, must acknowledge that we come short of it; that we have not yet attained, neither are already perfect. We find it by constant sad experience, for it is certain that we do enough every day to bring us upon our knees at night.

[2.] We must examine our consciences that we may find out our particular transgressions of the day past. Let us every night search and try our ways, our thoughts, words, and actions, compare them with the rule of the word, examine our faces in that glass, that we may see our spots, and may be particular in

the acknowledgment of them. It will be good for us to ask, What have we done this day? What have we done amiss? What duty have we neglected? What false step have we taken? How have we carried it in our callings, in our converse? Have we done the duties of our particular relations, and accommodated ourselves to the will of God in every event of providence? By doing this frequently, we shall grow in our acquaintance with ourselves, than which nothing will contribute more to our soul's prosperity.

[3.] We must renew our repentance, for whatever we find has been amiss in us, or has been said or done amiss by us; we must be sorry for it, and sadly lament it, and take shame to ourselves for it, and give glory to God by making confession. If anything appear to have been wrong more than ordinary, that must be particularly bewailed; and in general, we must be mortified for our sins of daily infirmity, which we ought not to think slightly of, because they are returning daily, but rather be the more ashamed of them, and of that fountain within, which casts out these waters.

It is good to be speedy in renewing our repentance, before the heart be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Delays are dangerous; green wounds may soon be cured, if taken in time, but if they are corrupt, as the Psalmist complains, (Ps. xxxviii. 5.) it is our fault and folly, and the cure will be difficult. Though through the weakness of the flesh we fall into sin daily, if we get up again by renewed repentance at night, we are not, nor ought we to think ourselves, utterly cast down. The sin that humbles us, shall not ruin us.

[4.] We must make a fresh application of the blood of Christ to our souls for the remission of our sins, and the gracious acceptance of our repentance. We must not think that we have need of Christ only at our first conversion to God; no, we have daily need of him, as our Advocate with the Father, and, therefore, as such he always appears in the presence of God for us, and attends continually to this very thing. Even our sins of daily infirmity would be our ruin, if he had not made satisfaction for them, and did not still make intercession for us. He who is washed, still needs to wash his feet, from the filth he contracts in every step; and blessed be God, there is a fountain opened for us to wash in, and it is always open.

[5.] We must apply ourselves to the throne of grace for peace and pardon. Those who repent must pray, that the thought of

their heart may be forgiven them, Acts viii. 22. And it is good to be particular in our prayers for the pardon of sin; that as Hannah said concerning Samuel, *For this child I prayed*; so we may be able to say, "For the forgiveness of this I prayed." However, the publican's prayer in general, is a very proper one for each of us to lie down with, *God be merciful to me a sinner*.

(4.) Let us lie down with humble supplications for the mercies of the night. Prayer is as necessary in the evening, as it was in the morning, for we have the same need of the Divine favour and care, to make the evening out-goings to rejoice, that we had to beautify those of the morning.

[1.] We must pray that our outward man may be under the care of God's holy angels, who are the ministers of his providence. God has promised, that he will give his angels charge concerning those who make the Most High their refuge, and that they shall pitch their tents round about them and deliver them; and what he has promised we may and must pray for; not as if God needed the service of the angels, or as if he did himself quit all the care of his people, and turn it over to them: but it appears by abundance of scripture proofs, that they are employed about the people of God, whom he takes under his special protection, though they are not seen, both for the honour of God, by whom they are charged, and for the honour of the saints with whom they are charged. It was the glory of Solomon's bed, that threescore valiant men were about it, of the valiant of Israel, all holding swords, because of fear in the night, Cant. iii. 7, 8. But much more honourably and comfortably are all true believers attended, for though they lie ever so meanly, they have hosts of angels surrounding their beds, and by the ministration of good spirits are preserved from malignant spirits. But God will for this be inquired of by the house of Israel; Christ himself must pray the Father, and he will send to his relief legions of angels, Matt. xxvi. 53. Much more reason have we to ask, that it may be given us.

[2.] We must pray, that our inward man may be under the influences of his Holy Spirit, who is the author and fountain of his grace. As public ordinances are opportunities in which the Spirit works upon the hearts of men, and, therefore, when we attend on them, we must pray for the Spirit's operations; so are private retirements; and, therefore, we must put up the same prayer, when we enter upon them. We find that in slumbering

upon the bed, God opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction, Job xxxiii. 15, 16. And with this, David's experience concurs. He found that God visited him in the night, and tried him, and so discovered him to himself, Ps. xvii. 3. And that God gave him counsel, and his reins instructed him in the night season, and so he discovered himself to him, Ps. xvi. 7. He found that was a proper season for remembering God, and meditating upon him; and in order to our due improvement of this proper season for conversing with God in solitude, we need the powerful and benign influences of the blessed Spirit, which, therefore, when we lie down we should earnestly pray for, and humbly put ourselves under, and submit ourselves to. How God's grace may work upon us when we are asleep, we know not; the soul will act in a state of separation from the body, and how far it does act independent of the body, when the bodily senses are all locked up, we cannot say, but are sure that the Spirit of the Lord is not bound: we have reason to pray, not only that our minds may not be either disturbed or polluted by evil dreams, in which for aught we know evil spirits sometimes have a hand, but may be instructed and quieted by good dreams, which Plutarch reckons among the evidences of increase and proficiency in virtue, and on which the good Spirit has an influence. I have heard of a good man, that used to pray at night for good dreams.

II. When we lay us down, our care and endeavour must be to lay us down in peace. It is promised to Abraham that he should go to his grave in peace, (Gen. xv. 15.) and this promise is sure to all his spiritual seed, for *the end of the upright man is peace*; Josiah dies in peace, though he is killed in a battle: now as an earnest of this let us every night lie down in peace. It is threatened to the wicked, that they shall lie down in sorrow, Isa. l. 11. It is promised to the righteous, that they shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid, Lev. xxvi. 6; Job xi. 19. Let us then enter into this rest, this blessed sabbatism, and take care that we come not short of it.

1. Let us lie down in peace with God; for without this there can be no peace at all; *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked*, whom God is at war with. A state of sin is a state of enmity against God; they who continue in that state are under the wrath and curse of God, and cannot lie down in peace; what have they to do with peace? Hasten therefore, (sinner,) hasten to make thy peace with God in Jesus Christ, by repentance and faith; take hold on his strength, that thou mayst make peace

with him; and thou shalt make peace, for fury is not in him. Conditions of peace are offered, consent to them; close with him who is our peace; take Christ upon his own terms, Christ upon any terms. Defer not to do this; dare not to sleep in that condition, in which thou darest not die. *Escape for thy life, look not behind thee.* Acquaint now thyself with him, now presently, and be at peace, and thereby this good shall come unto thee, thou shalt lie down in peace.

Sin is ever and anon making mischief between God and our souls, provoking God against us, alienating us from God, we, therefore, need to be every night making peace, reconciling ourselves to him and to his holy will, by the agency of his Spirit upon us, and begging of him to be reconciled to us through the intercession of his Son for us; that there may be no distance, no strangeness between us and God, no interposing cloud to hinder his mercies from coming down upon us, or our prayers from coming up unto him. *Being justified by faith,* we have this *peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ,* and then we may not only lie down in peace, but we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Let this be our first care, that God have no quarrel with us, nor we with him.

2. Let us lie down in peace with all men; we are concerned to go to sleep, as well as to die in charity. Those who converse much with the world can scarcely pass a day but something or other happens that is provoking, some affront is given them, some injury done them, at least they think so; when they retire at night and reflect upon it, they are apt to magnify the offence, and while they are musing on it the fire burns, their resentments rise, and they begin to say, *I will do so to him as he has done to me,* Prov. xxiv. 29. Then is the time of ripening the passion into a rooted malice, and meditating revenge; then, therefore, let wisdom and grace be set on work, to extinguish this fire from hell before it get head; then let this root of bitterness be killed and plucked up, and let the mind be disposed to forgive the injury, and to think well of, and wish well to him that did it. If others incline to quarrel with us, yet let us resolve not to quarrel with them. Let us resolve that whatever the affront or injury was, it shall neither disquiet our spirits nor make us to fret, which Peninnah aimed at in provoking Hannah, (1 Sam. i. 6.) nor sour or embitter our spirits, or make us peevish and spiteful: but that we still love ourselves, and love our neighbours as ourselves, and therefore not by harbouring malice, do any wrong to ourselves or

our neighbour. And we shall find it much easier in itself, and much more pleasant in the reflection, to forgive twenty injuries than to avenge one.

That it should be our particular care at night to reconcile ourselves to those who have been injurious to us, is intimated in that charge, (Eph. iv. 26) *Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.* If your passion has not cooled before, let it be abated by the cool of the evening, and quite disappear with the setting sun. You are then to go to bed, and if you lie down with these unmortified passions boiling in your breasts, your soul is among lions, you lie down in a bed of thorns, in a nest of scorpions. Nay, some have observed from what follows immediately, *Neither give place to the devil,* (ver. 27.) that those who go to bed in malice have the devil for their bed-fellow. We cannot lie down at peace with God, unless we be at peace with men; nor in faith pray to be forgiven, unless we forgive. Let us, therefore, study the things that make for peace, for the peace of our own spirits, by living as much as in us lies, peaceably with all men. I am for peace, yea, though they are for war.

3. Let us lie down in peace with ourselves, with our own minds, with a sweet composure of spirit and enjoyment of ourselves; *Return unto thy rest, O my soul,* and be easy; let nothing disturb my soul, my darling.

But when may we lie down in peace at night?

(1.) If we have by the grace of God in some measure done the work of the day, and filled it up with duty, we may then lie down in peace at night. If we have the testimony of our consciences for us, that *in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God,* we have this day *had our conversation in the world,* that we have done some good in our places, something that will turn to a good account; if our hearts do not reproach us with a *Diem perdidit,* alas! *I have lost a day;* or with that which is worse, the spending of that time in the service of sin, which should have been spent in the service of God; but if, on the contrary, we have abode with God, have been in his fear, and waited on him all the day long, we may then lie down in peace, for God says, *Well done, good and faithful servant;* and the sleep of the labouring man, of the labouring Christian, is sweet, is very sweet, when he can say, as I am a day's journey nearer my end, so I am a day's work fitter for it. Nothing will make our bed-chambers pleasant, and our beds easy, like the witness of the Spirit of God with our spirits,



that we are going forward for heaven; and a conscience kept void of offence, which will be not only a continual feast, but a continual rest.

(2.) If we have by faith and patience, and submission to the divine will, reconciled ourselves to all the events of the day, so as to be uneasy at nothing that God has done, we may then lie down in peace at night. Whatever has fallen out cross to us, it shall not fret us, but we will kiss the rod, take up the cross, and say, "All is well that God does." Thus we must in our patience keep possession of our own souls, and not suffer any affliction to put us out of the possession of them. We have met with disappointments in husbandry perhaps, in trade, at sea, debtors prove insolvent, creditors prove severe, but this and the other proceed from the Lord; there is a providence in it, every creature is what God makes it to be, and therefore I am dumb, I open not my mouth; that which pleases God ought not to displease me.

(3.) If we have renewed our repentance for sin, and made a fresh application of the blood of Christ to our souls for the purifying of our consciences, we may then lay us down in peace. Nothing can break in upon our peace but sin; that is it which troubles the camp; if that be taken away there shall no evil befall us. The inhabitant, though he be far from well, yet shall not say, I am sick, shall not complain of sickness, for the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity, Isa. xxxiii. 24. The pardon of sin has enough in it to balance all our griefs, and therefore to silence all our complaints. A man sick of the palsy has yet reason to be easy, nay, and to be of good cheer, if Christ says to him, *Thy sins are forgiven thee*; and *I am thy salvation*.

(4.) If we have put ourselves under the divine protection for the ensuing night, we may then lay us down in peace. If, by faith and prayer, we have run into the name of the Lord as our strong tower, have fled to take shelter under the shadow of his wings, and made the Lord our refuge and habitation, we may then speak peace to ourselves, for God in his word speaks peace to us. If David has an eye to the cherubim, between which God is said to dwell, when he says, (Ps. lvii. 1.) *In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge*; yet, certainly, he has an eye to the similitude which Christ makes use of, of a hen gathering her chickens under her wings, when he says, (Ps. xci. 4.) *He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust*; and the chickens under the wings of the hen are not only safe, but warm and pleased.

(5.) If we have cast all our cares for the day following upon God, we may then lay us down in peace. Taking thought for the morrow is the great hinderance of our peace in the night; let us but learn to live without disquieting care, and to refer the issue of all events to that God who may and can do what he will, and will do what is best for those that love and fear him; *Father, thy will be done*, and then we make ourselves easy. Our Saviour presses this very much upon his disciples, not to perplex themselves with thoughts what they shall eat and what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed, because their Heavenly Father knows that they have need of these things, and will see that they be supplied. Let us, therefore, ease ourselves of this burthen, by casting it on him who careth for us; what need he care and we care too?

III. Having laid ourselves down in peace, we must compose ourselves to sleep: *I will lay me down and sleep*. The love of sleep for sleeping sake is the character of the sluggard, but as it is nature's physic for the recruiting of its weary powers, it is to be looked upon as a mercy equal to that of our food, and in its season to be received with thankfulness.

And with such thoughts as these we may go to sleep:

1. What poor bodies are these we carry about with us, that call for rest and relief so often, that are so soon tired, even with doing nothing, or next to nothing. It is an honour to man above the beasts, *Os Homini sublime dedit—that he is made so erect*; it was part of the serpent's curse, *On thy belly shalt thou go*; yet we have little reason to boast of this honour, when we observe how little a while we can stand upright, and how soon we are burthened with our honour, and are forced to lie down. The powers of the soul, and the senses of the body, are our honour, but it is mortifying to consider, how after a few hours' use they are all locked up under a total disability of acting, and it is necessary they should be so. *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom*, or the *strong man in his strength*, since they both lie for a fourth part of their time utterly bereft of strength and wisdom, and on a level with the weak and foolish.

2. What a sad thing it is to be under the necessity of losing so much precious time as we do in sleep. That we should lie so many hours out of every four-and-twenty, in no capacity at all of serving God or our neighbour, of doing any work of piety or charity! Those who consider how short our time is, and what a great deal of work we have to do, and how fast the day of ac-

count hastens on, cannot but grudge to spend so much time in sleep, cannot but wish to spend as little as may be in it; cannot but be quickened by it to redeem time, when they are awake, and cannot but long to be there where there shall be no need of sleep, but they shall be as the angels of God, and never rest day or night from the blessed work of praising God.

3. What a good master do we serve, that allows us time for sleep, and furnishes us with conveniences for it, and makes it refreshing and reviving to us. By this it appears, the Lord is for the body, and it is a good reason why we should present our bodies to him as living sacrifices, and glorify him with them. Nay, sleep is spoken of as given by promise to the saints, (Ps. cxxvii. 2.) *So he giveth his beloved sleep.* The godly man has the enjoyment of that in a quiet resignation to God, which the worldly man labours in vain for, in the eager pursuit of the world. What a difference is there between the sleep of a sinner who is not sensible of his being within a step of hell, and the sleep of a saint that has good hopes, through grace, of his being within a step of heaven: that is the sleep God gives to his beloved.

4. How piteous is the case of those from whose eyes sleep departs, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, and to whom wearisome nights are appointed; who, when they lie down, say *When shall we arise?* and who are thus made a terror to themselves. It was said, that of all the inhuman tortures used by those whom the French king employed to force his Protestant subjects to renounce their religion, none prevailed more than keeping them by violence long waking. When we find how earnestly nature craves sleep, and how much it is refreshed by it, we should think with compassion of those, who upon any account want that and other comforts which we enjoy, and pray for them.

5. How ungrateful we have been to the God of our mercies, in suffering sleep, which is so great a support and comfort to us, to be our hinderance in that which is good. As when it has been the gratification of our sloth and laziness, when it has kept us from our hour of prayer in the morning, and disfitted us for our hour of prayer at night; or when we have slept unseasonably in the worship of God; as Eutychus, when Paul was preaching; and the disciples, when Christ was in his agony at prayer. How justly might we be deprived of the comfort of sleep, and upbraided with this as the provoking cause of it! *What! could ye not watch with me one hour?* Those who would sleep, and cannot, must think how often they should have kept awake, and would not.

6. We have now one day less to live, than we had in the morning. The thread of time is winding off apace, its sands are running down, and as time goes eternity comes; it is hastening on. Our days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle; which passes and repasses in an instant. And what do we of the work of time? What forwardness are we in to give up our account? O that we could always go to sleep with death upon our thoughts, how would it quicken us to improve time! It would make our sleep not the less desirable, but it would make our death much the less formidable.

7. To thy glory, O God, I now go to sleep; whether we eat or drink, yea, or sleep, for that is included in whatever we do, we must do it to the glory of God. Why do I go to sleep now, but that my body may be fit to serve my soul, and able for a while to keep pace with it in the service of God to-morrow? Thus common actions, by being directed toward our great end, are done after a godly sort, and abound to our account; and thus the advantages we have by them are sanctified to us. *To the pure all things are pure; and whether we wake or sleep, we live together with Christ,* 1 Thess. v. 10.

8. To thy grace, O God, and to the word of thy grace, I now commend myself. It is good to fall asleep with a fresh surrender of our whole selves, body, soul, and spirit, to God: now, *Return to God as thy rest, O my soul; for he has dealt bountifully with thee;* thus we should commit the keeping of our souls to him, falling asleep, as David did, (Ps. xxxi. 5.) with, *Into thy hands I commit my spirit;* and as Stephen did, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.* Sleep does not only resemble death, but is sometimes an inlet to it; many go to sleep and never wake, but sleep the sleep of death; which is a good reason why we should go to sleep with dying thoughts, and put ourselves under the protection of a living God, and then sudden death will be no surprise to us.

9. O that when I awake I may be still with God! that the parenthesis of sleep, though long, may not break off the thread of my communion with God, but that as soon as I awake I may resume it. O that when I wake in the night I may have my mind turned to good thoughts! may remember God upon my bed, who then is at my right hand, and to whom the darkness and the light are both alike; and that I may sweetly meditate upon him in the night watches; that thus even that time may be redeemed, and improved to the best advantage, which otherwise is in danger not only of being lost in vain thoughts, but misspent in ill ones.

O that when I awake in the morning, my first thoughts may be of God, that with them my heart may be seasoned for all day!

10. O that I may enter into a better rest than that which I am now entering upon! The Apostle speaks of a rest, which we that have believed do enter into, even in this world, as well as of a rest which in the other world remains for the people of God, Heb. iv. 3, 9. Believers rest from sin and the world; they rest in Christ, and in God through Christ; they enjoy a satisfaction in the covenant of grace, and their interest in that covenant; *This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell.* They enter into this ark, and there are not only safe but easy. Now, O that I might enjoy this rest while I live, and when I die might enter into something more than rest, even the joy of my Lord, a fulness of joy!

IV. We must do all this in a believing dependence upon God, and his power, providence, and grace. Therefore I *lay me down in peace*, and compose myself to sleep, because thou, Lord, keep-est me, and assurest me that thou dost so; *Thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety.* David takes notice of God's compassing his path, and his lying down, as his observer, Ps. cxxxix. 3. He sees his eye upon him when he is retired into his bed-chamber, and none else sees him; when he is in the dark, and none else can see him. Here he takes notice of him, compassing his lying down as his preserver; and sees his hand about him to protect him from evil, and keep him safe; feels his hand under him to support him, and to make him easy.

1. It is by the power of God's providence that we are kept safe in the night, and on that providence we must depend continually. It is he that preserveth man and beast, (Ps. xxxvi. 6.) that upholds all things by the word of his power. That death, which by sin entered into the world, would soon lay all waste, if God did not shelter his creatures from its arrows, which are continually flying about, we cannot but see ourselves exposed to it in the night. Our bodies carry about with them the seeds of all diseases. Death is always working in us; a little thing would stop the circulation either of the blood or the breath, and then we are gone; either never awake, or awake under the arrests of death. Men by sin are exposed to one another; many have been murdered in their beds, and many burned in their beds. And our greatest danger of all is from the malice of evil spirits, that go about seeking to devour.

We are very unable to help ourselves, and our friends unable to help us; we are not aware of the particulars of our danger,

nor can we foresee which way it will arise; and, therefore, know not where to stand upon our guard; or if we did, we know not how. When Saul was asleep, he lost his spear and his cruise of water, and might as easily have lost his head, as Sisera did when he was asleep, by the hand of a woman. What poor helpless creatures are we, and how easily are we overcome when sleep has overcome us! Our friends are asleep too, and cannot help us. An illness may seize us in the night, which, if they be called up and come to us, they cannot help us against; the most skilful and tender are *physicians of no value*.

It is therefore God's providence that protects us night after night, his care, his goodness. That was the hedge about Job, about him and his house, and all that he had round about, (Job i. 10.) a hedge that Satan himself could not break through, nor find a gap in, though he traversed it round. There is a special protection which God's people are taken under, they are hid in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle, under the protection of his promise, (Ps. xxvii. 5.) they are his own, and dear to him, and he keeps them as the apple of his eye, Ps. xvii. 8. He is round about them from henceforth and for ever, as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, Ps. cxxv. 2. He protects their habitations, as he did the tents of Israel in the wilderness; for he has promised to create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion *a cloud and smoke by day, to shelter from heat; and the shining of a flaming fire by night, to shelter from cold*, Isa. iv. 5. Thus he blesseth the habitation of the just, so that no real evil shall befall it, nor any plague come nigh it.

The care of the Divine Providence concerning us and our families we are to depend upon, so as to look upon no provision we make for our own safety sufficient, without the blessing of the divine Providence upon it; *Except the Lord keepeth the city, the watchman waketh but in vain*. Be the house ever so well built, the doors and windows ever so well barred, the servants ever so careful, ever so watchful, it is all to no purpose, unless he that keeps Israel, and neither slumbers nor sleeps, undertake for our safety; and if he be thy protector, *at destruction and famine thou shalt laugh, and shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace*, Job v. 22, 24.

2. It is by the power of God's grace that we are enabled to think ourselves safe, and on that grace we must continually depend. The fear of danger, though groundless, is as vexatious as if it were ever so just. And, therefore, to complete the mercy

of being made to dwell safely, it is requisite that, by the grace of God, we be delivered from our fears, (Ps. xxxiv. 4.) as well as from the things themselves that we were afraid of; that shadows may not be a terror to us, no more than substantial evils.

If, by the grace of God we are enabled to keep conscience void of offence, and still to preserve our integrity; if iniquity be put far away, and no wickedness suffered to dwell in our tabernacles, then shall we lift up our faces without spot, we shall be steadfast, and shall not need to fear, (Job xi. 14, 15.) for fear came in with sin, and goes out with it. *If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God*, and man too, and are made to dwell securely, for we are sure nothing can hurt us but sin: and whatever does harm us, sin is the sting of it; and, therefore, if sin be pardoned and prevented, we need not fear any trouble.

If, by the grace of God, we be enabled to live by faith; that faith which sets God always before us; that faith which applies the promises to ourselves, and puts them in suit at the throne of grace; that faith which purifies the heart, overcomes the world, and quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked one; that faith which realizes unseen things, and is the substance and evidence of them: if we be actuated and governed by this grace we are made to dwell safely, and to bid defiance to death itself, and all its harbingers and terrors: *O Death, where thy sting?* This faith will not only silence our fears, but will open our lips in holy triumphs, *If God be for us, who can be against us?*

Let us lie down in peace, and sleep, not in the strength of a natural resolution against fear, nor merely of rational arguments against it, though they are of good use, but in a dependence upon the grace of God to work faith in us, and to fulfil in us the work of faith. This is going to sleep like a Christian under the shadow of God's wings, going to sleep in faith; and it will be to us a good earnest of dying in faith; for the same faith that will carry us cheerfully through the short death of sleep, will carry us through the long sleep of death.

#### THE APPLICATION.

1. See how much it is our concern to carry our religion about with us wherever we go, and to have it always at our right hand; for at every turn we have occasion for it, lying down, rising up, going out, coming in; and those are Christians indeed, who confine not their religion to the new moons and the sabbaths, but

bring the influences of it into all the common actions and occurrences of human life. We must sit down at our tables and rise from them, lie down in our beds and arise from them, with an eye to God's providence and promise. Thus we must live a life of communion with God, even while our conversation is with the world.

And in order to this, it is necessary that we have a living principle in our hearts, a principle of grace, which, like a well of living water, may be continually springing up to life eternal, John iv. 14. It is necessary likewise that we have a watchful eye upon our hearts, and keep them with all diligence, that we set a strict guard upon their motions, and have our thoughts more at command than I fear most Christians have. See what need we have of the constant supplies of divine grace, and of a union with Christ, that by faith we may partake of the root and fatness of the good olive continually.

2. See what a hidden life the life of good Christians is, and how much it lies from under the eye and observation of the world. The most important part of their business lies between God and their own souls, in the frame of their spirits, and the workings of their hearts, in their retirements, which no eye sees but his, that is all eye. Justly are the saints called God's hidden ones, and his secret is said to be with them, for they have meat to eat, and work to do, which the world knows not of; and joys, and griefs, and cares which a stranger does not intermeddle with. *Great is the mystery of godliness.*

And this is a good reason why we should look upon ourselves as incompetent judges one of another, because, we know not each other's hearts, nor are witnesses to their retirements. It is to be feared, there are many whose religion lies all in the outside; they make a fair show in the flesh, and perhaps a great noise; and, yet, are strangers to this secret communion with God, in which consists so much of the power of godliness. And on the other hand it is to be hoped, there are many who do not distinguish themselves by any thing observable in their profession of religion, but pass through the world without being taken notice of, and yet converse much with God in solitude, and walk with him in the even, constant tenor of a regular devotion and conversation. *The kingdom of God comes not with observation.* Many merchants thrive by a secret trade, that make no bustle in the world. It is fit, therefore, that every man's judgment should proceed from the Lord, who knows men's hearts and sees in secret.



3. See what enemies they are to themselves, who continue under the power of a vain and carnal mind, and live without God in the world. Multitudes I fear there are, to whom all that has been said of secret communion with God is accounted as a strange thing, and they are ready to say of their ministers when they speak of it, *Do they not speak parables?* They lie down and rise up, go out and come in, in the constant pursuit either of worldly profits, or of sensual pleasures; but God is not in all their thoughts, not in any of them. They live upon him, and upon the gifts of his bounty from day to day, but they have no regard to him, never own their dependence on him, nor are in any care to secure his favour.

Those who live such a mere animal life as this, do not only put a great contempt upon God, but do a great deal of damage to themselves; they stand in their own light, and deprive themselves of the most valuable comforts that can be enjoyed on this side heaven. What peace can they have who are not at peace with God? What satisfaction can they take in their hopes, who build them not upon God, the everlasting foundation? Or in their joys, who derive them not from him, the fountain of life and living waters? O that at length they would be wise for themselves, and remember their Creator and Benefactor!

4. See what easy, pleasant lives the people of God might live, if it were not their own faults. There are those who fear God and work righteousness, and are accepted of the Lord, but go drooping and disconsolate from day to day, are full of cares and fears and complaints, and make themselves always uneasy; and it is because they do not live that life of delight in God, and dependence on him, that they might and should live. God has effectually provided for their dwelling at ease, but they make not use of that provision he has laid up for them.

O that all who appear to be conscientious, and are afraid of sin, would appear to be cheerful, and afraid of nothing else; that all who call God Father, and are in care to please him, and keep themselves in his love, would learn to cast all their other care upon him, and commit their way to him as to a Father. He shall choose our inheritance for us, and knows what is best for us, better than we do for ourselves. "Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me." It is what I have often said, and will abide by, "That a holy, heavenly life, spent in the service of God, and in communion with him, is the most pleasant, comfortable life anybody can live in this world."

5. See in this, what is the best preparation we can make for the changes that may be before us in our present state; and that is, to keep up a constant acquaintance and communion with God, to converse with him daily, and keep up stated times for calling on him, that so when trouble comes, it may find the wheels of prayer a going. And then may we come to God with a humble boldness and comfort, and hope to speed when we are in affliction, if we have been no strangers to God at other times, but in our peace and prosperity had our eyes ever toward him.

Even when we arrive to the greatest degree of holy security and serenity, and lie down most in peace, yet, still, we must keep up an expectation of trouble in the flesh. Our ease must be grounded not upon any stability in the creature; if it be, we put a cheat upon ourselves, and treasure up so much the greater vexation for ourselves. No, it must be built upon the faithfulness of God, which is unchangeable. Our Master has told us, *In the world you shall have tribulation*, much tribulation, count upon it, it is only in me that you shall have peace. But if every day be to us, as it should be, a sabbath of rest in God, and communion with him, nothing can come amiss to us any day, be it ever so cross.

6. See in this, what is the best preparation we can make for the unchangeable world, that is before us. We know God will bring us to death, and it is our great concern to get ready for it. It ought to be the business of every day, to prepare for our last day, and what can we do better for ourselves in the prospect of death, than, by frequent retirements for communion with God, to get more loose from that world which at death we must leave, and better acquainted with that world which at death we must remove to. By going to our beds as to our graves, we shall make death familiar to us, and it will become as easy to us to close our eyes in peace and die, as it used to be to close our eyes in peace and sleep.

We hope God will bring us to heaven; and by keeping up daily communion with God, we grow more and more meet to partake of that inheritance; and have our conversation in heaven. It is certain, all that will go to heaven hereafter, begin their heaven now and have their hearts there. If we thus enter into a spiritual rest every night, that will be a pledge of our blessed repose in the embraces of divine love, in that world wherein day and night come to an end, and we shall not rest day or night from praising him, who is and will be our eternal rest.

## MR. FLATMAN'S HYMN FOR THE MORNING.

Poems, p. 57.

**AWAKE, my soul! Awake my eyes,**  
**Awake, my drowsy faculties ;**  
**Awake, and see the new-born light**  
**Spring from the darksome womb of night.**  
**Look up and see th' unwearied sun,**  
**Already has his race begun ;**  
**The pretty lark is mounted high,**  
**And sings her matins in the sky.**  
**Arise, my soul, and thou my voice,**  
**In songs of praise early rejoice.**  
**O Great Creator, Heavenly King!**  
**Thy praises let me ever sing!**  
**Thy power has made, thy goodness kept**  
**This fenceless body while I slept ;**  
**Yet one day more hast given me,**  
**From all the powers of darkness free.**  
**O keep my heart from sin secure,**  
**My life unblamable and pure ;**  
**That when the last of all my days is come,**  
**Cheerful and fearless I may wait my doom.**

## HIS ANTHEM FOR THE EVENING, p. 58.

**SLEEP, downy sleep! Come close mine eyes,**  
**Tir'd with beholding vanities!**  
**Sweet slumbers, come and chase away**  
**The toils and follies of the day.**  
**On your soft bosom will I lie,**  
**Forget the world and learn to die.**  
**O Israel's watchful Shepherd, spread**  
**Tents of angels round my bed.**  
**Let not the spirits of the air,**  
**While I slumber, me insnare ;**  
**But save thy suppliant free from harms,**  
**Clasp'd in thine everlasting arms.**  
**Clouds and darkness is thy throne,**  
**Thy wonderful pavilion ;**  
**O dart from thence a shining ray,**  
**And then my midnight shall be day :**  
**Thus when the morn in crimson drest,**  
**Breaks through the windows of the east,**  
**My hymns of thankful praises shall arise,**  
**Like incense or the morning sacrifice.**

MR. WATTS' MORNING HYMN ; PS. XIX. 5, 8 ; LXXIII. 24, 25.

p. 63.

- 1 God of the morning, at whose voice  
The cheerful sun makes haste to rise,  
And like a giant doth rejoice,  
To run his journey through the skies.
- 2 From the fair chambers of the east  
The circuit of his race begins ;  
And without weariness or rest  
Round the whole earth he flies and shines.
- 3 O like the sun may I fulfil  
Th' appointed duties of the day,  
With ready mind and active will  
March on and keep my heavenly way !
- [4 But I shall rove and lose the race,  
If God my sun should disappear,  
And leave me in this world's wild maze  
To follow every wandering star.
- 5 Lord, thy commands are clean and pure,  
Enlighten our beclouded eyes,  
Thy threat'nings just, thy promise sure,  
Thy Gospel makes the simple wise.]
- 6 Give me thy counsels for my guide,  
And then receive me to thy bliss ;  
All my desires and hopes beside  
Are faint and cold, compar'd with this.

AN EVENING HYMN ; PS. IV. 8 ; III. 5, 6 ; CXLIII. 8.

- 1 Thus far the Lord has led me on,  
Thus far his power prolongs my days ;  
And every evening shall make known  
Some fresh memorial of his grace.
- 2 Much of my time has run to waste,  
And I perhaps am near my home ;  
But he forgives my follies past,  
He gives me strength for days to come.
- 3 I lay my body down to sleep,  
Peace is the pillow for my head,  
While well appointed angels keep  
Their watchful stations round my bed.

4 In vain the sons of earth or hell  
 Tell me a thousand frightful things,  
 My God in safety makes me dwell  
 Beneath the shadow of his wings.

[5 Faith in his name forbids my fear :  
 O may thy presence ne'er depart !  
 And in the morning make me hear  
 The love and kindness of thy heart.

6 Thus when the night of death shall come,  
 My flesh shall rest beneath the ground,  
 And wait thy voice to rouse my tomb,  
 With sweet salvation in the sound.]

A SONG FOR MORNING OR EVENING ; LAM. III. 23 ; ISA. XLV. 7.

1 MY God how endless is thy love !  
 Thy gifts are every evening new,  
 And morning mercies from above  
 Gently distil like early dew.

2 Thou spread'st the curtains of the night,  
 Great Guardian of my sleeping hours ;  
 Thy sovereign word restores the light,  
 And quickens all my drowsy powers.

3 I yield my powers to thy command,  
 To thee I consecrate my days ;  
 Perpetual blessings from thine hand  
 Demand perpetual songs of praise.



**THE**  
**COMMUNICANT'S COMPANION:**

**OR,**

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE RIGHT RECEIVING**

**OF THE**

**LORD'S SUPPER.**

**BY THE**

**REV. MATTHEW HENRY.**



## TO THE READER.

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I **HERE** humbly offer you, Christian reader, some assistance in that great and good work, which you have to do, and are concerned to do well, when you attend the table of your Lord ; a work in which I have observed most serious people desirous of help, and willing to use the helps they have ; which I confess was one thing that invited me to this undertaking.

I offer this service with all due deference and respect to the many excellent performances of this kind, with which we are already blessed, done by far better hands than mine ; who yet have not so fully gathered in this harvest, but that those who come after may gather up plentiful gleanings, without robbing their sheaves :—“ Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room ; ” room enough to enlarge upon a subject so copious, and of so great a compass that it cannot be exhausted.

I do this also with a just sense of my own unworthiness, and unfitness to bear the vessels of the Lord, and to do any service in his sanctuary. Who am I, and what is my father's house, that I should have the honour to be “ a door-keeper in the house of my God,” to show his guests the way to his table ? And that I should be employed thus to “ hew wood and draw water for the congregation of the Lord ? ” I reckon it true preferment, and “ by the grace of God,” his free grace, “ I am what I am.” It is service which is its own recompense, work which is its own wages. In helping to feed others, we may feast ourselves ; for our Master hath provided that the mouth of the ox be not muzzled when he treads out the corn. For my part, I would not exchange the pleasure of converse with the Scriptures and divine things, for all “ the delights of the sons and daughters of men, and the peculiar treasures of



kings and provinces." It was a noble saying of the Marquis of Vico, "Let their money perish with them, who esteem all the wealth of this world worth one hour's communion with God in Jesus Christ."

In doing this, I hope I can truly say, my desire and design is to contribute something to the faith, holiness, and joy of those who in this ordinance have given up their names to the Lord Jesus. And if God, by his grace, will make this endeavour in some degree serviceable to that end, I have what I wish, I have what I aim at; and it will not be the first time that praise hath been "perfected and strength ordained out of the mouths of babes and sucklings."

In this essay I have an eye particularly to that little handful of people among whom I have been (in much weakness) ministering in these holy things seventeen years; during all which time, through the good hand of our God upon us, we have never once been disappointed of the stated solemnities, either of our new moons, or of our Sabbaths. As I designed my Scripture Catechism, and the other little one that followed it, to be a present, and perhaps ere long it may prove my legacy, to the young ones, the lambs of the flock; so I recommend this to the adult, and leave it with them, being desirous that the sheep we are charged to feed, "may go in and out, and find pasture." And I earnestly wish, that both these may prove successful expedients to preserve some of those things they have been taught from being quite forgotten; and that, after my decease, they and theirs will have those things always in remembrance.

And lastly, I send this abroad under the protection and blessing of heaven; with a hearty prayer to God to forgive whatever is mine, that is, what is amiss and defective in the performance; and graciously to accept what is his own, that is, whatever is good and profitable; hoping that, if God pardon my defects and infirmities, my friends also will overlook them; and that, if he favourably accept my endeavours through Christ, they also will accept them; for truly it is the height of my ambition to approve myself

A faithful servant to Christ and souls,

MATTHEW HENRY.

CHESTER, *June 21st, 1704.*

THE  
COMMUNICANT'S COMPANION.

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CHAPTER I.

THE NAMES BY WHICH THIS ORDINANCE IS USUALLY  
CALLED.

- I. WE call it the Sacrament; that is, a sign and an oath. II. The Lord's Supper; a supper, our Lord's Supper. III. The Communion; having in it communion with Christ, and with the universal church. IV. The Eucharist; Christ in the institution of it gave thanks, and we in the participation. V. The Feast; a royal feast, a marriage feast, a feast of memorial, a feast of dedication, a feast upon a sacrifice, and a feast upon a covenant.

IN discoursing of this great and solemn ordinance, which every serious Christian looks upon with a peculiar regard and veneration, 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.

I. We call it *the* sacrament.—This is the name we commonly give it, but improperly, because it doth 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 improve, 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 it is an oath.

1. It 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 eye; and in it God uses similitudes,

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, which 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 a world of spirits; and, 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, which are represented by them. That things merely sensible may not improve the advantage they have from our present state wholly to engross our thoughts and cares, in compassion to our infirmity, spiritual things are in this ordinance made in a manner sensible.

Let us, therefore, rest contented with this sign which Christ hath appointed, in which he is "evidently set forth crucified among us," and not think it can be any honour to him, or advantage to ourselves, but, on the contrary, a dishonour to him, and 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 wilfully 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," so our seeing and receiving bread and wine, if therein we see and receive not Christ crucified, is dead also.

2. It is an oath.—That is the ancient signification of the word "sacrament." The Romans called the oath which 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, acknowledging 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, 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; and in this ordinance we make such an appeal as Peter did: "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." An oath is an imprecation of God's wrath upon ourselves, if we deal falsely, and wilfully prevaricate; and 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."

Let us, therefore, according to the character of a virtuous man, fear this oath; not fear to take it, for it is our duty, with all possible solemnity, to oblige ourselves to the Lord; but fear to break it, for oaths are not to be jested with. God hath said it, and hath sworn it by himself: "Unto me every tongue shall swear." But he hath also said, that we must swear to him "in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness;" and having 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 teacheth men to make conscience of an oath; much more doth the Christian religion teach us to make conscience of this oath, to which God is not only a witness, but a party.

II. We call it the Lord's Supper, and very properly, for so the Scripture calls it, (1 Cor. xi. 20,) where 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."

1. It is a supper.—A supper is a stated meal for the body; this is so for the soul, which stands in as much need of its daily bread as the body doth. Supper was then accounted the principal meal; this ordinance is so among Christ's friends, and in his family it is the most solemn entertainment. It is called a supper, because it was first instituted in the evening, and at the close of the passover supper; which, though it tie not us always to 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." This glorious discovery was reserved for us, "upon whom the ends of the world are come." 2nd, That comfort in Christ is intended for those only that dwell in God's house, and for those only that have done the work of the day in its day, according as the duty of every day required. They only that 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 a hireling our day," and come home at night.

2. It is the Lord's Supper, the Lord Christ's Supper.—The apostle, in his discourse concerning this ordinance, (1 Cor. xi. 23, &c.) all along calls Christ "the Lord," and seems to lay an emphasis upon it; for as the ordaining of this sacrament was an act of his dominion, and as Lord of his church he appointed it; so, in receiving this sacrament we own his dominion, and acknowledge him to be our Lord. This also puts an honour upon the ordinance, and makes it look truly great; however to a carnal eye it hath 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, gives the entertainment. In it we feed upon Christ, for he is the bread of life; 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 doth us the honour 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. If we receive not Christ Jesus the Lord here, we have the supper, but not the Lord's Supper.

III. We call it the Communion, the holy communion, and fitly do we call it so: for,

1. In this ordinance we have communion with Christ, our Head.—“Truly our fellowship is with him.” 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 supposeth union; this fellowship supposeth friendship; for, “can two walk together except they be agreed?” 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, concern him in all the concerns of our happiness; and concern ourselves in all the concerns of his glory.

2. In this ordinance we have communion with the universal church, “even with all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.”—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, Christ, the bread of life,” signified and communicated in this sacramental bread. All true Christians, though they be many, yet they are one;

and we express our consent to and complacency 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, 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 each other in place, of distinct societies, different attainments, and divers apprehensions 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." 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?

IV. We call it the Eucharist; so the Greek church called it, and we from them. It signifies a *thanksgiving*, and it is so called,

1. 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;" 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." Though our Saviour, when he instituted the sacrament, had a full prospect of his approaching sufferings, with all their aggravations, yet he was not thereby indisposed for 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 which, even before he took the field, he did in this ordinance divide the spoils among his followers, and "gave gifts unto men."

2. 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 atonement Christ himself offered once for all, and it must not, it cannot be repeated; but sacrifices of acknowledgment Christians must offer daily, that is, "the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." 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; at which time Christ chose to institute this sacrament, 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 hath done for us; let us remember that thanksgiving is the business of the ordinance, and let that turn our complaints into praises; for, whatever matter of complaint we find in ourselves, in Christ we find abundant matter for praise, and that is the pleasant subject upon which, in this ordinance, we should dwell.

V. We call it the Feast, the Christian feast.—Christ "our passover being sacrificed for us," in this ordinance we keep the feast. (1 Cor. v. 8.) They that communicate are said to feast with us. This name, though not commonly used, yet it 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; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." 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," so is this for spiritual joy; the wine here 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?"

Let us see what kind of a feast it is.

1. 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." 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, gather yourselves together to the supper of the great God;" and that must needs be a great supper. The wisest of kings introduceth Wisdom herself as a queen or princess making this feast: "Wisdom hath killed her beasts, and mingled her wine." 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. He is a King that comes in to see the guests, and therefore we are concerned to behave ourselves well.

2. It is a marriage feast; it is a feast made by a King, at the marriage of his Son: so our Saviour represents it, not only to speak exceeding rich and sumptuous, and celebrated with extraordinary expressions of joy and rejoicing, but because the covenant here sealed between Christ and his church is a marriage-covenant, such a covenant as makes two one; 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." "That was the day of his espousals, the day of the gladness of his heart." 2nd, The actual espousals of believing souls to Christ are here solemnized, and that agreement ratified: "My beloved is mine, and I am his." The soul that renounces all other lovers that 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." 3rd, A pledge and earnest 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, 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," are the wedding garments: "Put on Christ, put on the new man," these are the wedding garments. In these we must, with our lamps in our hands, as the wise virgins, go forth, with all due observance, to attend the royal bridegroom.

3. It 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 keep it a feast to the Lord,—a feast by an ordinance for ever." 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, that the truth of it, being confirmed by this traditional evidence, might never be questioned; and 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, and instituted in the close of the passover supper, (as coming in the room 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."

4. It 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 dedica-

tion of the house of God with joy." In the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, we dedicate ourselves to God as living temples; temples of the Holy Ghost, separated from every thing that is common and profane, and entirely devoted to the service and honour 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 hath done for David his servant, and for Israel his people."

5. It 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 of it was given back to the offerer; on which he and his family and his friends feasted with joy. Hence we read of Israel after the flesh eating the sacrifices, and so partaking of the altar: "Behold Israel after the flesh. Are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" That is, in token of their partaking of the benefit of the sacrifice, and their joy therein. And 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 being "once offered, perfected for ever them which are sanctified;" 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." That is, we give consent to and take complacency in the method which infinite Wisdom hath taken of justifying and saving us by the merit and mediation of the Son of God incarnate. 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.

6. It 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 federal 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 reconciliation 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." His enemies hungering, he thus feeds them; thirsting, he thus gives them drink; which if, like coals of fire heaped upon their heads, it 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.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE NATURE OF THIS ORDINANCE.

**I.** It is a Commemorating Ordinance, in remembrance of the person of Christ, as an absent friend, and of the death of Christ, as an ancient favour. Hereby we preserve the memory of it in the church, and revive the remembrance of it in our hearts. **II.** It is a Confessing Ordinance; we profess our value and esteem for Christ crucified, and our dependence upon and confidence in Christ crucified. **III.** It is a Communicating Ordinance; Christ and all his benefits are here communicated to us, and are here to be received by us. **IV.** It is a Covenanting Ordinance; it is the New Testament, and the new covenant, opened distinctly; God seals to us to be to us a God, and we seal to him to be to him a people.

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?" and they were directed what answer to give to that inquiry. 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, and we eat and drink together in a solemn religious manner, with an eye to a divine institution, as our warrant 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; and 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? And what must we aim at in the observation of it?

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

I. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper is a commemorating ordinance. This explanation our Lord himself gave of it, when he said, "Do this in remembrance of me." Do it for my memorial. Do it for a remembrance of me. In this ordinance he hath recorded his name for ever, and this is his memorial throughout all generations.

We are to do this,

1. 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; it is usual likewise to drink to one another, remembering such a friend that is absent. Jesus Christ is our beloved and our friend, the best friend that ever our souls had; he is now absent, he hath left the world, and is gone to the Father, and the heavens must contain him till 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? a friend that is our near and dear relation; "bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, and not ashamed to call us brethren?" a friend in covenant with us, who puts more honour upon us than we deserve, when he calls us his servants, and yet is pleased to call us friends? a friend that hath so wonderfully signalized his friendship, and commended his love? He hath done that for us which no friend we have in the world did or could do for us; he hath laid down his life for us, when the redemption of our souls

was grown so precious as otherwise to have ceased for ever. 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 for us? He is gone, but he is gone upon our business; as the forerunner he is for us entered; 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 name of all his spiritual Israel on his breast-plate, near his heart, within the veil?

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;" 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 remembered us, will never forget us? Shall not his name be written in indelible characters upon the tables of our heart, who hath graven us upon the palms of his hands? Surely we must continually remember our Judge and Lord, when, behold, the Lord is at hand, and the Judge standeth before the door. Thus must we show him forth till he come; for he comes quickly.

2. We are to do this in the remembrance of the death of Christ, as an ancient favour 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, (Exod. xii. 42, margin,) which intimateth 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," 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." Here we remember the dying of the Lord Jesus: that is,

(1.) We endeavour 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.

(2.) We endeavour to revive and incite the remembrance of it in our own hearts.—This ordinance was intended “to stir up our pure minds,” (our impure minds we have too much reason to call them,) “by way of remembrance,” 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.

1st. This 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; but 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 labour after a clearer insight into the mystery of our redemption by the death of Christ; for, if we be ignorant of this, and rest in false and confused notions of it, we are unworthy to wear the Christian name, and to live in a Christian nation.

2nd. It 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, 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 tragical; but pious and devout affections



are best kindled by the consideration of Christ's dying as a propitiation for our sins, and the Saviour 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.

3rd. 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 Christ and the fellowship of his sufferings," and we all, by our baptism, are in profession "planted together in the likeness of his death." Then 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, and 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;" when, in "touching the hem of his garment," we find, like that good woman, virtue comes out of him to heal our souls, then we rightly remember Christ crucified.

II. It is a confessing ordinance.—If the heart believe 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 which the professors of it 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, leaves no such indelible character on the body: but the Lord's Supper is a solemnity by which we constantly avow the Christian name, and declare ourselves not ashamed of the banner of the cross under which we were enlisted, but resolve to continue Christ's faithful servants and soldiers to the end of our lives, according to our baptismal vow.

In the ordinance of the Lord's Supper we are said to show forth the Lord's death, (1 Cor. xi. 26,) that is,

1. We hereby profess our value and esteem for Christ crucified: "Ye 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 foolish-

ness, because the doctrine of man's justification and salvation by it was not agreeable to their philosophy. The wisdom of this world, and the princes of it, judged it absurd to expect salvation by one that died a captive, and honour by one that died in disgrace; and 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 every one 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 any thing else Christians should 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 politicians thought it had been the interest of Christ's followers to have concealed their Lord's death, and that they should have endeavoured 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.

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: and 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, man saved by it; then is the reproach of it rolled away for ever.

2. We hereby 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 to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him," and as willing as he is able; and making 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 conse-

quence, our eternal weal or woe depends upon the right management of them: now we hereby solemnly declare, that having laid them near our own hearts in a serious care about them, we choose to lodge them in the Redeemer's hands by a judicious faith in him, for which we can give a good reason. God having declared himself well pleased in him, 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, as the sole Referee of the great cause, and the sole Trustee of the great concern, "knowing whom we have believed, even one who is able and faithful to keep what we have committed to him against that day," 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 Lord, and we own ourselves to be his subjects, and put ourselves under his government; we confess that he is a skilful 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 every thing. 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 God unto salvation to all them that believe," and having found it so to ourselves.

III. It is a communicating ordinance: here are not only Gospel truths represented to us, and confessed by us; but Gospel benefits offered to us, and accepted by us; for it is not only a faithful saying, but well worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus died to save sinners. This is the explication which 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," which 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, which 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 as in 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, and 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.

Unworthy receivers, that is, those who resolve to continue in sin, because grace hath abounded, 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. What they do speaks such ill thoughts of Christ, that we may conclude, that if they had been at Jerusalem when he was put to death, they would have joined with those that cried, "Crucify him! crucify him!"

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 virtually in them.

1. 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; 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: 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.

2. 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 unto thy servant according to it." We hereby interest ourselves in Christ's mediation between God and man, and take the benefit of it according to the tenor of the everlasting Gospel. Christ, in this ordinance, is graciously condescending to show us the print of the nails, and the mark of the spear, to show us his pierced hands, 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!" 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, 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 fulness 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, are nourished "up in the words of faith and of good doctrine," till we all come to the perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of

Christ. Thus it is our communion with, and communicating of, Christ's body and blood.

IV. It is a covenanting ordinance.—This cup, our Saviour tells us, (that is, this ordinance,) is the New Testament; not only pertaining to the New Testament, but containing it; it hath the whole New Testament in it, and has the sum and substance of it. It is, in general, an instrument by which a right passeth, and is conveyed; and a title to some good thing given. The Gospel revelation of God's grace and will is both a testament and a covenant, and the Lord's Supper hath a reference to it as both.

1. It is the New Testament.—The everlasting Gospel is Christ's last will, by which he hath 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 of 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 show it unto you." 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: so that 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.

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 by this seal and pleadable, is hereby given into the hands of every believer, that he may have strong consolation. 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 hath charged us to remember him, hath charged us to follow him whithersoever he goes; he hath charged us to love one another; and the estate he hath left us is so devised, as not to give any occasion to quarrel, but rather to be a bond of union. He hath 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 hath likewise charged us to expect and prepare for his second coming: his word of command is, "Watch." Now, in the Lord's Supper, we are reminded of this charge, and bound afresh faithfully to observe whatsoever Christ hath commanded, as the Rechabites kept the command of their father.

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, who will not deal unfaithfully with us; for, as Christ tells us, "we know him." 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. These are good securities, and upon which we may with abundant satisfaction rely; and yet our Lord Jesus, "more abundantly to show the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, hath confirmed it by an oath," (by a sacrament, which is his oath to us, as well as ours to him,) "that by all those immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation," that have ventured our all in the New Testament.

2. It is the new covenant.—Though God is our sovereign Lord and owner, and we are in his hand as the clay in the hand of the potter; 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." Salvation is the great promise of the covenant, believing in Christ the great condition of the covenant. Now, this cup is the covenant, that is, it is the seal of the covenant. There seems to be an allusion to that solemnity, 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 hath said we will do, and will be obedient. And then Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it upon the people, (part of it having before been sprinkled upon the altar,) and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." 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, 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, when by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, he doth in this sacrament sprinkle it upon the people; as the apostle explains this mystery. (Heb. ix.) 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." 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." This ordinance, therefore, was instituted to assure us that God will never forget it, and to assist us that we may never forget it. It is the seal of the new covenant; that is,

1. God doth 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, which 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. What God is in himself, he will be to them for their good. His wisdom theirs, to counsel and direct them; his power theirs, to protect and support them; his justice theirs, to justify them; his holiness theirs, to sanctify them; his good-



ness theirs, to love and supply them; his truth is the inviolable security of the promise, and his eternity the perpetuity of their happiness. He 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 hath said, that "he is married to them, and rejoiceth in them as the bridegroom in his bride." The Lord is their shepherd, and the sheep of his pasture shall not want. He is the portion of their inheritance in the other world, as well as of their cup in this; he hath prepared for them a city, and thereby "is not ashamed to be called their God."

2. We do in and by this ordinance seal 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, and only, and for ever thine." And this is the meaning of this service.

## CHAPTER III.

## AN INVITATION TO THIS ORDINANCE.

**ALL** things are ready, (opened in many particulars,) therefore come. I. Those that are unmeet for this ordinance must qualify themselves and come; a serious address to such in three things. II. Those that are in some measure meet for it must enter themselves. Young people reasoned with in four questions; those who are cold and indifferent, put upon considering two things; those that are timorous, counselled and encouraged in two things. III. Those that have given up themselves to God in this ordinance must be constant; this largely urged.

PLENTIFUL and suitable provision is made in this ordinance out of the treasures of the Redeemer's grace; and ministers, as servants, are sent to bid to the feast, to invite those that the Master of the feast hath designed for his guests, and to hasten those that are invited to this banquet of wine. Wisdom hath sent forth her maidens on this errand, and they have words put in their mouths: "Come, for all things are now ready." This is our message.

I. We are to tell you that all things are ready, now ready; he that hath 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, that knows its own nature and interest, and desires to be truly and eternally happy in the love and favour of its Creator.

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

1. There is a house ready for the entertainment of the guests, the Gospel church, Wisdom's house, which she hath built upon seven pillars. God hath set up his tabernacle among men, and the place of his tent is enlarged, and made capacious enough; so that though the table has been replenished with guests, yet still there is room.

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 canon 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;" come and wash in it, that, being purged from an evil conscience by the blood of Jesus, 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 portion of meat in due season, rightly dividing the word of truth." They are not masters of the feast, but only stewards, and "your servants for Christ's sake."

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. 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." God's ear is open to hear, and his hand open to give.

8. The provision is ready for your entertainment.

(1.) All things are ready: (i.) For our justification—divine justice is satisfied, an everlasting righteousness is brought in, an act of indemnity hath passed the royal assent, and a throne of grace is erected, at which all that can make it appear that they are interested in 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." (ii.) For our sanctification. There is a fulness 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. (iii.) 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 obviate every grief, every challenge, every fear, if we will use it. (iv.) 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 receive us. The many mansions are ready prepared for us: "All things are ready."

(2.) All things are now ready, just now; for, "Behold, now is the accepted time."

(i.) All things are now readier than they were under the law. Grace then lay more hid than it doth 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.

(ii.) 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 probation are numbered and finished, and he that now saith, "Come for a blessing," will say, "Depart with a curse."

II. We must call you to come: this is now the call, "Come, come." "The Spirit saith, Come; and the bride saith, Come." 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: 1. Those who are utterly unmeet for this ordinance, must be exhorted to qualify themselves, and then come. 2. Those who, through grace, are in some measure meet for this ordinance, must be exhorted speedily to enter themselves. 3. Those who have entered themselves, must be exhorted to be constant in their attendance upon it.

1. 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.

Dost thou live a carnal wicked life, in the service of sin and Satan, without fear, and without God in the world? Light is come into the world, and dost thou love darkness rather, not knowing nor desiring to know the way of the Lord, and the judgment of thy God? Art thou a drunkard, a swearer, a Sabbath-breaker? Art thou an adulterer, fornicator, or unclean person? Art thou a liar, a deceiver, a railer, or a contentious person? Art thou a mere drudge to the world, or a slave to any base lust? Doth thy own conscience tell thee thou art the man, or would it not tell thee so, if thou wouldst suffer it to deal faithfully with thee?

(1.) Know, then, that thou hast no part nor lot in this matter; whilst thou continuest thus, thou art not an invited guest to this feast; the servants dare not bid thee welcome, for they know the Master will not, but will ask thee, "Friend, how camest thou in thither? What hast thou to do to take God's covenant and the seal of it into thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction?" Read that scripture, and hear God speaking to thee in it: "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs." Thou art forbidden to touch these sacred things with thine unhallowed hands; for "what communion hath Christ with Belial?" If thou thrust thyself upon this ordinance, whilst thou continuest under such a character, instead of doing honour to the Lord Jesus, thou puttest a daring affront upon him, as if he were altogether such a one as thyself; instead of deriving any true comfort to thy own soul, thou dost but aggravate thy guilt and condemnation; thy heart will be more hardened, thy conscience more seared, Satan's strongholds more fortified, and thou eatest and drinkest judgment to thyself, not discerning the Lord's body, nor putting a difference between this bread and other bread; but trampling under foot the blood of the covenant, as a profane and common thing.

(2.) Know also, that thy condition is very miserable whilst thou debarrest thyself from this ordinance, and art, as polluted, put from this priesthood. How light soever thou mayest make of it, this is not a small portion of thy miseries, that thou shuttest thyself out of covenant and communion

with the God that made thee ; and, in effect, disclaimest any interest in the Christ that bought thee, as if thou hadst taken the devils' words out of their mouths, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?" And if thou persist in it, so shall thy doom be ; thou thyself hast decided it. If now it be as nothing to thee, to be separated from the sheep of Christ, and excluded from their green pastures ; yet it will be something shortly, when thou shalt accordingly have thy place among the goats, and thy lot with them for ever. Thou thinkest it no loss now to want the cup of blessing, because thou preferrest the cup of drunkenness before it ; but what dost thou think of the cup of trembling, that will ere long be put into thy hand if thou repent not ? Thou hast no desire to the wine of the love of God, but rather chooseth the puddle water of sensual pleasures ; but canst thou "drink of the wine of the wrath of God," which shall be poured out without mixture in the presence of the Lamb ? Thou thinkest thyself easy and happy, that thou art not under the bonds and checks of this ordinance ; but dost thou not see thyself extremely miserable, whilst thou hast no right to the blessings and comforts of this ordinance ? If there were not another life after this, thou mightest have some colour for blessing thyself thus in thine own wicked way ; (and yet, if so, I should see no cause to envy thee ;) but, wretched soul, "what wilt thou do in the day of visitation ?" Thou that joinest thyself with the sinners in Zion, and chooseth them for thy people, "canst thou dwell with devouring fire ? Canst thou inhabit everlasting burnings ?" May God by his grace open thine eyes, and give thee to see thy misery and danger before it be too late !

(3.) Yet know, that though thy condition is very sad, it is not desperate. Thou hast space yet given thee to repent, and grace offered thee. O refuse not that grace, slip not that opportunity ! Leave thy sins, and turn unto God in Christ ; cast away from thee all thy transgressions, make thee a new heart, begin a new life, forsake the foolish, and live to some purpose, and go in the way of understanding : and then, in Wisdom's name, I am to tell thee, that, notwithstanding all thy former follies, thou art welcome to her house, welcome to her table, freely welcome to "eat of her

bread, and to drink of the wine which she hath mingled." "Now at least, now at last, in this thy day, know the things that belong to thy peace;" be wise for thyself, be wise for thine own soul, and cheat not thyself into thine own ruin.

Poor sinner! I pity thee, I would gladly help thee; the Lord pity thee and help thee! He will, if thou wilt pity thyself, and help thyself. Wilt thou be persuaded by one that wishes thee well, to exchange the service of sin, which is perfect slavery, for the service of God, which is perfect liberty? to exchange the base and sordid pleasures of a sensual life, which level thee with the beasts, for the pure and refined pleasures of a spiritual and divine life, which will raise thee to a communion with the holy angels? I am confident thou wilt quickly find it a blessed change. "Awake, shake thyself from the dust, loose thyself from the bands of thy neck." Give up thyself in sincerity to Jesus Christ, and then come and feast with him: thou shalt then have in this ordinance the pledges of his favour, assurances of thy reconciliation to him, and acceptance with him; and all shall be well, for it shall end everlastingly well.

2. I must next apply myself to those who, having a competent knowledge in the things of God, and making a justifiable 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, give the hand unto the Lord;" so the Hebrew phrase is: 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.

Let me direct this exhortation to young people that were in their infancy baptized into the Christian faith, and have been well educated in the knowledge of God and of his holy ways, and are now grown up to years of discretion, are capable of understanding what they do, of discerning between their right hand and their left in spiritual things, and of choosing and refusing for themselves accordingly; and that have had some good impressions made upon their souls by divine

things, and some good inclinations towards God, and Christ, and heaven: such are invited to the table of the Lord, and called upon to come; for all things are now ready, and it is not good to delay.

You that are young, will you now be prevailed with to be serious, and resolved for God? You now begin to act with reason, and to put away childish things; you are come to be capable of considering, and you are thinking how you must live in this world. O that I could prevail with you to think first how you may live for another world! I am not persuading you to come rashly and carelessly to the Lord's table, as when you were little children you went to church for fashion's sake, and because your parents took you with them; but I am persuading you now, in the days of your youth, from a deep conviction of your duty and interest, and a serious concern about your souls and eternity, intelligently, deliberately, and with a fixed resolution, to join yourselves unto the Lord in an everlasting covenant, and then to come and seal that covenant at his table. You are now come to the turning time of life, to those years when ordinary people fix for their whole lives; I beg of you for Christ's sake, and for your own precious souls' sake, that now you will turn to God, and fix for him, and set your faces heavenwards.

Come, and let us reason together a little, and I beseech you to reason with yourselves:

(1.) Are you not by baptism given up unto the Lord? Are not the vows of God already upon you? Is not your baptism your honour? Is it not your comfort? It is so; but you are unworthy of that honour, unworthy of that comfort, if, when you arrive at a capacity for it, you decline doing that for yourselves, which was done for you when you were baptized. How can you expect that your parents' dedication of you to God then should avail you anything, if you do not now make it your own act and deed? Might not your backwardness to confirm the covenant, by this solemn taking of it upon yourselves, be construed as an implicit renunciation of it, and be adjudged a forfeiture of the benefit of it? I believe you would not for a world disclaim your baptism, nor disown the obligation of it: you will not, I am confident you will not, throw off your Christianity, nor join with those that say, "We have no part in David, or inheritance in the



Son of David." Come then and ratify your baptism ; either let these articles be cancelled, or, now that you are of age, come and seal them yourselves ; either be Christians complete, Christians by your own consent, or not Christians at all. The matter is plain ; the bonds of both the sacraments are the same : you are under the bonds of the one, which I know you dare not renounce ; therefore, come under the bonds of the other. Consider, take advice, and speak your minds.

(2.) How can you dispose of yourselves better now in the days of your youth, than to give up yourselves to the Lord ? These are your choosing days ; you are now choosing other settlements, in callings, relations, and places of abode ; why should you not now close this settlement in the service of God, which will make all your other settlements comfortable ? Choose you, therefore, this day, whom you will serve, —God, or the world ; Christ, or the flesh ; and be persuaded to bring the matter to a good issue ; determine the debate in that happy resolution to which the people of Israel came, when they said, "Nay, but we will serve the Lord." Why should not he, who is the first and the best, have the first and the best of your days ? Which I am sure you cannot bestow better, and which it is both your duty and interest to bestow thus.

(3.) What will you get by delaying it ? You intend some time or other solemnly to give up yourselves unto the Lord in this ordinance, and you hope then to receive the benefit and comfort of it : but the tempter tells you, "It is all in good time ;" and you dismiss your convictions, as Felix did Paul, with a promise, that "at a more convenient season" you will send for them. You are ready to say, as the people did, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built:" you think you must build your own first. And what comes of those delays ? Satan, ere you are aware, gets advantage by them, and cheats you of all your time, by cheating you of the present time ; your hearts are in danger of being hardened, the Spirit of grace may hereby be provoked to withdraw, and strive no more ; and what will become of you, if death surprise you before your great work be done ?

(4.) What better provision can you make for a comfortable

life in this world, than by doing this great work betimes? You are setting out in a world of temptations more than you think of; and how can you better arm yourselves against them, than by coming up to that fixed resolution which will silence the tempter, "Get thee behind me, Satan?" When Naomi saw that Ruth was "steadfastly resolved, she left off speaking to her." The counsel of the ungodly will not be so apt to court you to the way of sinners and the seat of the scornful, when you have avowed yourselves set out in the way of God, and seated already at the table of the Lord. You are launching forth into a stormy sea, and this will furnish you with ballast; your way lies through a vale of tears, and therefore you have need to be well stocked with comforts: and where can you stock yourselves better than in this ordinance, which seals all the promises of the new covenant, and conveys all the happiness included in them?

And now, shall I gain this point with young people? Will they be persuaded betimes to resolve for God and heaven? "Remember thy Creator," remember thy Redeemer, "in the days of thy youth;" and then it is to be hoped thou wilt not forget them, nor will they forget thee, when thou art old.

Let me address this exhortation to those whose inclinations are good, and their conversation 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 are 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; 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, and the things that remain are ready to die; 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, and it grieves them to bring it to

their mouth again," 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," (cometh in this ordinance to espouse you to himself; stir up yourselves, and) "go ye forth to meet him." Hear, ye servants, ye slothful servants, your Master's voice, "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?" Is it not high time to awake out of sleep, and apply thyself more closely and vigorously to the business of a Christian? Is it not far in the day with thee, perhaps the sixth hour, or further on; and yet hast thou no appetite to this spiritual feast to which thou art invited? Thou hast lost a great deal of time already; shouldst not thou now think of redeeming time for thy soul and eternity? And how can that be better done, than by improving such advantageous opportunities as sacraments are? Hear that call to careless and trifling professors, as if thou thyself wert called by name in it: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

(1.) Consider what an affront you put upon the Lord Jesus, while you live in the neglect of this ordinance; you contemn his authority, who hath given this command to all his disciples, (and among them you reckon yourselves,) "Do this in remembrance of me." 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, or suffer your children to be, 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: this appointment, you think, might have been spared; that is, you think yourselves wiser than Christ. You likewise hereby put a great slight upon the grace and love of Christ, which hath made such rich

provision for you, and given you so kind an invitation to it.

This is excellently well urged in the public form of invitation to the holy communion, which warns those that are scandalous to keep off, in these words: "If any of you be a blasphemer of God, a hinderer or slanderer of his word, an adulterer, or be in malice or envy, or in any other grievous crime; repent you of your sins, or else come not to that holy table; lest, after the taking of that holy sacrament, the devil enter into you, as he entered into Judas, and fill you full of all iniquities, and bring you to destruction of both body and soul."

But the other exhortation stirs up those that are negligent, in these words: "Ye know how grievous and unkind a thing it is, when a man hath prepared a rich feast, decked his table with all kind of provision, so that there lacketh nothing but the guests to sit down, and yet they who are called (without any cause) most unthankfully refuse to come. Which of you in such a case would not be moved? Who would not think it a great injury and wrong done unto him? Wherefore, most dearly beloved in Christ, take ye good heed, lest ye, withdrawing yourselves from this holy supper, provoke God's indignation against you. It is an easy matter for a man to say, 'I will not communicate, because I am otherwise hindered with worldly business;' but such excuses are not so easily accepted and allowed before God. If any man say, 'I am a grievous sinner, and therefore am afraid to come;' wherefore then do you not repent and amend? When God calleth you, are ye not ashamed to say ye will not come? When ye should return to God, will you excuse yourselves, and say you are not ready? Consider earnestly with yourselves, how little such feigned excuses will avail before God. They that refused the feast in the Gospel, because they had bought a farm, or would try their yokes of oxen, or because they were married, were not so excused, but counted unworthy of the heavenly feast."

(2.) 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; and, in such a case, while you lament the want of it, and 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 thy hands. "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it;" yet thou deniest thine own soul that which would nourish and cherish it, and thereby showest how little thou lovest it. If thou didst duly attend on this ordinance, and improve it aright, thou wouldst find it of unspeakable use to thee for the strengthening of thy faith, the exciting of holy affections in thee, and thy furtherance in every good word and work. So that to thy neglect of it thou hast reason to impute all thy weakness, and all the strength and prevalency of thy temptations; all the unsteadiness of thy resolutions, and all the unevenness of thy conversation. How can we expect the desired end, while we persist in the neglect of the appointed means?

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 you, and make you 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 offence be his defence? You think you are not serious enough, nor devout enough, nor regular enough, in your conversations, 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? 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.

ness. Say not, "I am too light, airy, too much addicted to sports and pleasures; I am linked too close in vain and carnal company, or plunged too deep in worldly care and business, and therefore I must be excused from attending this ordinance;" for this is to make ill worse: but rather say, "It is necessary I come to the Lord's Supper, and come in a right manner; my soul withers and languishes, dies and perishes, if I do not; and therefore I must break off this vain and sensual course of life, which unfits me for and indisposes me to that ordinance; I must disentangle myself from that society, and disengage myself from that encumbrance, whatever it is, which cools pious affections, and quenches the coal." Shake off that, whatever it is, which comes between you and the comfort and benefit of this ordinance; trifle no longer in a matter of such vast moment, but speedily come to that resolution: "Depart from me, ye evil-doers, and evil doings; for I will keep the commandment of my God."

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 timorous, 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;" 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 judgment to themselves." 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, which should not be made sad. We are commanded to "strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees; to say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong; fear not." But wherewith shall we comfort such, whose souls many times refuse to be comforted. If we tell them of the infinite mercy and good-

ness 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, hath forgotten them, their God hath forsaken them, and utterly separated them from his people. "As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart."

But O 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:—

(1.) 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, and yet hath nothing;" so it is a disquieting mistake, common among the children of God, to think their spiritual state and condition to be bad, when it is very good; for "there is that maketh himself poor, and yet hath great riches." But it is a mistake which, I hope, by the grace of God, may be rectified: and 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 labour after, and of which we ought not to deny ourselves the comfort, when God by his grace hath 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 "think as a child, and speak as a child." Blessed Paul himself had not yet attained, nor was already perfect. Gold in the ore is truly valuable, though it be not yet refined from its dross. "Despise not the day of small things," for God doth not. Deny not that power and grace which hath brought you out of the land of Egypt, though you be not yet come to Canaan.

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 that see Christ's beauty. "The child that cries is as sure alive as the child that laughs." Complaints of spiritual burdens are the language of the new nature, as well as praises for spiritual blessings.

Drooping soul, thou art under grace, and not under the law; and therefore judge of thyself by the measures of grace, and not by those of the law. Thou hast to do with one that is willing to make the best of thee, and will accept the willingness of the spirit, and pardon the weakness of our flesh. Take thy work before thee, therefore, and let not the penitent, humble sense of thy own follies and corruptions eclipse the evidence of God's graces in thee, nor let the diffidence of thyself shake thy confidence in Christ. Thank God for what he has done for thee: let him have the praise of it, and then thou shalt have the joy of it. And this is certain, either thou hast an interest in Christ, or thou mayest have. If thou doubt, therefore, whether Christ be thine, put the matter out of doubt, by a present consent to him: I take Christ to be mine, wholly, only, and for ever mine: Christ upon his own terms, Christ upon any terms.

(2.) 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 which we meet with in Scripture, delivered by angels, began with, "Fear not;" and particularly that to the women who attended Christ's sepulchre: "Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus." 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, 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 clamours with that, "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 that 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 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 the 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 savour 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, and 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, 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; he is empty, and therefore he will take no food; he is faint, and therefore he will take no cordials. 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 confirming of good resolutions: in God's name, therefore, use it for these purposes; pine not away in thy weakness, while God has ordained thee strength: perish not for hunger, while there is bread.

enough in thy Father's house, and to spare; die not for thirst, while there is a well of water by thee.

III. 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 allow 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 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,

1. How powerful the engagements are which 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, "Do this, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." 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 law of Moses prescribed how oft the passover must be celebrated, under very severe penalties; but the Gospel being a dispensation of a greater love and liberty, only appoints us to observe its passover oft, and then leaves it to our own ingenuity and pious affections to fix the time, and determine how oft. If a deliverance out of Egypt merited an annual commemoration, surely our redemption by Christ merits a more frequent one, especially since we need not go up to Jerusalem to do it. If this tree of life, which bears more than twelve manner of fruits, yieldeth her fruit to us every month, I know not why we should neglect it any month. Where there is the truth of grace, this ordinance ought to be improved, which, by virtue of divine appointment, has a moral influence upon our growth in grace. 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 which are

sanctified," 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 sins in this defective state, they 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.

While we are often labouring 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 and 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, than which nothing can be more affecting to a Christian, nor more proper to raise and refine the thoughts; it is a subject that more than once has made the disciples' "hearts to burn within" them.

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. It is a token of Christ's favour 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." And an honest mind will not startle at assurances.

2. 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?

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 thy excuse? Weigh it in the balances of the sanctuary then, and consider, is any business more necessary than the doing of thy duty to God, and the working out of thine own salvation? Thou art careful and troubled about many things; but is not this the one thing needful, to which every thing else should be obliged to give way? Dost thou not think thy worldly business would prosper and succeed the better for thy care about the main matter? If it were left whilst thou comest hither to worship, mightest thou not return to it with greater hope to speed in it? And dost thou not spare time from thy business for things of much less moment than this? Thou wilt find time, as busy as thou art, to eat and drink, and sleep, and converse with thy friends; and is not the nourishment of thy soul, its repose in God, and communion with him, much more necessary? I dare say, thou wilt own it is.

If indeed thou canst not allow so much time for solemn secret worship in preparation for this ordinance, and reflection upon it, as others do, and as thou thyself sometime hast done, and wouldst do, yet let not that keep thee from the ordinance; thy heart may be in heaven, when thy hands are about the world; and 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, 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.

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

Perhaps some unhappy quarrels, with some relations or with neighbours, some vexatious lawsuit 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 has ought against thee," that is, if thy conscience tell thee that thou art the party offending, do not therefore leave the altar, but "leave thy gift before the altar," as a pawn for thy return, and go first and "be reconciled to thy brother," by confessing thy fault, begging his pardon, and making satisfaction for the wrong done, and then be sure to "come and offer thy gift." But, on the other hand, "if ye have ought against any," if thou 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 lawsuit 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. If the true reason of your absenting yourselves so often from the Lord's Supper be, that you are not willing to take that 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, and your works are not found filled up before God." It is a sad sign of spiritual decay, and it is time for thee to "remember whence thou art fallen, and to repent, and do thy first works." Time was, when thou hadst a dear love to this ordinance, when thou longedst for the returns of it, and it was to thee "more than thy necessary food: such was the kindness of thy youth, such the love of thine espousals:" 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, you now end in the flesh." 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?" 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."

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.

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 for ever.

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. It is better to be lamenting and longing in the want of ordinances, than loathing in the fulness of them.

## CHAPTER IV.

## HELPS FOR SELF-EXAMINATION BEFORE WE COME TO THIS ORDINANCE.

WHAT it is to examine ourselves, illustrated in six similitudes, particularly six questions to be put to ourselves. I. What am I? Four inquiries by which to find out what our spiritual state is; two directions what to do thereupon. II. What have I done? Twelve questions to be put to ourselves, to bring to remembrance, and directions thereupon. III. What am I doing? In two things. IV. What ground do I get? Four questions by which to try our growth in grace. V. What do I want? What grace? What comfort? VI. What shall I resolve to do? In two things.

How earnest soever 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." It must be done, but it must be done with great caution and consideration. Bounds must be set 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 in a due order," that is, we must "stir up ourselves to take hold on him."—"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." Those that labour under such an habitual indisposition to communion with God, and are liable to many actual discomposures, as we are conscious of to ourselves, have need to take pains with their hearts, 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 which 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." 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; upon that condition, and with that preparation, "I will wash my hands in innocency, so will I compass thine altar." In this method we must proceed.

"Let a man examine himself,"—signifies either to prove, or to approve; and appoint such an approbation of ourselves as is the result of a strict and close probation; 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;" so as to appeal to God's inquiry, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me."

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, "sit alone, and keep silence;" we must retire into our bosoms, and consider ourselves, reflect upon ourselves, inquire concerning ourselves, enter into a solemn conference with our own souls, and be inquisitive concerning our state. Those who are ignorant, and cannot do this, or careless and secure, and will not do it, are unmeet for this ordinance.

I shall illustrate this by some similitudes.

1. We must examine ourselves, as metal is examined by the touchstone whether it be right or counterfeit. We have a show of religion; but are we what we seem to be? Are we current coin, or only washed over, as "a potsherd covered with silver dross?" Hypocrites are reprobate silver. True Christians, when they are tried, come forth as gold. The word of God is the touchstone by which we must try ourselves. Can I through grace answer the characters which the Scriptures give of those whom Christ will own and save? It is true, the best coin has an alloy which will be allowed for in this state of imperfection; but the question is, Is it sterling?—is it standard? Though I am conscious to myself there are remainders of a baser metal, yet is love to God the predominant principle? Are the interests of Christ the prevailing interest in my soul, above those of the world and

the flesh? I bear God's image and superscription: is it of God's own stamping? Is it upon an honest and good heart? It is a matter of great consequence, and in which it is very common but very dangerous to be imposed upon, and therefore we have need to be jealous over ourselves. When we are bid to try the spirits, it is supposed we must begin with our own, and try them first.

2. We must examine ourselves, "as a malefactor is examined by the magistrate," that we may find out what we have done amiss. We are all criminals; that is readily acknowledged by each of us, because it is owned to be the common character: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." We are all prisoners to the divine justice, from the arrests of which we cannot escape, and to the processes of which we lie obnoxious: being thus in custody, that we may not be judged by the Lord, we are commanded to judge ourselves. We must inquire into the particular crimes we have been guilty of, and their circumstances, that we may discover more sins, and more of the evil of them, than first we are aware of: dig into the wall as Ezekiel did, and see the secret abominations of your own hearts; look further, as he did, and you will see more and greater. The heart is deceitful, and has many devices, many evasions, to shift convictions; we have therefore need to be very particular and strict in examining them, and to give them that charge which Joshua gave to Achan, when he had him under examination: "Give glory unto the God of Israel, and make a confession unto him; tell me now what thou hast done, hide it not from me."

3. We must examine ourselves, as a copy is examined by the original to find out the *errata*, that they may be corrected. As Christians, we profess to be "the epistles of Christ," to have his law and love transcribed into our hearts and lives; but we are concerned to inquire, whether it be a true copy, by comparing ourselves with the Gospel of Christ, whether our affections and conversations be conformable to it, and such as become it. How far do I agree with it, and where are the disagreements? What mistakes are there? What blots and what omissions? That what hath been amiss may be pardoned, and what is amiss may be rectified. In this examination faith must read the

original, and then let conscience read the copy, and be sure that it read true, because there will shortly be a review.

4. We must examine ourselves, as a candidate is examined that stands for preferment. Inquiry is made into his fitness for the preferment he stands for; we are candidates for heaven, the highest preferment, to be to our God kings and priests. We stand for a place at the wedding feast. Have we on the wedding garment? Are we made meet for the inheritance? What knowledge have we? What grace? Are we skilled in the mystery we make profession of? What improvement have we made in the school of Christ? What proficiency in divine learning? What testimonials have we to produce? Can we show the seal of the Spirit of promise? If not, we shall not be welcome.

5. We must examine ourselves, as a wife is examined of her consent to the levying of a fine for the confirming of a covenant. It is a common usage of the law. A covenant is to be ratified between God and our souls in the Lord's Supper. Do we freely and cheerfully consent to that covenant, not merely through the constraint of natural conscience, but because it is a covenant highly reasonable in itself, and unspeakably advantageous to us? Am I willing to make this surrender of myself unto the Lord? Am I freely willing, not because I cannot help it, but because I cannot better dispose of myself? We must examine ourselves as Joshua examined the people, whether they could choose to serve the Lord or not; and the product of the inquiry must be a fixed resolution, like theirs, "Nay, but we will serve the Lord."

6. We must examine ourselves, as a way-faring man is examined concerning his business. Our trifling hearts have need to be examined as vagrants, whence they come, whither they go, and what they would have; we are coming to a great ordinance, and are concerned to inquire, What is our end in coming? What brings us thither? Is it only custom or company that draws us to this duty? or is it a spiritual appetite to the dainties of heaven? Our hearts must be catechized, as Elijah was: "What dost thou here, Elijah?" That we may give a good account to God of the sincerity of our intentions in our approaches to him, we

ought, before we come, to call ourselves to an account concerning them.

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 ground do I get? What do I want? and, What shall I resolve to do?"

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 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 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 are unsanctified. This is a distinction which divides all mankind, and which 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 favour 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 to-morrow,) 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 undoubt-

edly 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 thee to inquire: no, it is thy life, thy precious life, the life of thy soul, thine eternal life, which depends upon it. Multitudes have been deceived in this matter, whose ways seemed right, but the end of it proved the ways of death; and 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; and 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?"

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: 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.

Therefore, that I may consider, in some measure, what my spiritual state is, let me seriously inquire,

1. What choice have I made?—Have I chosen God's favour for my felicity and satisfaction, or the pleasures of sense, and the wealth of this world? Since I came to be capable of acting for myself, and discerning between my right hand and my left, have I made religion my deliberate choice? Have I chosen God for my portion, Christ for my Master, the Scripture for my rule, holiness for my way, and heaven for my home and everlasting rest? If not, how can I expect to have what I never chose? If my covenant with the world and the flesh, (which certainly amounts to a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell,) be still in force, and never yet broken, never yet disannulled, what have I to do to take God's covenant and the seal of it into my mouth? But if I have refused Satan's offers of the kingdom of this world, and the glory of them, and given the preference to the Gospel offer of a kingdom in the other world, and the glory of that, I have reason to bless the

Lord who gave me that counsel, and to hope that he, who hath directed me to choose the way of truth, will enable me to "stick to his testimonies."

2. What change have I experienced?—When I ask, Am I a child of wrath, or a child of love? I must remember that I was by nature a child of wrath. Now, can I witness to a change? Though I cannot exactly tell the time and manner, and the steps of that change, yet "one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Though, in many respects, it is still bad with me, yet, thanks be to God, it is better with me than it has been. Time was, when I minded nothing but sport and pleasure, or nothing but the business of this world; when I never seriously thought of God and Christ, and my soul and another world: but now it is otherwise; now I see a reality in invisible things. I find an alteration in my care and concern; and now I ask more solicitously, "What shall I do to be saved?" than ever I asked, "What shall I eat, or what shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed?" Time was, when this vain and carnal heart of mine had no relish at all of holy ordinances, took no delight in them, called them a task and a weariness. But now it is otherwise; I love to be alone with God, and though I bring little to pass, yet I love to be doing in his service. If I have indeed experienced such a change as this, if this blessed turn be given to the bent of my soul, grace, free grace, must have the glory of it, and I may take the comfort of it. But if I have not found any such work wrought in my heart; if I am still what I was by nature,—vain, and carnal, and careless; if Jordan runs still in the old channel, and was never yet driven back before the ark of the covenant; I have reason to suspect the worst by myself. If all go one way without struggle or opposition, it is to be feared it is not the right way.

3. What is the bent of my affections?—The affections are the pulse of the soul. If we would know its state, we must observe how that pulse beats. How do I stand affected to sin? Do I dread it as most dangerous, loathe it as most odious, and complain of it as most grievous? Or do I make a light matter of it, "as the madman that casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, and saith, Am not I in sport?" Which lies heavier, the burden of sin, or the

burden of affliction ; and of which am I most desirous to be eased ? What think I of Christ ? How do I stand affected to him ? Do I love him, and prize him as the fairest among ten thousand ? Or hath he in mine eyes no form nor comeliness, and is he no more than another beloved ? How do I stand affected to the word and ordinances ? Are God's tabernacles amiable with me, or are they despicable ? Am I in God's service as in my element, as one that calls it a delight ? Or am I in it as under confinement, and as one that calls it a drudgery ? How do I stand affected to good people ? Do I love the image of Christ whenever I see it, though it be in rags, or though not in my own colour ? Do I honour them that fear the Lord, and choose his people for my people in all conditions ? Or do I prefer the gaities of the world before the beauties of holiness ? How do I stand affected to this world ? Is it under my feet, where it should be ; or in my heart, where Christ should be ? Do I value it, and love it, and seek it with a prevailing concern ? Or do I look upon it with a holy contempt and indifference ? Which have the greater command over me, and which, in my account, have the most powerful and attractive charms ; those riches, honours, and pleasures that are worldly, or those that are spiritual and divine ? How do I stand affected to the other world ? Do I dread eternal misery in a world of spirits, more than the greatest temporal calamities here in this world of sense ? Do I desire eternal happiness in a future state, more than the highest contentments and satisfactions to which this present state can pretend ? Or are the things of the other world, though sure and near, looked upon as doubtful and distant, and consequently little ? By a close prosecution of such inquiries as these, with a charge to conscience, in God's name, to make a true answer to them, we may come to know our own selves.

4. What is the course and tenor of our conversations ?—The tree is known by its fruits. Do I work the works of the flesh, or bring forth the fruits of the Spirit ? The apostle gives us instances of both. Be not deceived yourselves, neither let any man deceive you : " He that doeth righteousness is righteous." And the surest mark of uprightness is, keeping ourselves from our own iniquity. Do I allow

myself in any known sin, under the cloak of a visible profession? Dare I, upon any provocation, swear or curse, or profane God's holy name, and therein speak the language of His enemies? Dare I, upon any allurements, to please my appetite, or please my company, drink to excess, and sacrifice my reason, honour, and conscience, to that base and brutish lust? Dare I defile a living temple of the Holy Ghost by adultery, fornication, uncleanness, or an act of lasciviousness? Dare I tell a lie for my gain or reputation? Dare I go beyond or defraud my brother in any matter, cheat those I deal with, or oppress those I have advantage against? Dare I deny relief to the poor that really need it, when it is in the power of my hand to give it? Dare I bear malice to any, and study revenge? If so, I must know that these are not the spots of God's children. If this be the life I live, I am certainly a stranger to the life of God. But if, upon search, my own heart tells me that I keep myself pure from these pollutions, and "herein exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards man;" if I have respect to all God's commandments, and make it my daily care in every thing to frame my life according to them, and to keep in the fear of God every day, and all the day long; and wherein I find I am defective, and come short of my duty, I repent of it, and am more watchful and diligent for the future: I have reason to hope, that though I have not attained, neither am already perfect, yet there is a good work begun in me, which shall be performed unto the day of Christ.

Thus we must examine our spiritual state; and, that the trial may come to an issue, we must earnestly pray to God to discover us unto ourselves, and must be willing to know the truth of our case: and the result must be this:—

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 matter 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." Rest not, therefore, in thy former faint purposes and feeble efforts; but consider more seriously than ever the concerns of thy soul. Pray more seriously than ever for the sanctifying grace of God; put forth thyself more vigorously than ever to



improve that grace; resolve more firmly than ever to live a holy life; and depend more closely than ever upon the merit and strength of Jesus Christ: and I hope thou wilt 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, and not hearken to the tempter when he would disturb our peace, and hinder our progress, by calling it in question. Though we must always abase ourselves, and be jealous over ourselves, yet we must not derogate from the honour of God's grace, nor deny its work in us. God keeps us all, both from deceiving ourselves with groundless hopes, and from disquieting ourselves with groundless fears.

II. 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. 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." But if we cover them, we cannot prosper. Not that we can, by our confession, inform God of any thing He did not know before, as earthly princes are informed by the confessions of criminals; but this, we must give glory to God, and 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." It is not enough to say, as Saul, "I have sinned;" but we must say, as David, "I have sinned, and done this evil;" as Achan, "I have sinned, and thus and thus have I done." 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." 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 generals.

It is therefore necessary, in order to a particular confession of sin, that we "search and try our ways;" 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 any thing. The putting of this question is

spoken of as the first step towards repentance: "No man repenteth him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?" 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?" 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 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, of every week, the day's work, the week's work should be reviewed. It is one of the richest of Pythagoras' golden verses, wherein, though a heathen, he adviseth his pupil, every night before he sleeps, to go over the actions of the day, and revolve them three times in his mind, asking himself seriously these questions:—"Wherein have I transgressed? What have I done? What duty hath been omitted?" The oftener it is done, the easier it is done: even reckonings make long friends. 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, 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.

To give some assistance in this inquiry, I shall instance some heads of it. Let the interrogatories be such as these:—

1. How have I employed my thoughts?—Hath God been in all my thoughts? It is well if he has been in any. When I awake, am I still with him? Or am I not still with the world and the flesh? When I should have been contemplating the glory of God, the love of Christ, and the great things of the other world, hath not my heart been with the fool's eyes in the ends of the earth, "following after lying vanities, and forsaking mine own mercies?" How seldom have I thought seriously, and with any fixedness, on spiritual and divine things! I set myself sometimes to meditate, but I soon break off abruptly, and this treacherous heart starts aside like a broken bow, and nothing that is good is brought to any head; but how have vain and vile

thoughts lodged within me, gone out and come in with me, lain down and risen up with me, and crowded out good thoughts! Have not the "imagination of the thoughts of my heart" been evil, only evil, and that continually?

2. How have I governed my passions?—Have they been kept under the dominion of religion and right reason? Or have they not grown intemperate and headstrong, and transgressed due bounds? Have not provocations been too much resented, and made too deep an impression? Hath not my heart many times been hot within me, too hot; so that its heat hath consumed the peace of my own mind, and the love I owe my brother? Hath not anger rested in my bosom? Have not malice and uncharitableness, secret enmities and antipathies, been harboured there, where love and peace should have reigned and given law?

3. How have I preserved my purity?—Have I possessed my vessel in sanctification and honour, or am I not conscious to myself of indulging the lust of uncleanness? If, by the grace of God, I have kept my body pure, yet hath not my spirit been defiled by impure thoughts and affections? I have made a covenant with mine eye not to look and lust, but have I made good that covenant? Have I in no instance transgressed the laws of chastity in my heart, and modesty in my behaviour? Let this inquiry be made with a strict guard upon the soul, lest that which should not be named among Christians, be thought of without that just abhorrence and detestation which becometh saints.

4. How have I used my tongue?—It was designed to be my glory, but has it not been my shame? Hath not much corrupt communication proceeded out of my mouth, and little of that which is good, which might either manifest grace, or minister grace? Have not I sometimes spoken unadvisedly, and said that in haste which at leisure I could have wished unsaid? Have not I said that by which God's great name hath been dishonoured, or my brother's good name reproached, or my own exposed? If, for every idle word that I speak, I must give account to God, I had best call myself to an account for them, and I shall find innumerable evils compassing me about.

5. How have I spent my time?—So long as I have lived in the world, to what purpose have I lived? What improvement have I made of my days for doing or getting good? It

is certain I have lost time ; have I yet begun to redeem it, and to repair those losses ? How many hours have I spent that might have been spent much better ! There is a duty which every day requires ; but how little of it has been done in its day !

6. How have I managed my worldly calling ?—Have I therein abode with God, or have I not in many instances of it wandered from him ? Have I been just and fair in all my dealings, and spoken the truth from my heart ? Or have I not sometimes dealt deceitfully in bargaining, and said that which bordered upon a lie ? Hath not fleshly wisdom governed me more than that simplicity and godly sincerity which becomes an Israelite indeed ? Have I no wealth got by vanity, no unjust gain, no blot of that kind cleaving to my hand ?

7. How have I received my daily food ?—Have I never transgressed the law of temperance in meat and drink, and so made my table my snare ? Have not God's good gifts been abused to luxury and sensuality, and the body, which by the sober use of them should have been fitted, by the excessive use of them been unfitted to serve the soul in the service of God ? Have I not eaten to myself, and drunk to myself, when I should have eaten and drunk to the glory of God ?

8. How have I done the duty of my particular relations ?—The word of God hath expressly taught me my duty as a husband, a wife, a parent, a child, a master, a servant ; but have I not in many things failed of my duty ? Have not I carried myself disrespectfully to my superiors, disdainfully to my inferiors, and disingenuously to my equals ? Have I given to each that which is just and right, and rendered to all their dues ? Have I been a comfort to my relations, or have I not caused grief ?

9. How have I performed my secret worship ?—Have I been constant to it, morning and evening ; or have I not sometimes omitted it, and put it by with some frivolous excuse ? Have I been conscientious in it, and done it with an eye to God ; or have I not kept it up merely as a custom, and suffered it to degenerate into a formality ? Have I been lively and serious in secret prayer and reading ; or have I not rested in the outside of the performance, without any close application and intention of mind in it ?

10. How have I laid out what God has given me in the world?—I am but a steward; have I been faithful? Have I honoured the Lord with my substance, and done good with it; or have I wasted and misapplied my Lord's goods. Hath God had his dues, my family and the poor, their dues, out of my estate? What should have been consecrated to piety and charity, hath it not been either sinfully spared, or sinfully spent?

11. How have I improved the Lord's day, and the other helps I have had for my soul?—I enjoy great plenty of the means of grace; have I grown in grace in the use of those means, or have I not received the grace of God therein in vain? Have I "called the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable;" or have I not snuffed at it, and said, "When will the Sabbath be gone?" How have I profited by sermons and sacraments, and the other advantages of solemn assemblies? Have I received and retained the good impressions of holy ordinances; or have I not lost them, and let them slip?

12. How have I borne my afflictions?—When providence had crossed me, and frowned upon me, what frame have I been in, repining or repenting? Have I submitted to the will of God in my afflictions, and patiently accepted the punishment of my iniquity; or have I not striven with my Maker, and quarrelled with his disposals? When mine own foolishness hath perverted my way, hath not my heart fretted against the Lord? What good have I gotten to my soul by my afflictions? What inward gain by outward losses? Hath my heart been more humbled and weaned from the world; or have I not been hardened under the rod, and trespassed yet more against the Lord?

Many such queries might be instanced, but these may suffice for a specimen. Yet it will not suffice to put these questions to ourselves, but we must diligently observe what return conscience, upon an impartial search, makes to them. We must not do as Pilate did, when he asked our Saviour, "What is truth?" but would not stay for an answer. No, we must take pains to find out what hath 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 to

that grace, and let the testimony of conscience for us be our rejoicing. "If our hearts condemn us not, then we have confidence towards God."

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 follows there. "Wherein I have done iniquity, I will do so no more."

III. Inquire, What am I doing?—When we have considered what our way hath been, it is time to consider what it is. "Ponder the path of thy feet."

1. What am I doing in the general course of my conversation?—Am I doing any thing for God, for my soul, for eternity; any thing 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, "He that will not labour, let him not eat."

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; in a right manner, and for right ends? 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? 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.

IV. Inquire, What ground do I get?—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, and “he that hath clean hands will be stronger and stronger.” 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 sensible 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. But do I see more and more reason for my religion? Am I more strongly convinced of its certainty and excellency, so as to be able, better than at first, to “give a reason of the hope that is in me?” My first love was able to call religion a comfortable service; was my after light better able to call it a reasonable service? I was extremely surprised, when, at first, “I saw men as trees walking;” but, am I now better satisfied, when I begin to see all things more clearly? Am I, through God's grace, better rooted? or am I, through my own folly, still as a “reed shaken with the wind?”

2. Do I find my corrupt appetites and passions more manageable; or are they still as violent and headstrong as ever? Doth the house of Saul grow weaker and weaker, and

its struggles for the dominion less frequent and more feeble? If so, it is a good sign the house of David grows stronger and stronger. Though these Canaanites are in the land, yet do they not make head as they have done, but are under tribute? then the interests of Israel are getting ground. 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 it is not so hard a thing to me as it had 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 hath "begun the good work, is carrying it on." But if nothing be done towards the suppressing of these rebels, towards the weeding out of these "roots of bitterness which spring up and trouble us;" though we lament them, yet we do not prevail against them; it is to be feared we stand at a stay, or go back.

3. Do I find the duties of religion more easy and pleasant to me; or am I still as unskilful and unready in them as ever? Do I go dexterously 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 service; or do I, like the man David, cheerfully answer, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek;" and so enter into that within the veil? 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 this word 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? If, through grace, we are got above the fear of death, by reason of which many weak and trembling Christians are all their life-time subject to bondage, and can truly say, "We desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better," it is certain we are getting ground, though we have not yet attained it.

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 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 hath 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, whilst thou art with him."

V. 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. It concerns us, therefore, when we come to an audience, which is as a spiritual market, to consider what we have occasion for, 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?"—or that which Christ put to the blind men, "What will ye that I shall do unto you?"

"Grace and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ," 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, it concerns us to inquire what particular grace and comfort we need, that we may, by faith and desire, reach forth towards that in a special manner.

1. What grace do I most want?—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 must 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 doth 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? 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? 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 covenant adapted to them, which, in this ordinance, we must, in a particular manner, apply to ourselves, and claim the benefit of it, 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.” “I will put my law in your hearts,” “and my fear,” and many such like. And we know who hath said, “My grace is sufficient for thee.”

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 oft disquieting to me: O for the comfort of a sealed pardon! The power of corruption is very discouraging: O 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:” O for the comfort of clear and unclouded evidences! I am sometimes tempted to say, “The Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me:” O that he would seal to my soul that precious promise, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee!” But my greatest trouble arises from the sense of my own weakness, and tendency to backslide; and I am sometimes ready to make that desperate conclusion, “I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul:” O that I may have the comfort.

of that promise, "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they will not depart from me!" 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," that we may spread it before the Lord, and may apply to ourselves that relief which is proper for it, and "from the fulness which is in Jesus Christ may receive, and grace for grace," grace for all occasions.

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 that; for even against those there is comfort provided in the new covenant, and administered in this ordinance: "Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is." When Christ was inviting his disciples to come and dine with him, he asked them first, "Children, have ye any meat?" 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; and 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." 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, and allow no complaint that is not fit to be spread before him. 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 remonstrance of his grievance: "Behold, to me thou hast given no seed." Hannah did so, when she came up to worship. 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,

and that it was not made to grow, when he was taking the comfort of this, that, however it were, "God hath made with him an everlasting covenant."

VI. Inquire, What shall I resolve to do?—This question is equivalent to that of Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" We come to this ordinance solemnly to engage ourselves against all sin, and to all duty; and therefore it is good to consider what that sin is which we should particularly covenant against, and what that duty 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 mind 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,

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 defence and double our guard. What is the sin that hath most easily beset me,—the well-circumstanced sin? 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 backward 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 honour, and the interests of his kingdom among men? "The liberal deviseth liberal things," and so the pious deviseth pious things, that he may both engage and excite himself to those liberal pious things, in and by this ordinance. What is the talent I am intrusted with the improvement of? 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, that, having sworn, I may perform it.

## CHAPTER V.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR RENEWING OUR COVENANTS WITH GOD  
IN OUR PREPARATION FOR THIS ORDINANCE.

- I. In what method we must renew our covenant with God. (I.) We must repent of our sins, by which we have rendered ourselves unworthy to be taken into covenant: three things to be lamented. (II.) We must renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh: opened in three things. (III.) We must receive Christ as offered to us, consenting to his grace, and to his government. (IV.) We must resign and give up ourselves to God in Christ; devote ourselves to his praise, and submit ourselves to his power: in three things. (V.) We must resolve to abide in it: opened in two things. (VI.) We must rely on the righteousness and strength of Christ herein: opened in two things. II. After what manner we must renew our covenant; intelligently, considerately, humbly, cheerfully, and in sincerity.

It is the wonderful condescension of the God of heaven, that he hath been pleased to deal with man in the way of a covenant; that, on the one hand, we might receive strong consolations from the promises of the covenant, which are very sweet and precious; and, on the other hand, might lie under strong obligations from the conditions of the covenant, which on this account have greater cogency in them than mere precept, that we ourselves have occasioned to them, and that we have therein consulted our own interest and advantage.

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper being a seal of the covenant, and the solemn exchanging of the ratifications of it, it is necessary we make the covenant before we pretend to seal it. In this order, therefore, we must proceed,—first give the hand to the Lord, and then enter into the sanctuary; first in secret consent to the covenant, and then solemnly testify that consent: this is like a contract before marriage. They that “ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward,” must “join themselves to the Lord in a perpetual

covenant." The covenant is mutual, and in vain do we expect the blessings of the covenant, if we be not truly willing to come under the bonds of the covenant. We must "enter into covenant with the Lord our God, and into his oath;" else he doth not "establish us this day for a people unto himself." We are not owned and accepted as God's people, though we "come before him as his people come," and sit before him as his people sit, if we do not in sincerity "avouch the Lord for our God." In our baptism this was done for us; in the Lord's Supper we must do it for ourselves, else we do nothing.

Let us consider, then, in what method, and after what manner, we must manage this great transaction.

I. In what method we must renew our covenant with God in Christ, and by what steps we must proceed.

(I.) We must repent of our sins, by which we have rendered ourselves unworthy to be taken into covenant with God. Those that would be exalted to this honour, must first humble themselves. God "layeth his beam in the waters." The foundations of spiritual joy are laid in the waters of penitential tears: therefore this sealing ordinance sets that before us which is proper to move our godly sorrow: in it we look on him whom we have pierced, and if we do not mourn, and be not in bitterness for him, surely "our hearts are as hard as a stone, yea, harder than a piece of the nether millstone." Those that join themselves to the Lord, must go weeping to do it: so they do: "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." That comfort is likely to last, which takes rise from deep humiliation and contrition of soul for sin. Those only that go forth weeping, bearing this precious seed, shall come again rejoicing in God as theirs, and bring the sheaves of covenant blessings and comforts with them. Let us therefore begin with this.

1. We have reason to bewail our natural estrangement from this covenant. When we come to be for God, we have-

reason to be affected with sorrow and shame, that ever we were for any other; that ever there should have been occasion for our reconciliation to God, which supposeth that there hath been a quarrel. Wretch that I am, ever to have been a stranger, an enemy to the God that made me, at war with my Creator, and in league with the rebels against his crown and dignity! O the folly, and wickedness, and misery, of my natural estate! My first father an Amorite, and my mother a Hittite, and myself a transgressor from the womb, alienated from the life of God, and cast out in my pollution: nothing in me lovely, nothing amiable, but a great deal loathsome and abominable:—such as this was my nativity, my original.

2. We have reason to bewail our backwardness to come into this covenant. Well may we be ashamed to think how long God called, and we refused; how often he stretched forth his hand before we regarded; how many offers of mercy we slighted, and against how many kind invitations we stood out; how long Christ stood at the door and knocked, before we opened to him; and how many frivolous excuses we made to put off this necessary work. What a fool was I to stand in my own light so long! How ungrateful to the God of love, who waited to be gracious! How justly might I have been for ever excluded from this covenant, who so long neglected that great salvation! Wherefore I abhor myself.

3. We have reason to bewail the inconsistency of our hearts and lives to the terms of this covenant, since first we professed our consent to it. In many instances we have dealt foolishly, it is well if we have not dealt falsely in the covenant. In our baptism we were given up to Christ to be his, but we have lived as if we were our own; we then put on the Christian livery, but we have done little of the Christian's work; we were called by Christ's name to take away our reproach, but how little have we been under the conduct and government of the Spirit of Christ? Since we became capable of acting for ourselves, perhaps we have oft renewed our covenant with God, at his table, and upon other occasions; but we have despised the oath, "in breaking the covenant, when, lo, we had given the hand!" Our performances have not answered the engagements we have solemnly laid ourselves under. Did we not say, and say it with

the blood of Christ in our hands, that we would be the faithful servants of the God of heaven? We did; and yet, instead of serving God, we have served divers lusts and pleasures, we have made ourselves slaves to the flesh, and drudges to the world; and this "hath been our manner from our youth up." Did we not say we would not transgress, we would not offend any more? We did; and yet "our transgressions are multiplied, and in many things we offend daily. Did we not say we would walk more closely with God, more circumspectly in our conversation, we would be better in our closets, better in our families, better in our callings, every way better? We did; and yet we are still vain, and careless, and unprofitable; all those good purposes have been to little purpose: this is a lamentation, and should be for a lamentation. Let our hearts be truly broken for our former breach of covenant with God, and then the renewing of our covenant will be the recovery of our peace, and that which was broken shall be bound up, and made to rejoice.

(II.) We must renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and everything that stands in opposition to, or competition with, the God to whom we join ourselves by covenant. If we will indeed deal sincerely in our covenanting with God, and would be accepted of him therein, our "covenant with death must be disannulled, and our agreement with hell must not stand." All these foolish, sinful agreements, which were indeed null and void from the beginning, by which we had alienated ourselves from our rightful owner, and put ourselves in possession of the usurper, must be revoked and cancelled, and our consent to them drawn back with disdain and abhorrence. When we take an oath of allegiance to God and Christ as our rightful King and Sovereign, we must herein abjure the tyranny of the rebellious and rival powers. "O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us," while sin hath reigned in our mortal bodies, in our immortal souls, and every lust hath been a lord; but now we are weary of that heavy yoke, and through God's grace it shall be so no longer; for, from henceforth, "by thee only will we make mention of thy name."

The covenant into which we are to enter is a marriage covenant. "Thy Maker is to be thy husband," and thou art



to be betrothed to him. And it is the ancient and fundamental law of that covenant, that all other lovers be renounced, all other beloved ones forsaken; and the same is the law of this covenant: "Thou shalt not be for another man, so will I also be for thee." Quitting all others, we must cleave to the Lord only; lovers and crowned heads will not endure rivals; on these terms, and no other, we may covenant with God: "If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth;" else it is not a return to God.

1. We must renounce all subjection to Satan's rule and government. Satan's seat must be overturned in our hearts, and the Redeemer's throne set up there upon the ruins of it. We must disclaim the devil's power over us, cast off that iron yoke, and resolve to be deceived by him no more, and led captive by him at his will no more. We must quit the service of the citizen of that country, and feed his swine no longer, feed upon his husks no more, that we may return to our Father's house, where there is bread enough and to spare. We must renounce the treacherous conduct of the evil spirit, that we may put ourselves under the guidance of the holy and good Spirit. All that turn to God, must turn from the power of Satan: "for what communion hath Christ with Belial?" Our covenant with God engageth us in a war with Satan; for the controversy between them is such as will by no means allow us to stand neutral.

2. We must renounce all compliance with the wills and interests of the flesh. The body, though near and dear to the soul, yet must not be allowed to have dominion over it. The liberty, sovereignty, and honour of the immortal spirit, by which we are allied to the upper world, that world of spirits, must be asserted, vindicated, and maintained against the usurpation and encroachments of the body, which is of the earth, earthly, and by which we are allied to the beasts that perish. The elder too long hath served the younger, the nobler hath served the baser; it is time that the yoke should be broken from off its neck, and that that part of the man should rule under Christ, whose right it is. The servants on horseback must be dismounted, the lust of the flesh denied, and its will no longer admitted to give law to the man: and the princes, who have walked like servants

upon the earth, must be raised from the dunghill, and made to inherit the throne of glory; the dictates, I mean, of right reason, guided by revelation, and consulting the true interest of the better part, must have the commanding sway and empire in us. We must never more make it our chief good to have the flesh pleased, and the desires of it gratified; nor ever make it our chief business to make provision for the flesh, that we may fulfil the lusts of it. Away with them, away with them; crucify them, crucify them; for, like Barabbas, they are robbers, they are murderers, they are enemies to our peace. We will not have them to reign over us; no, no, we know them too well; we have no king but Jesus.

3. We must renounce all dependence upon this present world, and conformity to it. If we enter into a covenant which insures us a happiness in the other world, on which we look with a holy concern, we must disclaim the expectations of happiness in this world, and therefore look upon this with a holy contempt. God and mammon, God and gain, these are contrary the one to the other. So that if we will be found loving God, and cleaving to him, we must despise the world, and sit loose to that. We must so far renounce the way of the world, as not to govern ourselves by that, and take our principles and measures from it; for we must not be "conformed to this world," nor "walk according to the course of it." We must so far renounce the men of the world, as not to incorporate ourselves with them, nor choose them for our people; because, though we are in the world, we are not of the world, nor have we received the spirit of the world, but Christ hath chosen and called us out of it. We must so far renounce the wealth of the world, as not to portion ourselves out of it, nor lay up our treasure in it; nor to take up with the things of this world, as our good things, as our consolation, as our reward, as the penny we agree for. For in God's favour is our life, and not in the smiles of this world. The Lord make us cordial in thus renouncing these competitors, that we may be found sincere in covenanting with God in the Lord Jesus Christ!

(III.) We must receive the Lord Jesus Christ, as he is offered to us in the Gospel. In renewing our covenants with

God, it is not enough to enter our dissent from the world and the flesh, and to shake off Satan's yoke, but we must enter our consent to Christ, and take upon us his yoke. In the everlasting Gospel, both as it is written in the Scripture, and as it is sealed in this sacrament, salvation by Christ, that great salvation, is fairly tendered to us, who need it, and are undone for ever without it. We then come into covenant with God, when we accept of this salvation, with an entire complacency and confidence in those methods which Infinite Wisdom hath taken, of reconciling a guilty and obnoxious world to himself by the mediation of his own Son, and a cheerful compliance with those methods for ourselves and our own salvation.—“Lord, I take thee at thy word: be it unto thy servant according to that word, which is so well ordered in all things, and so sure!”

We must accept the salvation in Christ's way, and upon his terms; else our acceptance is not accepted.

By a hearty consent to the grace of Christ, we must accept the salvation in his own way, in such a way as for ever excludes boasting, humbles man to the dust, and will admit no flesh to glory in his presence; such a way as, though it leaves the blood of them that perish upon their own heads, yet lays all the crowns of them that are saved at the feet of free grace. This method we must approve of, and love this salvation; not going about to establish our own righteousness, as if, by pleading not guilty, we could answer the demands of the covenant of innocency, and so be justified and saved by that; but submitting “to the righteousness of God by faith.” All the concerns that lie between us and God, we must put into the hands of the Lord Jesus, as the great Mediator, the great Manager; we must be content to be nothing, that the Lord alone may be exalted, and Christ may be all in all. God hath declared more than once by a voice from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” To consent to Christ's grace, and accept of salvation in his way, is to echo back that solemn declaration:—“This is my beloved Saviour, in whom I am well pleased: the Lord will be pleased with me in him; for out of him I can expect no favour.”

By a hearty consent to the government of Christ, we must accept the salvation on his own terms. When we receive

Christ, we must receive an entire Christ; for, "is Christ divided?" A Christ to sanctify and rule us, as well as a Christ to justify and save us; for he is "a Priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace is between them both." What God has joined together, let us not think to put asunder. He saves his people from their sins, not in their sins; and is the author of eternal redemption to those only that obey him. That very "grace of God which bringeth salvation, teacheth us to deny ungodliness, and worldly and fleshly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world." Life and peace are to be had on these terms, and on no other; and are we willing to come up to these terms? Will we receive Christ and his law, as well as Christ and his love? Christ and his cross, as well as Christ and his crown? "Lord, I will," saith the believing soul; "Lord, I do." "My beloved is mine, and I am his," to all the intents and purposes of the covenant.

(iv.) We must resign and give up ourselves to God in Christ. God in our covenant makes over not only his gifts and favours, but himself to us: "I will be to them a God." What he is in himself, he will be to us, a God all-sufficient: so we in the covenant must offer up, not only our services, but ourselves; our own selves, body, soul, and spirit, to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, according to the obligations of our baptism, as those that are bound to be to him a people. This surrender is to be solemnly made at the Lord's table, and sealed there; it must therefore be prepared and made ready before. Let us see to it, that it be carefully drawn up without exception or limitation, and the heart examined, whether a free and full consent be given to it. We must first give our own selves unto the Lord, and I know not how we can dispose of ourselves better. By the mercies of God, which are inviting, and very encouraging, we must be wrought upon to present our bodies and souls to God a living sacrifice of acknowledgment, not a dying sacrifice of atonement; which, if it be holy, shall be acceptable, and it is our reasonable service. Thus he that covenants with God is directed to say, "I am the Lord's," and, for the greater solemnity of the transaction, to "subscribe with his hand unto the Lord." Not that we do or can hereby transfer or convey to God any right to us which he had not

before. He is our absolute Lord and Owner, and hath an incontestable sovereignty over us and propriety in us, as he is our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and Redeemer; but hereby we recognise and acknowledge his right to us. We are his already by obligation, more his than our own; but, that we may have the benefit and comfort of being so, we must be his by our own consent. More particularly,

1. To resign ourselves to God, is to dedicate and devote ourselves to his praise. It is not enough to call ourselves by his name, and associate ourselves with those that do so, to take away our reproach; but we must consecrate ourselves to his name, as living temples. It is a gift, a gift to God; all I am, all I have, all I can do is so; it is a dedicated thing, which it is sacrilege to alienate. All the powers and faculties of our souls, all the parts and members of our bodies, we must, as those that are alive from the dead, freely yield unto God as instruments of righteousness, to be used and employed in his service for his glory. All our endowments, all our attainments, all those things we call accomplishments, must be accounted as talents, which we must trade with for his honour. All being of him and from him, all must be to him and for him. Our tongues must not be our own, but his; in nothing to offend him, but to speak his praise, and plead his cause, as there is occasion. Our time not our own, but as a servant's time, to be spent according to our Master's directions, and some way or other to our Master's glory, every day being in this sense our Lord's day. Our estates not our own, to be spent or spared by the direction of our lusts, but to be used as God directs: God must be honoured with our substance, and our merchandise and our hire must be "holiness to the Lord." Our interest not our own, with it to seek our own glory, but to be improved in seeking and serving God's glory; that is, God's glory must be fixed and aimed at as our highest and ultimate end, in all the care we take about our employments, and all the comforts we take in our enjoyments. "As good stewards of the manifold grace of God," we must have this still in our eye, "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ." By this pious attention common actions must be sanctified, and done "after a godly sort." Our giving up ourselves to be to God a people, is

thus explained: "To be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory."

2. To resign ourselves to God, is to subject and submit ourselves to his power; to the sanctifying power of his Spirit, the commanding power of his law, and the disposing power of his providence. Such as this is the subjection to which we must consent; and it hath in it so much of privilege and advantage, as well as duty and service, that we have no reason to stumble at it.

(1.) We must submit ourselves to the sanctifying power of God's Spirit. We must lay our souls as soft wax under this seal, to receive the impressions of it; as white paper under this pen, that it may write the law there. Whereas we have resisted the Holy Ghost, quenched his motions, and striven against him when he hath been striving with us, we must now yield ourselves to be led and influenced by him, with full purpose of heart in every thing to follow his conduct, and comply with him. When Christ in his Gospel breathes on us, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," my heart must answer, "Lord, I receive him," I bid him welcome into my heart: though he comes as a spirit of judgment and a spirit of burning, as a refiner's fire and fullers' soap, yet "blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Let him come and mortify my lusts and corruptions, I do not desire that any of them should be spared; let them die, let them die by the sword of the Spirit, Agag himself not excepted, though he comes delicately. Let every thought within me, even the inward thought, "be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Let the blessed Spirit do his whole work in me, and fulfil it with an almighty power.

(2.) We must submit ourselves to the commanding power of God's law. The law, as it is in the hand of the Mediator, is God's instrument of government; if I yield myself to him as a subject, I must in everything be observant of, and obedient to, that law: and now I covenant to be so, in all my way to walk according to that rule; all my thoughts and affections, all my words and actions, shall be under the direction of the divine law, and subject to its check and restraint. God's judgments will I lay before me, and have respect to all his commandments; by them I will always be

ruled, overruled. "Let the word of the Lord come," as a good man once said, "and if I had six hundred necks, I would bow them all to the authority of it." Whatever appears to me to be my duty, by the grace of God I will do it, how much soever it interfere with my secular interest; whatever appears to me to be a sin, by the grace of God I will avoid it, and refrain from it, how strong soever my corrupt inclination may be to it: "All that the Lord shall say to me I will do, and will be obedient."

(3.) We must submit ourselves to the disposing power of God's providence. This must be the rule of our patience and passive obedience, as the former of our practice and active obedience. All my affairs relating to this life, I cheerfully submit to the divine disposal; let them be directed and determined as Infinite Wisdom sees fit, and I will acquiesce. Let the Lord save my soul; and then, as to everything else, "let him do with me and mine as seemeth good unto him." I will never find fault with anything that God doth. "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." I know I have no wisdom of my own; I am a fool, if I lean to my own understanding; and therefore I will have no will of my own. "Father, thy will be done." The health of my body, the success of my calling, the prosperity of my estate, the agreeableness of my family, the continuance of my comforts, and the issue of any particular concern my heart is upon, I leave in the hands of my heavenly Father, who knows what is good for me, better than I do for myself. If in any of these I be crossed, by the grace of God I will submit without murmuring or disputing. All is well that God doth, and therefore welcome the will of God in every event; while he is mine and I am his, nothing shall come amiss to me.

(v.) We must resolve to abide by it as long as we live, and to live up to it. In our covenanting with God, there must be, not only a present consent,—“Lord, I do take thee for mine, I do give up myself to thee, to be thine;” but this must be ripened into a resolution for the future, “with purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord.” We must lay hold on wisdom, so as to retain it; and choose the way of truth, so as to stick to it. The nail in the holy place must be well cleansed, that it may be “a nail in a sure place.” Many a pang of good affections, and many a hopeful turn of good

inclinations, comes to nothing, for want of resolution. It is said of Rehoboam, that he "did evil, because he prepared not," or "he fixed not, his heart"—so the word is in the margin—"to seek the Lord." The heart that is unfixed, is unprepared. Joshua took pains with the people, to bring them up to that noble resolution, "Nay, but we will serve the Lord." And we should not be content till we are also in like manner resolved, and firmly fixed, for God and duty, for Christ and heaven. This is the preparation of the Gospel of peace, wherewith our feet must be shod.

Let us inquire what that resolution is, to which, in an entire dependence upon the grace of Christ, we should come up, in our everlasting covenanting with God.

1. We must come up to such a settled resolution as doth not reserve a power of revocation for ourselves. The covenant is in itself a perpetual covenant, and as such we must consent to it; not as servants hire themselves, for a year, or to be free at a quarter's warning; not as apprentices bind themselves, for seven years, to be discharged at the expiring of that term; but it must be a covenant for life, a covenant for eternity, a covenant never to be forgotten; and in this even beyond the marriage covenant: for that is made with this proviso, "Till death us do part;" but death itself must not part us and Christ. Our covenant must be made like that servant's, who loved his master, and would not go out free; our ears must be nailed to God's door-post, and we must resolve to serve him for ever. A power of revocation reserved, is a disannulling of the covenant. It is no bargain, if it be not for a perpetuity, and if we consent not to put it past recall.

Let not those that are young, and under tutors and governors, think to discharge themselves of those obligations, when they come to be of age, and to put them off with their childish things; no, you must resolve to adhere to it, as Moses did, when you come to years. As children are not too little, so grown people are not too big, to be religious. You must resolve to live under the bonds of this covenant, when you come to live of yourselves, to be at your own disposal, and to launch out never so far into this world. Your greatest engagements in care and business cannot disengage you from these. Whatever state of life you are



called to, you must resolve to take your religion with you into it.

Let not those who are in the midst of their days think it possible or desirable to outlive the binding force of this covenant. If now we set out in the way we should go, it must be with a resolution, if we live to be old, how wise and honourable soever old age be, yet then we "will not depart from it;" as knowing that the hoary hairs are then only "a crown of glory, when they are found," as having been long before fixed, "in the way of righteousness."

2. We must come up to such a strong resolution as will not yield to the power of temptation from the enemy. When we engage ourselves for God, we engage ourselves against Satan, and must expect his utmost efforts to oppose us in our way, and to draw us out of it. Against these designs we must therefore arm ourselves, resolving to stand in the evil day, and, having done all in God's name, to stand our ground, saying to all that which would either divert or deter us from prosecuting the choice we have made, as Ruth did to Naomi, when she was steadfastly resolved:—"Entreat me not to leave Christ, or turn from following after him: for whither he goes, I will follow him, though it be to banishment; where he lodges, I will lodge with him, though it be in a prison; for death itself shall never part us."

We must resolve, by God's grace, never to be so elevated or enamoured with the smiles of the world, as by them to be allured from the paths of serious godliness; for our religion will be both the safety and honour of a prosperous condition, and will sanctify and sweeten all the comforts of it to us.

And we must in like manner resolve never to be so discouraged and disheartened by the frowns of the world, as by the force of them to be robbed of our joy in God, or by the fear of them to be driven from our duty to God. We must come to Christ with a steady resolution to abide by him in all conditions: "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. None of these things move me."

(VI.) We must rely upon the righteousness and strength of our Lord Jesus Christ in all this. Christ is the Mediator of this peace, and the guarantee of it, the surety of this better covenant, that blessed Days-man which hath laid his

hand upon us both, who hath so undertaken for God, that "in him all God's promises to us are yea and amen;" and unless he undertakes for us too, how can our promises to God have any strength or stability in them? When, therefore, we enter into covenant with God, our eye must be to Christ, the Alpha and Omega of that covenant. When God had "sworn by himself, that unto him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear," immediately it follows: "Surely, shall one say," every one that vows and swears to God, "in the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" in the Lord Jesus is all my sufficiency for the doing of this well. In making and renewing our covenant with God, we must take instructions from that of David: "I will go on in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only."

1. We must depend upon the strength of the Lord for assistance, and for the working of all our works in us and for us. In that strength we must go, go forth, and go on, as those that know we can do nothing that is good of ourselves; our own hands are not sufficient for us, but we can "do all things through Christ strengthening us." Our work then goes on, and then only, when we are "strengthened with all might by his Spirit." This way we must look for spiritual strength, as Nehemiah: "Now, therefore, O God, strengthen my hands." On this strength we must stay ourselves, in this strength we must engage ourselves, and put forth ourselves, and with it we must encourage ourselves.

We cannot keep this covenant when it is made, nor make it at all, but in the strength of Christ. Nature, corrupt nature, inclines to the world and the flesh, and cleaves to them; without the influences of special grace, we should never move towards God, much less resolve for him; we cannot do it well, but in Christ's strength, and in a dependence upon that. If, like Peter, we venture on our own sufficiency, and use those forms of speech which import a reliance on the divine grace, only as words of course, and do not by faith trust to that grace, and derive from it, we forfeit the aids of it, our covenant is rejected as presumptuous, and shall not avail us. Promises made in our own strength betray us, and do not help us, like the house built on the sand. We cannot keep this covenant, when it is made, but

in the strength of Christ: for we stand no longer than he by his grace upholds us; we go no further than he by his grace, not only leads us, but carries us. His promises to us are our security, not ours to him; from his fulness, therefore, we must expect to receive grace for grace: for it is not in ourselves, nor is it to be had anywhere but in him.

We then that are principals in the bond, knowing ourselves insolvent, must put him in as surety for us. He is willing to stand, and without him our bond will not be taken. We are too well known to be trusted; for all men are liars, and the heart is deceitful above all things. Go to Christ, therefore, with that address,—“Be surety for thy servant for good.” “I am oppressed, undertake for me.”

2. We must depend on the righteousness of Christ, making mention of that, even of that only, for acceptance with God in our covenanting with him. We have nothing in us to recommend us to God's favour, no righteousness of our own wherein to appear before him; we have by sin not only forfeited all the blessings of the covenant, but incapacitated ourselves for admission into it. By sacrifice, therefore, by a sacrifice of atonement, sufficient to expiate our guilt, and satisfy the demands of injured justice, we must make a covenant with God; and there is none such but that one offering by which Christ has “perfected for ever them which are sanctified;” that is, the blood of the covenant, which must be sprinkled upon our consciences, when we join ourselves to the Lord. That everlasting righteousness, which Messiah the prince hath brought in, must be the cover of our spiritual nakedness, our wedding garment to adorn our nuptials, and the foundation on which we must build all our hopes, to find favour in the sight of God.

I shall not here draw up a form of covenanting with God, both because such may be found drawn up by far better hands than mine, as Mr. Baxter, Mr. Alleine, and others, and because a judicious Christian may, out of the foregoing heads, easily draw up one for himself.

II. After what manner we must renew our covenant with God, that we may therein please God, and experience the good effect of it on our souls.

1. We must do it intelligently. Blind promises will produce lame performances, and can never be acceptable to the

seeing God: ignorance is not the mother of this devotion. Satan indeed puts out men's eyes, and so brings them into bondage to him, and leads them blindfold; for he is a thief and a robber, that comes not in by the door, but climbeth up some other way: and therefore to him we must not open. But the grace of God takes the regular way of dealing with reasonable creatures,—opening the understanding first, and then bowing the will: this is entering in by the door, as the shepherd of the sheep doth. In this method, therefore, we must see that the work be done. We must first acquaint ourselves with the tenor of the covenant, and then consent to the terms of it. Moses read the book of the covenant in the audience of the people, and then sprinkled upon them the blood of the covenant. And we must take the same method: first peruse the articles, and then sign them. That faith which is without knowledge, is not the faith of God's elect.

2. We must do it considerately. We need not take time to consider whether we should do it or not, the matter is too plain to bear that debate; we must seriously consider what we do, when we go about it. Let it be done with a solemn pause, such as Moses put Israel upon, when he said, "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God, that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord your God, and into his oath." Consider how weighty the transaction is, that it may be managed with due seriousness; and of what consequence it is that it be done well; for it is to be hoped, if it be once well done, it is done for ever. We must sit down and count the cost; consider the restraints this covenant will put upon the flesh, the loss and expense we may sustain by our adherence to it, the hazards we run, and the difficulties we must reckon upon, if we will be faithful unto death,—and in the view of this consent to the covenant, that hereafter, when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, we may not say, "This was what we did not think of." Do it deliberately, therefore, and then it will not be easily undone. The rule in vowing is, "Be not rash with thy mouth, neither let thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God." It is the character of a virtuous woman, that "she considers a field, and buys it." And it hath been thought a dictate of prudence, though it seem a paradox,— "Take time, and you will have done the sooner." Many

that, without consideration, have put on a profession, when the wind hath turned, have in like manner, without consideration, thrown it off again. Light come, light go. Those, therefore, that herein would prove themselves honest, must prove themselves wise.

3. We must do it humbly. When we come to covenant with God, we must remember what we are, and who he is with whom we have to do, that the familiarity to which we are graciously admitted may not beget a contempt of God, or a conceit of ourselves; but rather, the more God is pleased to exalt us, and condescend to us, the more we must honour him, and abase ourselves. "Abraham fell on his face," in a deep sense of his own unworthiness, when God said, "I will make my covenant between me and thee," and began to talk with him concerning it. And afterwards, when he was admitted into an intimate communion with God, pursuant to that covenant, he drew near as one that knew his distance, expressing himself with wonder at the favour done him: "Behold, now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes." When the covenant of royalty was confirmed to David, and God "regardeth him according to the estate of a man of high degree," he sits down as one astonished at the honour conferred upon him, and humbly expresseth himself thus:—"Who am I, O Lord God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" Thus must we cast ourselves down at the footstool of God's throne, if we would be taken up into the embraces of his love. He that humbles himself shall be exalted.

4. We must do it cheerfully: for here, in a special manner, God loves a cheerful giver, and is pleased with that which is done, not of constraint, but willingly. In our covenanting with God, we must not be actuated by a spirit of fear, but by a spirit of adoption, a spirit of power and love and a sound mind. We must join ourselves to the Lord, not only because it is our duty, and that which we are bound to, but because it is our interest, and that by which we shall be unspeakably gainers,—not with reluctance and regret, and with a half consent extorted from us, but with an entire satisfaction, and the full consent of a free spirit. Let it be a pleasure to us to think of our interest in God as ours, and our engagement to him as his; a pleasure to us to think of

the bonds of the covenant, as well as of the blessings of the covenant. Much of our communion with God (which is so much the delight of all that are sanctified) is kept up by the frequent recognition of our covenant with him, which we should make as those that like their choice too well to change; and as the men of Judah did, when "they swore unto the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting and with trumpets, and all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire." Christ's soldiers must be volunteers, not pressed men; and we must repeat our consent to him with such joy and triumph as appears in that of the spouse, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend."

5. We must do it in sincerity. This is the chief thing required in everything wherein we have to do with God: "Behold, he desires truth in the inward parts." When God took Abraham into covenant with himself, this was the charge he gave him, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," that is, upright; for uprightness is our Gospel perfection. Writing the covenant, and subscribing it, signing and sealing it, may be proper expressions of seriousness and resolution in the transaction, and of use to us in the review; but, if herein we "lie unto God with our mouth, and flatter him with our tongue," as Israel did, though we may put a cheat upon ourselves and others, yet we cannot impose upon him: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." If we only give the hand unto the Lord, and do not give our hearts to him, whatever our pretensions, professions, and present pangs of devotion may be, we are but as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal. What will it avail us to say we covenant with God, if we still keep our league with the world and the flesh, and have a secret antipathy to serious godliness? Dissembled piety is no disguise before God, but is hated as double iniquity. It is certain thou hast no part nor lot in the matter, whatever thou mayest claim, if thy heart be not right in the sight of God. I know no religion but sincerity; our vows to God are nothing, if they be not bonds upon the soul.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HELPS FOR MEDITATION AND PRAYER IN OUR PREPARATION FOR THIS ORDINANCE.

- I. OF meditation, opened in general. It is thought engaged, and thought inflamed. Particularly meditate, (i.) On the sinfulness and misery of man's fallen state. (ii.) The glory of God's attributes in man's redemption. (iii.) The person of the Redeemer, and his undertakings. (iv.) His sufferings. (v.) His present glories. (vi.) The riches of the new covenant. (vii.) The communion of saints; and, (viii.) The happiness of heaven. All these enlarged upon. II. Of prayer; why we must pray before the sacrament, and what we must pray for. Four things to be prayed for.

MEDITATION and prayer are the daily exercise of a devout and pious soul. In meditation we converse with ourselves; in prayer we converse with God. And what converse can we desire more agreeable and more advantageous? They who are frequent and serious in these holy duties at other times, will find them the easier and the sweeter on this occasion; the friends we are much with, we are most free with. But if at other times we be not so close and constant to them as we should be, we have the more need to take pains with our own hearts, that we may effectually engage them in these services, when we approach the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

Enter into thy closet, therefore, and shut the door of that against diversions from without: be not shy of being alone. The power of godliness withers and declines, if secret devotion be either neglected, or negligently performed. Enter into thy heart also, and do what thou canst to shut the door of that against distraction from within. Compose thyself for business, and summon all that is within thee to attend on it: separate thyself from the world, and thoughts of it; leave all its cares at the bottom of the hill, as Abraham did

his servants, when he was going up into the mount to worship God, and then set thyself about thy work: gird up thy loins, and trim thy lamp. Up and be doing, and the Lord be with thee.

I. We must set ourselves to meditate on that which is most proper for the confirming of our faith, and the kindling of pious and devout affections in us. Good thoughts should be oft in our minds, and welcome there; so should our souls often breathe towards God in pious ejaculations that are short and sudden. But as good prayers, so good thoughts must sometimes be set and solemn: morning and evening they must be so, on the Lord's day also, and before the Lord's Supper.

Meditation is thought engaged, and thought inflamed.

It is thought engaged.—In it the heart fastens upon, and fixes to, a select and certain subject, with an endeavour to dwell and enlarge upon it; not matters of doubtful disputation, or small concern, but those things that are of greatest certainty and moment. And since few of the ordinary sort of Christians can be supposed to have such a treasury of knowledge, such a fruitfulness of invention, and so great a compass and readiness of thought, as to be able to discourse with themselves, for any time, upon any one subject so closely, methodically, and pertinently as one would wish, it may be advisable, either to fasten upon some portion of Scripture, and to read that over and over, with a closeness of observation and application, or to recollect some profitable sermon lately heard, and think that over; or to make use of some books of pious meditations or practical discourses, (of which, blessed be God, we have great plenty and variety,) and not only read them, but descant and enlarge upon them in our minds, still giving liberty to our own thoughts to expatiate, as they are able; but, borrowing help from what we read, to reduce them when they wander, refresh them when they tire, and to furnish them with matter when they are barren. In the choice of helps for this work, wisdom and experience are profitable to direct, and no rule can be given to fit all capacities and all cases; the end may be attained by different methods.

It is thought inflamed.—To meditate, is not only to think seriously of divine things, but to think of them with



concern and suitable affection. While we are thus musing, the fire must burn. When the heart meditates terror, the terrors of the Lord, it must be with a holy fear; when we contemplate the beauty of the Lord, his bounty and his benignity, which is better than life, we must do it with a holy complacency, solacing ourselves in the Lord our God. The design of meditation is to improve our knowledge, and to affect ourselves with those things with which we have acquainted ourselves, that those impressions of them upon our souls may be deep and durable, and that, by "beholding the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image."

Serious meditation before a sacrament will be of great use to us, to make those things familiar to us, with which in that ordinance we are to be conversant. That good thoughts may not be to seek when we are there, it is our wisdom to prepare them, and lay them ready beforehand. Frequent acts confirm a habit, and pious dispositions are greatly helped by pious meditations. Christian graces will be the better exercised in the ordinance when they are thus trained and disciplined, and drawn out in our preparation for it.

For our assistance herein, I shall mention some few of those things which may most properly be pitched upon for the subject of our meditations before a sacrament: I say, before a sacrament; because, though this be calculated here for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, yet it may equally serve us in our preparations for the other sacrament, both that we may profit by the public administration of it, and especially that we may, in an acceptable manner, present our children to it; for which service we have as much need carefully to prepare ourselves as for this. As we must in faith join ourselves to the Lord, so we must in faith dedicate ourselves to him.

That our hearts, then, may be raised and quickened, and prepared for communion with Christ at his table,

(I.) Let us set ourselves to think of the sinfulness and misery of man's fallen state. That we may be taught to value our recovery and restoration by the grace of the second Adam, let us take a full and distinct view of our ruin by the sin of the first Adam. Come and see what desolations it hath made upon the earth, and how it hath turned the world into

a wilderness. "How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed!" What wretched work did sin make! What a black and horrid train of fatal consequences attended its entrance into the world!

Come, my soul, and see how the nature of man is corrupted and vitiated, and lamentably degenerated from its primitive purity and rectitude. God's image defaced and lost, and Satan's image stamped instead of it. The understanding blind, and unapt to admit the rays of the divine light: the will stubborn, and unapt to comply with the dictates of the divine law: the affections carnal, and unapt to receive the impressions of the divine love. Come, my soul, and lament the change, for thou thyself feelest from it, and sharest in the sad effects of it; for a nature thus tainted, thus depraved, I brought into the world with me, and carry about with me to this day sad remainders of its corruption. It was a nature by creation little lower than that of angels, but become by sin much baser than that of brutes. It was like the Nazarites, "purer than snow, whiter than milk, more ruddy than the rubies, and its polishing was of sapphires; but now its visage is blacker than a coal." Never was beauty so deformed, never was strength so weakened, never was a healthful constitution so spoiled, never was honour so laid in the dust. "How is the faithful city become an harlot!" Man's nature was planted a choice vine, wholly a right seed; but, alas! it is become "the degenerate plant of a strange vine." I find it in myself by sad experience. I am naturally prone to that which is evil, and backward to that which is good. Foolishness is daily breaking out in my life, and by that I perceive it is bound up in my heart: for these things I tremble and am afraid; "for these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runs down with tears."

Come, my soul, and see how miserably fallen man is: see him excluded from God's favour, expelled the garden of the Lord, and forbidden to meddle with the tree of life; see how odious he is become to God's holiness, and obnoxious to his justice, and by nature a child of wrath. See how calamitous the state of human life is; with what troops of diseases, disasters, and deaths, in the most horrid and frightful shapes, man is compassed about. Lord, "how are they increased that trouble" him!

See him attacked on every side by the malignant powers of darkness that seek to destroy; see him sentenced for sin to utter darkness, to the devouring fire, to the everlasting burning. "How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" O what a gulf of misery is man sunk into by sin! Separated from all good to all evil; and his condition in himself helpless and hopeless. A deplorable case! And it is my case by nature: I am of this guilty, exposed, condemned race; undone, undone for ever; as miserable as the curse of heaven and the flames of hell can make me, if infinite mercy do not interpose. And shall not this affect me? Shall not this afflict me? Shall not these thoughts beget in me a hatred of sin, that evil, that only evil? Shall I ever be reconciled to that which hath done so much mischief? Shall I not be quickened hereby to flee to Christ, in whom alone help and salvation is to be had? Is this thy condition, O my soul, thine by nature? And is there a door of hope opened thee by grace. Up, then, get thee out of this Sodom; "escape for thy life; look not behind thee, stay not in all the plain; escape to the mountain," the mountain of holiness, "lest thou be consumed."

(II.) Let us set ourselves to think of the glory of the divine attributes, shining forth in the work of our redemption and salvation. Here is a bright and noble subject, the contemplation and wonder of angels and blessed spirits above, and in the admiring view of which eternity itself will be short enough to be spent.

Come, then, O my soul, come and think of the kindness and love of God our Saviour, his good-will to man, which designed our redemption, the spring and first wheel of that work of wonder. Herein is love. Though God was happy from eternity before man had a being, and would have been happy to eternity, if man had never been, or had been miserable; though man's nature was mean and despicable; though his crimes were heinous and detestable; though by his disobedience he had forfeited the protection of a prince; though by his ingratitude he had forfeited the kindness of a friend; and though by his perfidiousness he had forfeited the benefits of a covenant; yet the tender mercies of our God moved for his relief. Come and see a world of apostate angels passed by, and left to perish; no Redeemer, no Saviour.

provided for them ; but fallen men pitied and helped, though angels have been more honourable, and would have been more serviceable.

Come and think of God's patience and forbearance exercised towards man : "The long-suffering of our Lord is salvation." Think how much he bears, and how long, with the world, with me, though most provoking. This patience left room for the salvation, and gives hopes of it. "If the Lord had been pleased to kill us," he would have done it before now.

Come and think especially of the wisdom of God which is so gloriously displayed in the contrivance of the work of our redemption. Here is the wisdom of God "in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world for our glory." Think of the measures God hath taken, the means he hath devised, that the banished might not for ever be expelled from him. Think with wonder how all the divine attributes are by the method pitched upon, secured from danger and reproach, so that one is not glorified by the diminution of the lustre of another. When sin had brought things to that strait, that one would think either God's justice, truth, and holiness must be eclipsed or clouded, or man's happiness must be for ever lost; infinite wisdom finds out an expedient for the securing both of God's honour, and of man's happiness. It is now no disparagement at all to God's justice to pardon sin, nor to his holiness to be reconciled to sinners ; for by the death of Christ justice is satisfied, and by the Spirit of Christ sinners are sanctified. "Mercy and truth here meet together ; behold, righteousness and peace kiss each other." Be astonished, O heavens ! at this ; and wonder, O earth ! And thou, my soul, that owest all thy joys and all thy hopes to this contrivance, despairing to find the bottom of this unfathomable fountain of life, sit down at the brink and adore the depth ! "O the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God !"

(III.) Let us set ourselves to think of the person of the Redeemer, and his glorious undertaking of the work of our salvation. Come, my soul, and think of Christ, who thought of thee. Think of him as the eternal Son of God, "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," who lay in his bosom from all eternity, and had

an infinite joy and glory with him before the worlds were, and in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead ; the eternal Wisdom, the eternal Word, that hath life in himself, and is one with the Father, and who thought it no robbery to be equal with God. He is thy Lord, O my soul ! and worship thou him.

Think of him as the Former of all things, without whom was not any thing made that was made. "Thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, all things were created by him, and for him ; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." Let this engage my veneration for him, let this encourage my faith and hope in him. If I have my being from him, I must consecrate my being to him, and may expect my bliss in him.

Think of him as Emmanuel, the Word incarnate, "God manifested in the flesh," clothed with our nature, taking part of flesh and blood, that for us in our nature he might satisfy the justice of God, whom we had offended, and break the power of Satan, by whom we are enslaved. Come, my soul, and with an eye of faith behold the beauties, the transcendent, unparalleled beauties, of the Redeemer. See him, "white and ruddy, fairer than the children of men," perfectly pure and spotless, wise and holy, kind and good ; that he hath the infinite mercies of a God, and withal the experimental compassions of a man that hath been "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." See him by faith, as John saw him in a vision. See him and admire him, as one that in all things hath the pre-eminence ; none like him, nor any to be compared with him.

Think of him as the undertaker of our redemption, the redemption of the soul, which was so precious that otherwise it must have ceased for ever. When the sealed book of God's counsels concerning man's redemption was produced, "none in heaven or earth was found worthy to open that book, or to look thereon." When sacrifice and offering for sin would not do, and the blood of bulls and of goats had been tried in vain, and found ineffectual, then said he, "Lo, I come ; this ruin shall be under my hands : " alluding to Isaiah iii. 6. Come, my soul, and see help laid upon one that is mighty ; one chosen out of the people, and every way qualified for the undertaking, able to do the Redeemer's work, and fit to wear the Redeemer's crown. See how

willingly he offered himself to the service, how cheerfully he obliged himself to go through with it, and engaged his heart to approach unto God as our Advocate. It is "the voice of thy beloved, O my soul! Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills," making nothing of the difficulties that lay in his way. Behold, the King cometh, thy Bridegroom cometh; go forth, my soul, go forth to meet him with thy joyful hosannas, and bid him welcome. "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

(IV.) Let us set ourselves to think of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, the dishonours done to him, and the honours done to us by it. Here is a wide field for our meditations to expatiate in; nor can we determine to know any thing before a sacrament more proper and profitable than Jesus Christ, and him crucified; lifted up from the earth, and drawing all men unto him, as the attractive loadstone of their hearts, and the common centre of their unity. Come, then, and behold the Man; represent to thyself, O my soul, not to thy fancy, but to thy faith, the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world by the sacrifice of himself.

Come and look over the particulars of Christ's sufferings, all the humiliations and mortifications of his life, but especially the pains, agonies, and ignominies of his death. Review the story; thou wilt still find something in it surprising and very affecting; take notice of all the circumstances of his passion, and say, "Never was any sorrow like unto his sorrow." Take notice especially of the disgrace and reproach done him in his sufferings, the shame he was industriously loaded with. This contributed greatly to the satisfaction made by his sufferings. God hath been injured in his glory by sin, and no other way could be injured; he, therefore, who undertook to make reparation for that injury, not only denied himself in, and divested himself of, the honours due to an incarnate Deity, but, though most innocent and most excellent, voluntarily submitted to the utmost disgraces that could be done to the worst of criminals; thus he "restored that which he took not away." See him, my soul, see him enduring the cross, and despising the shame.

Come and see the purchases of the cross. The blood there shed is the ransom with which we are redeemed from hell;

the prize with which heaven is bought for us. See it, a prize of inestimable value: "The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, nor shall it be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire." No, my soul, thou wast not redeemed with such corruptible things. The pardon of sin, the favour of God, the graces of his Spirit, the blessings of the covenant, and eternal life, could not be purchased with silver and gold, but are dearly bought and paid for with the precious blood of the Son of God. All the praise be to the glorious Purchaser.

Come and see the victories of the cross; see the Lord Jesus even then a Conqueror, when he seemed a captive; then spoiling principalities and powers, when he seemed totally defeated and routed by them. See Christ upon the cross breaking the serpent's head, disarming Satan, triumphing over death and the grave, leading captivity captive, and going forth in that chariot of war, conquering and to conquer.

Think, my soul, think what thou owest to the dying of the Lord Jesus; the privileges of thy way, and the glories of thy home. All thou hast, all thou hopest for, that is valuable, they are all precious fruits gathered from this tree of life. Christ's wounds are thy healing, his agonies thy repose, his conflicts thy conquests, his groans thy songs, his pains thine ease, his shame thy glory, his death thy life, his sufferings thy salvation.

(v.) Let us set ourselves to think of the present glories of the exalted Redeemer. When we meditate on the cross he bore, we must not forget the crown he wears within the veil. Think, my soul, think where he is at the right hand of the Father, far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named; he is set down upon the throne of the Majesty in the highest heavens. Having obtained eternal redemption for us, he is "entered with his own blood into the holy place." Think how he is attended there with an innumerable company of angels, that continually surround the throne of God and of the Lamb; think of the songs there sung to his praise, the crowns there cast at his feet, and the name he hath there above every name. Think especially what he is doing there: he always appears in the presence of God as the great High Priest of our profession, to intercede for all those that come to God by him;

and he attends continually to this very thing: there he is preparing a place for all his followers, and thence he will shortly come to receive them to himself, to behold his glory, and to share in it. Dwell on these thoughts, O my soul, and say as they did who saw his glory in his transfiguration: "It is good to be here; here let us make tabernacles." Let these thoughts kindle in thee an earnest desire (shall I call it a holy curiosity?) to see him as he is, face to face. His advancement is thine advantage: as the Forerunner he is for me entered. Let the contemplation of the joy he is entered into, and the power he is there girded with, have such an influence upon me, as that by faith I may be raised up likewise, and "made to sit together with him in heavenly places."

(VI.) Let us set ourselves to think of the unsearchable riches of the new covenant, made with us in Jesus Christ, and sealed to us in the sacraments. Peruse this covenant in the several dispensations of it, from the dawning of its day in the first promise, to that of noon-day light, which life and immortality are brought to by the Gospel. Read over the several articles of it, and see how well ordered it is in all things, so well that it could not be better. Review its promises, which are precious and many, very many, very precious, and sure to all the seed. Search into the hidden wealth that is treasured up in them; dig into these mines; content not thyself with a transient view of these fountains of living water, but bring thy bucket, and draw with joy out of these wells of salvation. Go, walk about this Zion, this city of God; tell the towers, mark well the bulwarks, consider the palaces; and say, "This God, who is our God in covenant, is ours for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."

Stir up thyself, therefore, O my soul, to meditate on the privileges of a justified state; the liberties and immunities, the dignities and advantages, that are conveyed by the charter of pardon. O the blessedness of the man whose iniquities are forgiven! See him secured from the arrests of the law, the curse of God, the evil of affliction, the sting of death, and the damnation of hell. Read with pleasure the triumphs of blessed Paul. (Rom. viii. 33, &c.) Happy thou art, my soul, and all is well with thee, or shall be shortly, if thy sins be pardoned.

Meditate on the honours and comforts of a state of grace.



If now I am a child of God, adopted and regenerated, and have received the Spirit of adoption, I have a sanctified use of my creature-comforts; my fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; all is mine; "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are" mine. I have meat to eat that the world knows not of, joy that a stranger doth not intermeddle with. Let thoughts of these great privileges work in thee, O my soul, a holy disdain of the pleasures of sense, and the profits of the world; whenever they come in competition with the gains of godliness, and the delights of spiritual life, offer those to them that know no better.

(VII.) Let us set ourselves to think of the communion of saints. This contributes something to our comfort in communion with Christ, that through him we have fellowship one with another: so that "we being many are one bread, and one body;" for Christ died to "gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad;" that all might be one in him whom we all meet, as many members in one head, so making one body; many branches in one root, so making one vine; and many stones on one foundation, so making one building.

Enlarge thy thoughts, then, O my soul! and let it be a pleasure to thee to think of the relation thou standest in to the whole family, both in heaven and earth, which is named of Jesus Christ; to think that thou art come, in faith, hope, and love, even to the "innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." Even these are thy brethren and fellow-servants. Rejoice in thine alliance to them, in their affection to thee, and in the prospect thou hast of being with them shortly, of being with them eternally. Here we sit with a little handful of weak and imperfect saints, and those mixed with pretenders; but we hope shortly to have a place and a name in the general assembly of the firstborn, and to "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of our Father," with all the saints, and none but saints, and saints made perfect, and so to be together for ever with the Lord.

Please thyself also, O my soul, with thinking of the spiritual communion thou hast in the acts of Christian piety,

and in the exercise of Christian charity, with "all that in every place on this earth call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Some good Christians there are, that fall within the reach of our personal communion, to whom we give the right hand of fellowship; others, within the line of our acquaintance and correspondence; and many more whom we know not, nor have ever heard of, never saw, nor are ever likely to see in this world; but all these are our "companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." They and we are guided by the same rule, animated by the same spirit, conformed to the same image, interested in the same promises, and joined to the same great body; they and we meet daily at the same throne of grace, under the conduct of the Spirit of adoption, which teaches us all to cry, "Abba, Father;" and they and we hope to meet shortly at the same throne of glory, under the conduct of the same Jesus, who will gather his elect from the four winds, and present them all together unto the Father. Christ hath prayed, that "all that believe may be one;" and therefore we are sure they are so, for the Father heard him always. Let this subject yield us some delightful thoughts here in a scattered world and a divided church.

(VIII.) Let us set ourselves to think of the happiness of heaven. A pleasant theme this is, very improvable, and pertinent enough to an ordinance which hath so much of heaven in it. If indeed we have heaven in our eye, as our home and rest, and our conversation there, we cannot but have it much upon our hearts. Have we good hope, through grace, of being shortly with Christ in the heavenly paradise, where there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore,—where we shall see God's glory, and enjoy his love immediately, to our complete and eternal satisfaction? Do we expect that yet a little while the veil shall be rent, the shadows of the evening shall be done away, and we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known? Are we in prospect of a crown of glory that fades not away, an incorruptible, undefiled inheritance?

Raise thy thoughts then, O my soul, to the joyful contemplation of thy glory to be revealed. Arise, then, and survey this land of promise, as Abraham. Go with Moses to the top of Pisgah, and take a view of it by faith. Get a Scripture map of that Canaan, and study it well. Think, my

soul, what they see in that world, who always behold the face of our Father, and in it see all truth and brightness, and the perfection of beauty. Think what they have there, that eat of the tree of life, and the hidden manna; whose faculties are enlarged, to take in the full communication of divine love and grace, and who have God himself with them as their God. Think what they are doing there who dwell in God's grace, and are still praising him, and rest not day nor night from doing it. Think of the good company that is there,—thousands of thousands of blessed angels, and holy souls, with whom we shall have an intimate and undisturbed converse in perfect light and love.

Compare the present state thou art in, my soul, with that thou hopest for; and let it be a pleasure to thee to think, that whatever is here, thy grief and burden shall be there removed and done away for ever. Satan's temptations shall there no more assault thee; thine own corruptions shall there no more ensnare thee; the guilt of sin, and doubts about thy spiritual state, shall there no more terrify and perplex thee; no pain, nor sickness, nor sorrow, shall be an alloy to the enjoyments of that world, as they are to those of this world. All tears shall there be wiped away, even those for sin.

On the other side, whatever is here thy delight and pleasure shall there be perfected. The knowledge of God, joy in him, and communion with him, are here, as it were, thy running banquets; there they shall be thy continual feast. The work of grace begun in thee, is that which reconciles thee to thyself, and gives thee some pleasure now in thy reflections upon thyself. This work shall be there completed, and the finishing strokes given to it, by the same skilful and happy hand that begun it.

Come now, my soul, and "neglect not the gift that is in thee, but meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them." Be thou in them, as in thy business, as in thine element. Think of the things of the invisible and unchangeable world, till thou findest thyself so affected with them, as even to forget the things that are here below, that are here behind, and look upon them with a holy negligence, that thou mayest, with great diligence, reach towards "the things that are before, and press towards the mark for the high calling."

II. We must not only meditate, but we must pray, and cry earnestly to God for assistance and acceptance in what we do. When the apostle had reckoned up all the parts of the Christian's armour, he concludes with this, "Praying always." Prayer must gird on the whole armour of God; for, without prayer, all our endeavours are vain and ineffectual. Therefore, in our preparations for the Lord's Supper, time must be spent and pains taken in prayer, for two reasons:—

1. Because this is a proper means of quickening ourselves, and stirring up our graces.—One duty of religion is of use to dispose and fit us for another; and the most solemn services ought to be approached gradually, and through the outer courts. In prayer, the soul ascends to God, and converseth with him; and thereby the mind is prepared to receive the visits of his grace, and habituated to holy exercises. Even the blessed Jesus prepared himself for the offering up of the great sacrifice by prayer,—a long prayer in the house, and strong cryings with tears in the garden. Three times was Christ spoken to, while he was here on earth, by voices from heaven, and they all three found him praying.—That at his baptism: "Jesus being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened."—That at his transfiguration: "As he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered."—And at a little before his passion, when he was praying, "Father, glorify thy name," the voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it," &c. Saul of Tarsus prays, and then sees a vision; and afterwards, Cornelius had his vision when he was at prayer, and Peter his. All which instances, and many the like, suggest to us, that communion with God in prayer prepares and disposes the mind for communion with him in other duties.

2. Because this is the appointed way for fetching in that mercy and grace which God hath promised, and which we stand in need of.—In God is our help, and from him is our fruit found; and he hath promised to help us and to give us "a new heart, to put his Spirit within us, and to cause us to walk in his statutes." "I will yet for all this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." How can we expect the presence of God with us, if we do not invite him by prayer? Or the power of God upon us, if we do not by prayer derive it from him? The greatest blessings are

promised to the prayer of faith ; but God will not give if we will not ask. Why should he ?

But what must we pray for, when we draw near to God in this solemn ordinance ? Solomon tells us, that both the "preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." To him, therefore, we must apply ourselves for both. The whole word of God is of use to direct us in these prayers, and in it the blessed Spirit "helpeth our infirmities, forasmuch as we know not what to pray for," in this or any other case, as we ought.

1. We must pray that we may be prepared for this solemnity before it comes. Whatever is necessary to qualify us for communion with God in it, is spoken of in Scripture as God's gift ; and whatever is the matter of God's promise, must be the matter of our prayers ; for promises are given, not only to be the ground of our hope, but also to be the guide of our desire in prayer. Is knowledge necessary ? "Out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding ;" and at wisdom's gates we must wait for wisdom's gifts, rejoicing herein "that the Son of God has come, and hath given us an understanding." Is faith necessary ? That is not "of ourselves, it is the gift of God." Him, therefore, we must attend, who is both the Author and the Finisher of our faith. To him we must pray, "Lord, increase our faith : Lord, perfect what is lacking in it : Lord, fulfil the work of faith with power." Is love necessary ? It is the Holy Ghost that sheds abroad that love in our hearts, and circumciseth our hearts to love the Lord our God. To that heavenly fire we must therefore go for this holy spark, and pray for the breath of the Almighty to blow it up into a flame. Is repentance necessary ? It is God that gives repentance, that takes away the stony heart and gives a heart of flesh ; and we must beg of him to work that blessed change in us. "Behold the fire and the wood," the ordinance instituted, and all needful provision made for our sacrifice ; "but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering ?" Where is the heart to be offered up to God ? If God did not provide himself a lamb, the solemnity would fail. To him, therefore, we must go to buy such things as we have need of against the feast, that is, to beg them ; for we buy without money and without price : and such buyers shall not be

driven out of God's temple, nor slighted there, however they are looked on in men's markets.

2. Pray that our hearts may be enlarged in the duty. It is the gracious promise of God, that he will open rivers in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; and the joint experience of all the saints, that they looked upon him and were lightened: such outgoings of soul therefore towards God, as may receive the incomes of divine strength and comfort, we should earnestly desire and pray for. Pray that God would grace his own institutions with such manifest tokens of his presence as those two disciples had, who reasoned thus for their own conviction that they had been with Jesus, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" Pray that, by the grace of God, the business of the ordinance may be faithfully done; the work of the day, the sacrament day, in its day, according as the duty of the day requires. (Ezra iii. 4.) Pray that the ends of the ordinance may be sincerely aimed at, and happily attained, and the great intentions of the institution of it answered; that you may not receive the grace of God therein in vain. O that my heart may be engaged to approach to God!—so engaged as that nothing may prevail to disengage it. Come, blessed Spirit, and breathe upon these dry bones! Move upon the waters of the ordinances, and produce a new creation! "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; and blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow forth. And then let my beloved come into his garden," (his it is, and then it will be fit to be called his,) "and eat his pleasant fruits."

3. Pray that we may be favourably accepted of God, both in the preparation and in the performance. In vain do we worship, if God do not accept us. The applause of men is but a poor reward, (such as the hypocrites were content with, and put off with,) if we come short of the favour of God. Herein therefore we should labour, this we should be ambitious of as our highest honour, the top of our preferment, "that whether present or absent we may be accepted of the Lord." About this, therefore, we should be very solicitous in our inquiries: "Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord," so as to please him? For this we should be very importunate in our prayers: "O that I knew where I might find him!" O that I might be met at the table of the Lord

with a blessing, and not with a breach! O that God would smile upon me there, and bid me welcome! O that the beloved of my soul would show me some token for good there, and say unto me, I am thy salvation! "Son, daughter, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine." O that it might be a communion indeed between Christ and my soul! That which is in vogue with the most of men is, "Who will show us any good?" But when I am admitted to touch the top of the golden sceptre, this is my petition, this is my request: "Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon me; and that shall put true gladness into my heart, greater than the joy of harvest."

4. Pray that what is amiss may be pardoned in the blood of Christ. This prayer good Hezekiah hath put into our mouths: (God put it into our hearts!) "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart in sincerity to seek the Lord God of his fathers, and aims honestly, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary." We cannot but be conscious to ourselves, that in many things we come short of our duty, and wander from it. The rule is strict, it is fit it should be so; and yet no particular rule more strict than that general and fundamental law of God's kingdom, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and might." But our own hearts know, and God, who is greater than our hearts, and knows all things, knows that we do not come up to the rule, nor "continue in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." By our deficiencies we become obnoxious to the curse, and should perish by it if we were under the law; but we are encouraged by a penitent believing prayer to sue out our pardon, having an advocate with the Father.

Would we take with us words in these prayers? David's Psalms and St. Paul's Epistles will furnish us with great variety of acceptable words; words which the Holy Ghost teacheth; and other helps of devotion, of which, thanks be to God, we have plenty which may be used to much advantage: and if in these prayers we stir up ourselves to take hold on God, our experience should be added to that of thousands, that Jacob's God never said to Jacob's seed, "Seek ye me in vain."

## CHAPTER VII.

DIRECTIONS IN WHAT FRAME OF SPIRIT WE SHOULD COME  
TO, AND ATTEND UPON, THIS ORDINANCE.

- I. WITH a fixedness of thought. II. With an easiness and calmness of affection. III. With a holy awe and reverence of the Divine Majesty. IV. With a holy jealousy over ourselves, and an humble sense of our own unworthiness, suspecting ourselves, and abasing ourselves. V. With a gracious confidence, as children to a father. VI. With earnest desires towards God. VII. With raised expectations. VIII. With rejoicing and thanksgiving: two things matter of joy. IX. In charity with all men, and a sincere affection to all good Christians, bearing ill-will to none, and good-will to all.

To make up the wedding garment, which is proper for this wedding feast, it is requisite, not only that we have an habitual temper of mind agreeable to the Gospel, but that we have such an actual disposition of spirit as is consonant to the nature and intentions of the ordinance. It is an excellent rule in the Scripture directory of religious worship, "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God;" that is, "Keep thy heart with all diligence." Look well to the motions of thy soul, and observe the steps it takes. When we are to see the goings of our God, our King, in the sanctuary, it concerns us to see our own goings: "Keep thy foot," that is, do nothing rashly; but, "when thou goest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee." It was not enough for the priests under the law that they were washed and dressed in their priestly garments when they were first consecrated, but they must be carefully washed and dressed every time they went in to minister, else they went in at their peril. We are spiritual priests to our God, and must do the office of our priesthood with a due decorum, remembering that this is that which the Lord hath said, (God by his grace speak it home to our hearts!) "I will be



sanctified in them that come nigh me ;” that is, I will be attended as a holy God in a holy manner ; “and so before all the people I will be glorified.” We then sanctify God in holy duties, when we sanctify ourselves in our approaches to them ; that is, when we separate ourselves from every thing that is common or unclean, “from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit,” and consecrate ourselves to God’s glory as our end, and to his service as our business. If we would have the ordinance sanctified to us for our comfort and benefit, we must thus sanctify ourselves for it. Joshua’s command to the people, when they were to follow the ark of the covenant through Jordan, should be still sounding in our ears the night before a sacrament : “Sanctify yourselves, for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.” When the God of glory admits such worms, such a generation of vipers as we are, into covenant and communion with himself ; when he gives gifts, such gifts, to the rebellious ; when by the power of his grace he sanctifies the sinful, and comforts the sorrowful, and gives such holiness and joy as his life from the dead,—surely then he does wonders among us. That we may see these wonders done, and share in the benefit of them,—that we may experience them done in our souls, “Jordan driven back at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob,” to open a passage for us into the heavenly Canaan,—let us sanctify ourselves, and earnestly pray to God to sanctify us.

For our help herein, the following directions perhaps may be of some use :—

I. Let us address ourselves to this service with a fixedness of thought.—There is scarcely any instance of the corruption of nature, and the moral impotence which we are brought under by sin, more complained of by serious Christians, than the vanity of the thoughts, and the difficulty of fixing them on that which is good. They are apt to wander after a thousand impertinences ; it is no easy matter to gather them in, and keep them employed as they should be ; we all find it so by sad experience. “Vain thoughts lodge within us,” and are most a hinderance and disturbance to us when good thoughts are invited into the soul, and should be entertained there. When, therefore, we apply ourselves to a religious service which will find work for all our thoughts, and which

presents objects well worthy of our closest contemplation, we are concerned to take pains with ourselves, to get ourselves engaged, and to "bring every thought into obedience to the law of this solemnity."

This is a time to set aside the thoughts of every thing that is foreign and unseasonable, and all those foolish speculations which used to be the unprofitable amusement of our idle hours, and the sports and pastimes of our carnal minds; away with them all; clear the court of those vagrants, when the doors are to be opened for the King of glory to come in. Are they thoughts that pretend business, and are as buyers and sellers in the temple? Tell them you have other business to mind; bid them depart for this time, and in a more convenient season you will call for them. Do they pretend urgent business, as Nehemiah's enemies did when they sought to give him a diversion? Give them the repulse that he gave, and like him repeat it as oft as they repeat their solicitations: "I am doing a great work; why should the work cease, while I leave it and come down to you?" Do they pretend friendship, and send in the name of thy mother and thy brethren standing without to speak with thee? Yet dismiss them as Christ did, by giving the preference to better friends. Let not thoughts of those we love best, divert us from thinking of Christ, whom we know we must love better.

This is a time to summon the attendance of all the thoughts, and keep them close to the business we are going about. Suffer none to wander, none to trifle: for here is employment, good employment for them all, and all little enough. Though a perfect fixation of thought, without any distractions during the solemnity, is what I believe none can attain to in this state of imperfection, yet it is what we should desire and aim at, and come to as near as we can. Let us charge our thoughts not to wander; keep a watchful eye upon them, and call them back when they begin to rove; keep them in full employment about that which is proper and pertinent, which will prevent their starting aside to that which is otherwise. Come, "bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar," that it may not be to seek when it should be sacrificed. Be able to say through grace, "O God, my heart is fixed;" though unfixed at other times, yet fixed

now. Look up to God for grace to establish the heart and keep it steady; look with sorrow and shame upon its wanderings; shut the door against distractions; watch and pray against the temptation; and when those birds of prey come down upon the sacrifices, do as Abraham did, "drive them away." And while you sincerely endeavour to keep your hearts fixed, be not discouraged; the vain thoughts that are disallowed, striven against, and repented of, though they are our hinderance, yet they shall not be our ruin.

II. Let us address ourselves to this service with an evenness and calmness of affection, free from the disorders and ruffles of passion.—A sedate and quiet spirit, not tossed with the tempests of care and fear, but devolving care on God, and silencing fear with faith; not sinking under the load of temporal burdens, but supporting itself with the hopes of eternal joys; easy itself, because submissive to its God: this is the spirit fit to receive and return divine visits. They were still waters, on the face of which the Spirit moved to produce the world: the Lord was not in the wind, "was not in the earthquake." The prince of the power of the air raised storms, for "he loves to fish in troubled waters;" but the Prince of Peace still storms and quiets the winds and waves, for he casts his net into a calm sea. The waters of Siloah run softly, and without noise. And that "river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God," is none of those, the waters whereof "roar and are troubled."

Let us, therefore, always study to be quiet, and, however we are crossed and disappointed, "let not our hearts be troubled, let them not be cast down and disquieted within us." Let us not create or aggravate our own vexations, nor be put into a disorder by any thing that occurs; but let the peace of God always rule in our hearts, and then that peace will keep them. They whose natural temper is either fretful or fearful, have the more need to double their guard; and, when any disturbance begins in the soul, should give diligence to suppress the tumult with all speed, lest the Holy Spirit be thereby provoked to withdraw, and then they will have but uncomfortable sacraments.

But especially let us compose ourselves, when we approach to the table of the Lord. Charge the peace then in the name of the King of kings; command silence when you expect to

hear the voice of joy and gladness; stop the mouth of clamorous and noisy passions, banish tumultuous thoughts; "suffer not those evil spirits to speak," but expel them; and let your souls return to God, and repose in him as their rest. Bring not unquiet distempered spirits to a transaction which requires the greatest calmness and serenity possible. Let all intemperate hearts be cooled, and the thoughts of that which hath made an uproar in the soul be banished; and let a strict charge be given to all about you, to all within you, "by the roes and the hinds of the field," those innocent and pleasant creatures, that they stir not up, nor awake your love, nor give any disturbance to your communion with him.

III. Let us address ourselves to it with a holy awe and reverence of the Divine Majesty.—We ought to be in the fear of the Lord every day, and all the day long; for he is our strict observer wherever we are, and will be the judge of persons and actions, by whose unerring sentence our eternal state will be decided; but in a special manner he is "greatly to be feared in the assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him;" and the nearer we approach to him, the more reverent we should be. Angels, that always behold God's face, see cause to cover their own. Even then when we are admitted to sit down at God's table, we must remember that we are worshipping at his footstool, and therefore must lay ourselves very low before him, and "in his fear worship towards his holy temple." Let us not rush into the presence of God in a careless manner, as if he were a man like ourselves, nay, so as we would not approach to a prince or a great man; but observe a decorum, "giving to him the glory due unto his name," and taking to ourselves the shame due to ours. If he be a master, where is his fear? We do not worship God acceptably, if we do not worship him "with reverence and godly fear."

1. We must worship him with reverence as a glorious God, a God of infinite perfection and almighty power, who "covers himself with light as with a garment," and yet, as to us, makes darkness his pavilion. Dare we profane the temples of the Holy Ghost by outward indecencies of carriage and behaviour, the manifest indications of a vain and regardless mind? Dare we allow of low and common thoughts of that God who is over all, blessed for evermore?

See him, my soul, see him by faith upon a throne, high and lifted up; not only upon a throne of grace, which encourages thee to come with boldness, but upon a throne of glory and a throne of government, which obliges thee to come with caution. Remember that "God is in heaven, and thou art upon earth; and therefore let thy words be few:" "Be still, and know that he is God," that he is great, and keep thy distance. Let an awful regard to the glories of the eternal God, and the exalted Redeemer, make thee humble and serious, very serious, very humble, in thine approach to this ordinance, and keep thee so during the solemnity.

2. We must also worship him with godly fear, as a holy God, a God whose name is jealous, and who "is a consuming fire." We have reason to fear before him; for we have offended him, and have made ourselves obnoxious to his wrath and curse; and we are but upon our good behaviour, as probationers for his favour. He is not a God that will be mocked, that will be trifled with; if we think to put a cheat upon him, we shall prove in the end to have put the most dangerous cheat upon our own souls. In this act of religion, therefore, as well as in others, we "must work out our salvation with fear and trembling."

IV. Let us come to this ordinance with a holy jealousy over ourselves, and an humble sense of our own unworthiness.—We must sit before the Lord in such a frame as David composed himself into, when he said, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" Nothing prepareth the soul more for spiritual comforts than humility.

1. It may be we have reason to suspect ourselves lest we come unworthily. Though we must not cherish such suspicions of our state as will damp our joy in God, and discourage our hope in Christ, and fill us with amazement; nor such as will take off our chariot wheels, and keep us standing when we should be going forward; yet we must maintain such a jealousy over ourselves as will keep us humble, and take us off from all self-conceit and self-confidence; such a jealousy of ourselves as will keep us watchful, and save us from sinking into carnal security. And now is the proper time to think how many there are that eat bread with Christ,

and yet lift up the heel against him : the hand of him that betrayeth him, perhaps, is with him at the table ; which should put us upon our asking, as the disciples did, just before the first sacrament, " Lord, is it I ? " Many that eat and drink in Christ's presence, will be rejected and disowned by him in the great day. Have I not some reason to fear lest that be my doom at last ? to fear lest, a promise being left me of entering into rest, I should seem to come short ? to fear lest, when the King comes to see the guests, he find me without a wedding garment ? Be not too confident, O my soul, lest thou deceive thyself : " Be not high-minded, but fear."

2. However, it is certain we have reason to abase ourselves ; for, at the best, we are unworthy to come. If we " are less than the least of God's mercies," how much less are we than the greatest, than this which includes all ? We are unworthy of the crumbs that fall from our Master's table ; much more unworthy of the children's bread, and the dainties that are upon the table. Being invited, we may hope to be welcome ; but what is there in us that we should be invited ? Men invite their friends and acquaintance to their tables ; but we are naturally " strangers and enemies in our minds by wicked works," and yet are invited. Men invite such as they think will, with their quality or merit, grace their tables ; but we are more likely to be a reproach to Christ's table, being poor and maimed, halt and blind ; and yet are picked up out of the highways and the hedges. Men invite such as they are under obligations to, or have expectations from ; but Christ is no way indebted to us, nor can he be benefitted by us ; our goodness extends not to him, and yet he invites us. We have much more reason than Mephibosheth had, when he was made a constant guest at David's table, to bow ourselves and say, " What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am ? " They who thus humble themselves shall be exalted.

V. Yet let us come to this ordinance with a gracious confidence, as children to a father, to a father's table ; not with any confidence in ourselves, but in Christ only.—That slavish fear which represents God as a hard master, rigorous in his demands, and extreme to mark what we do amiss ; which straitens our spirits, and subjects us to bond-

age and torment,—must be put off, and striven against; and we must come boldly to the throne of grace, to the table of grace, not as having anything in ourselves to recommend us, but as having a High Priest, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. As a presumptuous rudeness is a provocation to the master of the feast, so a distrustful shyness is displeasing to him; which looks as if we questioned either the sincerity of the invitation, or the sufficiency of the provision.

This is the fault of many good Christians: they come to the sacrament rather like prisoners to the bar, than like friends and children to the table; they come trembling and astonished, and full of confusion. Their apprehensions of the grandeur of the ordinance, and the danger of coming unworthily, run into an extreme, and become a hinderance to the exercise of faith, hope, and love: this extreme we should carefully watch against, because it tends so much to God's dishonour, our own prejudice, and the discouragement of others. Let us remember we have to do with one who is willing to make the best of sincere desires and serious endeavours, though in many things we be defective; and who deals with us in tender mercy, and not in strict justice, and who, though he be out of Christ a consuming fire, yet in Christ is a gracious Father: let, us, "therefore, draw near with a true heart, and in full assurance of faith." It is related of Titus the emperor, that when a poor petitioner presented his address to him with a trembling hand, he was much displeased, and asked him, "Dost thou present thy petition to thy prince, as if thou wert giving meat to a lion?"—Chide thyself for these amazing fears: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?" If the Spirit undertake to work all my works in me, as the Son hath undertaken to work all my works for me, both the one and the other shall be done effectually: therefore "hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him."

VI. Let us come to this ordinance with earnest desire towards God, and communion with him.—It is a feast, a spiritual feast; and we must come to it with an appetite, a spiritual appetite: for the full soul loathes even the honey-comb, and slights the offer of it; but to the hungry soul, that is sensible of its own needs, every bitter thing is sweet, even

the bitterness of repentance, when it is in order to peace and pardon. Our desires towards the world and the flesh must be checked and moderated, and kept under the government of religion and right reason ; for we have been too long spending our money for that which is not bread, and which is, at the best, unsatisfying : but our desires towards Christ must be quickened and stirring. As the hart, the hunted hart, panteth after the refreshment of the water brook, so earnestly must our souls pant for the living God. The invitation is given, and the promise made, to them only that hunger and thirst ; they are called to come to the waters, to come and drink, and it is promised to them that they shall be filled. It is necessary, therefore, that we work upon our hearts the consideration of those things that are proper to kindle this holy fire, and to blow up its sparks into a flame. We are then best prepared to receive temporal mercies, when we are most indifferent to them, and content, if the will of God be so, to be without them. " Did I desire a son of my lord ? " said the good Shunammite. Here the danger is of being too earnest in our desires, as Rachel : " Give me children, or else I die." But we are then best prepared to receive spiritual mercies, when we are most importunate for them : here the desires cannot be too vehement. In the former case, strong desires evidence the prevalency of sense ; but in this they evidence the power of faith, both realizing and valuing the blessings desired. The devout and pious soul " thirsts for God, for the living God," as a thirsty land. It longs, " yea, even faints, for the courts of the Lord," and for communion with God in them. It " breaks for the longing it hath unto God's judgments at all times." Can our souls witness to such desires as these ? O that I might have a more intimate acquaintance with God and Christ, and divine things ! O that I might have the tokens of God's favour, and fuller assurances of his distinguishing love in Jesus Christ ! O that my covenant interest in him, and relation to him, might be cleared up to me, and that I might have more of the comfort of it ! O that I might partake more of the divine grace ; and, by its effectual working on my soul, might be made more conformable to the divine will and likeness ; more holy, humble, spiritual, heavenly, and more meet for the inheritance ! O



that I might have the earnest of the Spirit in my heart, sealing me to the day of redemption!

Thus the desire of our souls must be towards the Lord, and towards the remembrance of his name. In this imperfect state, where we are at home in the body, and absent from the Lord, our love to God acts more in holy desires than in holy delights. All those who have the Lord for their God agree to desire nothing more than God, for they know they have enough in him; but yet still they desire more and more of God; for, till they come to heaven, they will never have enough of him. Come then, my soul, why art thou so cold in thy desires towards those things which are designed for thy peculiar satisfaction, distinct from the body? Why so eager for the meat that perisheth, and so indifferent to that which endures to everlasting life? Hast thou no desire to that which is so necessary to thy support, and without which thou art undone? No desire to that which will contribute so much to thy profit, and yield thee inexpressible satisfaction? Provision is made in the Lord's Supper of bread to strengthen thee; will not the sense of thine own weakness and emptiness make thee hunger after that? Canst thou be indifferent to that which is the staff of thy life? Provision is made of pleasant food, fat things full of marrow, and wines on the lees; art thou not desirous of dainties, such dainties? Was the tree of knowledge such a temptation, because it was "pleasant to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise," that our first parents would break through the hedge of a divine command, and venture all that was dear to them to come at it? and shall not the tree of life, which we are not only allowed, but commanded, to eat of, and the fruit of which will nourish us to life eternal,—shall not that appear more pleasant in our eyes, and more to be desired? God, even thine own God, who hath wherewithal to supply all thy needs, and hath promised to be to thee a God all-sufficient, a God that is enough,—he hath said, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;" thou art not straitened in him, be not straitened in thine own desires.

VII. Let us come to this ordinance with raised expectations.—The same faith that enlargeth the desire, and draws it out to a holy vehemence, should also elevate the hope,

and ripen it to a holy confidence. When we come thirsting to these waters, we need not fear that they will prove like the brooks in summer, which disappoint the weary traveller; for, "when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place." Such are all the broken cisterns of the creature; they perform not what they promise, or rather what we foolishly promise to ourselves from them: no, but these are inexhaustible fountains of living waters, in which there is enough for all, though ever so many; enough for each, though ever so needy; enough for me, though most unworthy.

Come, my soul, what dost thou look for at the table of the Lord? The maker of the feast is God himself, who doth nothing little or mean, but is "able to do exceeding abundantly above what we are able to ask or think." When he gives, he gives like himself, gives like a king, gives like a God, all things richly to enjoy; considering not what becomes such ungrateful wretches as we are to receive, but what it becomes such a bountiful benefactor as he is to give. A lively faith may expect that which is rich and great from him that is possessor of heaven and earth, and all the wealth of both; and that which is kind and gracious from him that is the "Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation." A lively faith may expect all that is purchased by the blood of Christ from a God who is righteous in all his ways, and all that is promised in the new covenant from a God who cannot lie nor deceive.

The provision in this feast is Christ himself, and all his benefits; all we need to save us from being miserable, and all we can desire to make us happy: and glorious things, no doubt, may be expected with him, in whom "it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell." Let our expectations be built upon a right foundation; not any merit of our own, but God's mercy, and Christ's mediation: and then build large, as large as the new covenant in its utmost extent; build high, as high as heaven in all its glory. Come expecting to see that which is most illustrious, and to taste and receive that which is most precious; come expecting that with which you will be abundantly satisfied.

Though what is prepared seems to a carnal eye poor and scanty, like the five loaves set before five thousand men; yet, when Christ hath the breaking of those loaves, they

shall all eat and be filled. In this ordinance the oil is multiplied, the oil of gladness; it is multiplied in the pouring out, as the widow's oil. Do as she did, therefore: bring empty vessels, bring not a few, they shall all be filled; the expectations of faith shall all be answered; the oil stays not, while there is an empty vessel waiting to be filled. Give faith and hope their full compass, and thou wilt find, as that widow did, there is enough of this oil, this multiplied oil, this oil from the good olive, to pay thy debt, and enough beside for thee and thine to live upon. As we oft wrong ourselves by expecting too much from the world, which is vanity and vexation; so we often wrong ourselves by expecting too little from God, whose "mercy is upon us, according as we hope in him," and who, in exerting his power, and conferring his gifts, still saith, "According to your faith be it unto you." The king of Israel lost his advantage against the Syrians, by "smiting thrice, and then staying, when he should have smitten five or six times." And we do often, in like manner, prejudice ourselves by the weakness of our faith: we receive little, because we expect little; and are like them among whom "Christ could not do many mighty works, because of their unbelief."

VIII. Let us come to this ordinance with rejoicing and thanksgiving.—These two must go together; for whatever is the matter of our rejoicing, must be the matter of our thanksgiving. Holy joy is the heart of our thankful praise, and thankful praise the language of holy joy; and both these are very seasonable when we are coming to an ordinance which is instituted both for the honour of the Redeemer, and for the comfort of the redeemed.

Beside the matter of joy and praise with which we are furnished in our attendance on the ordinance, even our approach to it is such an honour, such a favour, as obligeth us to "come before his presence with singing, and even to enter into his gates with thanksgiving."—"With gladness and rejoicing shall the royal bride be brought." Those that in their preparations for the ordinance have been "sowing in tears, may not only come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them," but go with rejoicing to fetch their sheaves, to meet the ark, "lifting up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption," and the sealing

of them to the day of redemption, draws nigh. Let those that are of a sorrowful spirit hearken to this; cheer up and be comforted: "This day is wholly unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep." "It is the day that the Lord hath made, and we must rejoice and be glad in it;" and the joy of the Lord will be our strength, and oil to our wheels. All things considered, thou hast a great deal more reason than Haman had, "to go in merrily with the king to the banquet of wine."

Two things may justly be matter of our rejoicing and thanksgiving in our approach to this ordinance:—

1. That God hath put such a price as this in our hands to get wisdom; that such an ordinance as this was instituted for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace; that it is transmitted down to us, is administered among us, and we are invited to it. This is a token for good, in which we have reason to rejoice, and be very thankful for, that our lot is not cast either among those who are strangers to the Gospel, and so have not this ordinance at all, or among those who are enemies to the Gospel, and have it wretchedly corrupted, and turned into an idolatrous service; but that Wisdom's table is spread among us, and her voice heard in our streets, and we are called to her feasts; we have a nail in God's holy place, a settlement in his house, and stated opportunities of communion with him. "If the Lord had been pleased to kill us, he would not have shown us such things as these." O what a privilege is it thus to eat and drink in Christ's presence! to sit down under his shadow, at his table, with his friends and favourites! that we, who deserved to have been set with the dogs of his flock, should be set with the children of his family, and eat of the children's bread! nay, that we should be numbered among his priests, and eat of the dedicate things! "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

2. That God hath given us a heart to the price in our hands. We have reason to be thankful that he hath not only invited us to this feast, which is a token of his good will towards us; but that he hath inclined us to accept the invitation, which is the effect of a good work upon us. Many that are called make light of it, and go their way to their farms and merchandise; and, if we had been left to ourselves, we should have made the same foolish choice, and,

in the greatness of our folly, should have gone astray, and wandered endlessly. It was free grace that made us willing in the day of power, and graciously compelled us to come in to the Gospel feast; it was distinguishing grace that revealed to us babes the things that were hid from the wise and prudent: let that grace have the glory, and let us have the joy, of this blessed work.

IX. Let us come to this ordinance in charity with all men, and with a sincere affection to all good Christians.—It is a love feast; and if we do not come in love, we come without the wedding garment, and forfeit the comforts of the feast. This is to be seriously thought of when we bring our gift to the altar, as we hope for acceptance there. When we come to the sacrament, we must bring with us ill-will to none, good-will to all, but especially to them who are of the household of faith.

1. We must bear ill-will to none; no, not to those that have been most injurious and provoking to us: though they have affronted us ever so much in our honour, wronged us in our interest, and set themselves to vilify us, and do us mischief, yet we must not hate them, nor entertain any malice towards them; we must not be desirous or studious of revenge, to seek their hurt in any respect, but must from our heart forgive them, as we ourselves are, and hope to be, forgiven of God. We must see to it, that there be not the least degree of enmity to any person in the world lodged in our breast, but carefully purge out all that old leaven; not only lay aside the thoughts of it for the present, but wholly pluck up and cast out that root of bitterness, "which bears gall and wormwood." Pure hands must, in this ordinance, as well as in prayer, be "lifted up without wrath and doubting." How can we expect that God should be reconciled to us, if we bring not with us a disposition to be reconciled to our brethren? for our trespasses against God are unspeakably greater than the worst of our brethren's trespasses against us. O that each would apply this caution to themselves! You have a neighbour, that, upon some disgust conceived, you cannot find in your hearts to speak to, nor to speak well of; some one, that you have entertained a prejudice against, and would willingly do an evil turn to, if it lay in your power; some one, of whom, it may be you are ready to say,

you cannot endure the sight. And dare you retain such a spirit when you come to this ordinance? Can you conceal it from God? or do you think you can justify it at his bar, and make it out that you do well to be angry? Let the fear of God's wrath, and the hope of Christ's love, reduce you to a better temper; and when you celebrate the memorial of the dying of the Lord Jesus, be sure you remember this, that he is our peace, and that he died to slay all enmities.

2. We must bear good-will to all, with a particular affection to all good Christians. Christian charity doth not only forbid that which is any way injurious, but it requires that which is kind and friendly.

The desire of our hearts must be towards the welfare of all. If we be indeed solicitous about the salvation of our own souls, we cannot but have a tender concern for the souls of others, and be hearty well-wishers to their salvation likewise; "for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved." True grace hates monopolies. We must thus love those whose wickedness we are bound to hate; and earnestly desire their happiness, even while we industriously decline their fellowship.

But the "delight of our souls must be in the saints that are on the earth, those excellent ones," as David was. They are precious in God's sight, and honourable; and they should be so in ours. They "have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ:" and therefore, by a sincere and affectionate love to them, we also should have fellowship with them. Our hearts will then be comforted, when they are "knit together in love." This love must not be confined to those of our own communion, our own way and denomination: then we love them for our own sakes, because they credit us; not for Christ's sake, because they honour him: but, since God is no respecter of persons, we must not be such. "In every nation, he that fears God, and works righteousness, is accepted of him," and should be so of us. Doubtless, there may be a diversity of apprehensions in the less weighty matters of the law,—such as the distinction of meats and days, and diversity of practice accordingly,—and yet a sincerity of mutual love, according to the law of Christ. Those who think it is not possible, should be con-

tent to speak for themselves only, and must believe there are those who have much satisfaction in being able to say, that they love the image of Christ wherever they see it, and highly value a good man, though not in every thing of their mind. He that casteth out devils in Christ's name must be dear to us, though he follow not us. The differences that are among Christians, though fomented by the malice of Satan for the ruin of love, are permitted by the wisdom of God for the trial of love, that they which are perfect therein may be made manifest. Herein a Christian commendeth his love, when he loves those who differ from him, and joins in affection to those with whom he cannot concur in opinion: this is thank-worthy. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; they that have tasted of the bread of life, and the water of life, know it not; but it is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. He, therefore, that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God;" and therefore, though he esteem not our days, though he relish not our meats, he should be acceptable and dear to us.

Let us then, in our approach to this sacrament, stir up ourselves to holy love, love without dissimulation: let us bear those on our hearts, whom the great High Priest of our profession bears on his; and, as we are "taught of God to love one another, let us increase therein more and more." Christ having loved us, is a good reason why we should love him: Christ having loved our brethren also, is a good reason why we should love them. "Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for" Christians to be kindly affectionated one towards another, of one heart, and of one soul! There the Lord commands the blessing, and gives earnest of the joys of that world, where love is perfected and reigns eternally.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SOME ACCOUNT OF THE AFFECTING SIGHTS THAT ARE TO BE SEEN BY FAITH IN THIS ORDINANCE.

- I. IN general: Come and see the Lamb that had been slain opening the seals. II. In particular:—(i.) See the evil of sin. (ii.) See the justice of God: in two things. (iii.) See the love of Christ: opened in six properties of that love. (iv.) See the conquest of Satan: how Christ conquered Satan in two things. (v.) See the worth of souls: two inferences from that sight. (vi.) See the purchase of the blessings of the new covenant: opened in two things.

CARE being taken, by the grace of God, to compose ourselves into a serious frame of spirit agreeable to the ordinance, we must next apply ourselves to that which is the proper business of it. And the first thing to be done is, to contemplate that which is represented and set before us there. This David aimed at when he coveted to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his "life, that he might behold the beauty of the Lord;" "might see his power and his glory." To the natural man, who receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, there appears in it nothing surprising, nothing affecting, no form nor comeliness; but to that faith which is the "substance and evidence of things not seen," there appears a great sight, which, like Moses, it will, with a holy reverence, turn aside now to see. As, therefore, in our preparation for this ordinance, we should pray, with David, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of thy law and Gospel;" so we should, with Abraham, "lift up our eyes now and look."

When the Lamb that had been slain had taken the book, and was going to open the seals, St. John, who had the honour to be a witness in vision of the solemnity, was loudly called, by one of the four living creatures, to come and see.



The same is the call given to us when, in this sacrament, there is a door opened in heaven, and we are bidden to come up hither.

I. In general, we are here called to see the Lamb that had been slain opening the seals.—This is the general idea we are to have of the ordinance. We would have thought ourselves highly favoured indeed, and beloved disciples, if we had seen it in vision, as John did; behold, we are all invited to see it in a sacramental representation!

In this ordinance is showed the Lamb as it had been slain. John the Baptist pointed to him as the Lamb of God, and called upon his followers to behold him,—a Lamb designed for sacrifice, in order to the taking away of the sins of the world, a harmless, spotless Lamb: but John the Divine goes farther, and sees him a Lamb slain, now sacrificed for us in the outer court; and not only so, but appearing “in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and of the elders,” as if he were newly slain, bleeding afresh, and yet alive, and “lives for evermore,” constantly presenting his sacrifice within the veil; the blood of the Lamb always flowing, that it may still be sprinkled on our consciences, to purify and pacify them, and may still speak in heaven for us, in that prevailing intercession which the Lord Jesus ever lives to make there, in virtue of his satisfaction.

In this ordinance the Lord's death is shown forth; it is shown forth to us, that it may be shown forth by us. Jesus Christ is here “evidently set forth crucified among us,” that we may “all with open face behold, as in a glass, the glory of God in the face of Christ.” Thus, as Christ “was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” in the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, and the application of his merits to the saints that lived then; so he will be the Lamb slain to the end of the world, in the word and sacraments of the New Testament, and the application of his merits to the saints that are now, and shall be in every age. Still he is seen as a Lamb that had been slain; for this sacrifice doth not, like the Old Testament sacrifices, decay and wax old.

This is the sight, the great sight: we are here to see the bush burning, and yet not consumed; for the Lord is in it his people's God and Saviour. The wounds of this Lamb

are here open before us. Come, see in Christ's hands the very print of the nails, see in his side the very marks of the spear. Behold him in his agony, sweating as if it had been "great drops of blood falling to the ground;" then accommodating himself to the work he had undertaken; couching between two burdens, and bowing his shoulder to bear them. Behold him "in his bonds, when the breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits," and he was bound that we might go out free. Behold him at the bar, prosecuted and condemned as a criminal, because he was made sin for us, and had undertaken to answer for our guilt. Behold him upon the cross, enduring the pain and despising the shame of the cursed tree. Here is his body broken, his blood shed, his soul poured out unto death; all his sufferings, with all their aggravations, are here, in such a manner as the Divine Wisdom saw fit, by an instituted ordinance, represented to us, and set before us.

In this ordinance is shown us the Lamb that was slain, opening the seals of the everlasting Gospel: not only discovering to us the glories of the divine light, but dispensing to us the graces of divine love; opening the seals of the fountain of life, which had been long as a spring shut up; and rolling away the stone, that from thence we may draw water with joy; opening the seals of the book of life, that things hid from ages and generations might be manifested unto us, and we might know the things which are freely given us of God; opening the seals of God's treasures, "the unsearchable riches of Christ," which should have been sealed up for ever from us, if he had not found out a way to supply and enrich us out of them; opening the seals of heaven's gates, which had been shut and sealed against us; and consecrating for us "a new and living way into the holiest by his own blood." This is a glorious sight, and that which cannot but raise our expectations of something further; this is the principal sight given us in this ordinance: but when we view this accurately, we shall find there is that in it which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard."

II. In particular, we are here called to see many other things which we may infer from this general representation of the sufferings of Christ.—It is a very fruitful subject, and

that which will lead us to the consideration of divers things very profitable. When we come to this sacrament, we should ask ourselves the question, which Christ put to those that had been John's hearers, "What went ye out for to see?" What do we come to the Lord's table to see? We come to see that which, if God gives us the eye of faith to discern it, will be very affecting. Let this voice, therefore, be still sounding in our ears, "Come and see."

(I.) Come and see the evil of sin.—This we are concerned to see, that we may be truly humbled for our sins past, and may be firmly engaged by resolution and holy watchfulness against sin for the future. It was for our transgressions that Christ was thus wounded, for our iniquities that he was bruised. "Know therefore," O my soul, "and see, that it is an evil and bitter thing, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." That was a great provocation to God, which nothing would atone for but such a sacrifice; a dangerous disease to us, which nothing would heal but such a medicine. "This is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart."

Here sin appears sin, and by the cross of Christ, as well as by the command of God, it becomes exceeding sinful. The malignity of its nature was very great, and more than we can conceive or express: for it had made such a breach between God and man as none less than he who was both God and man could repair; none less than he durst undertake to be made sin for us, to become surety for that debt, and intercessor for such offenders. It was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin; the stain was too deep to be washed out so: "sacrifice and offering God did not desire," would not accept as sufficient to purge us from it; no, the Son of God himself must come to "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," or it will for ever separate between us and God.

Here sin appears death, and in the cross of Christ shows itself exceeding hurtful. Behold, my soul, and see what mischief sin makes, by observing how dear it cost the Redeemer, when he undertook to satisfy for it; how he sweated and groaned, bled and died, when the "Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all;" look on sin through this glass, and

it will appear in its true colour, black and bloody! nothing can be more so. The fatal consequences of sin are seen more in the sufferings of Christ, than in all the calamities that it has brought upon the world of mankind. O what a painful, what a shameful thing is sin, which put the Lord Jesus to so much pain, to so much shame, when he bore our "sins in his own body upon the tree!"

See this, my soul, with application: it was thy sin, thy own iniquity, that lay so heavy upon the Lord Jesus, when he cried out, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." It was thy pride and passion, thy worldliness and uncleanness, the carnal mind in thee, which is enmity against God, that crowned him with thorns, and nailed him to the cross, and laid him for a time under the sense of God's withdrawing from him. Is this so? And shall I ever again make a mock at sin? ever again make a light matter of that of which Christ made so great a matter? God forbid! "Is it a small thing to weary men, but" have I by my sin "wearyed my God also?" Have I made him thus to serve, and thus to suffer by my sins? and shall I ever be reconciled to sin again? or shall I ever think a favourable thought of it any more? No: by the grace of God I never will. The carnal pleasure and worldly profit that sin can promise, will never balance the pain and shame to which it put my Redeemer.

Meditate revenge, my soul, a holy revenge, such a revenge as will be no breach of the law of charity; such a revenge as is one of the fruits of godly sorrow. If sin was the death of Christ, why should not I be the death of sin? When David lamented Saul and Jonathan, who were slain by the archers of the Philistines, it is said, "He taught the children of Judah the use of the bow," that they might avenge the death of their princes upon their enemies. Let us thence receive instruction.—Did sin, did my sin crucify Christ? And shall not I crucify it? If it be asked, "Why, what evil has it done?" say, It cost the blood of the Son of God to expiate it: and therefore cry out so much the more, "Crucify it, crucify it." And thus all that are Christ's have in some measure crucified the flesh. As Christ died for sin, so we must die to sin.

(II.) Come and see the justice of God.—Many ways the great Judge of the world hath made it to appear that he

hates sin ; and, both by the judgments of his mouth in the written word, and the judgments of his hand in the course of his providence, he hath revealed "his wrath from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." It is true, that he is gracious and merciful ; but it is as true, that "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth." God, even our God, is a consuming fire, and will reckon for the violation of his laws, and the injuries done to his crown and dignity. The tenor of the Scripture, from the second of Genesis to the last of Revelation, proves this, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." In many remarkable punishments of sin, even in this life, it is written as with a sunbeam, so that he that runs may read, that "the Lord is righteous."

But never did the justice of God appear so conspicuous, so illustrious, as in the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ set before us in this ordinance. Here his "righteousness is like the great mountains, though his judgments are a great deep." Come and see the holy God, showing his displeasure against sin in the death of Christ, more than in the ruin of angels, the drowning of the old world, the burning of Sodom, and the destruction of Jerusalem : nay, more than in the torments of hell, all things considered.

God manifested his justice, in demanding such satisfaction for sin as Christ was to make by the blood of his cross. Hereby he made it to appear how great the provocation was which was done him by the sin of man, that not only such an excellent Person must be chosen to intercede for us, but his sufferings and death must be insisted on to atone for us. Sin, being committed against an infinite Majesty, seems by this to have in it a kind of infinite malignity, that the remission of it could not be procured but by a satisfaction of infinite value. If mere mercy had pardoned sin, without any provision made to answer the demands of injured justice, God had declared his goodness ; but, when Jesus Christ is set forth to be a propitiation for sin, and God is pleased to put himself to so vast an expense for the saving of the honour of his government in the forgiveness of sin, this declares his righteousness ; it "declares, I say, at this time, his righteousness ; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Sin hath wronged God in his honour ; for he cannot other-

wise be wronged by any of his creatures. In breaking the law, we dishonour God ; we sin, and come short of his glory. For this wrong, satisfaction must be made. That which first offers, is the eternal ruin of the sinner : let the sentence of the law be executed, and thereby God may get him honour upon us, in lieu of that he should have had from us. But can no expedient be found out to satisfy God, and yet save the sinner ? Is it not possible to offer an equivalent ? “ Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil ? Shall we give our firstborn for our transgressions, the fruit of our body for the sin of our soul ? ” No ; these are not tantamount : no submissions, sorrows, supplications, services, or sufferings of ours, can be looked upon as a valuable consideration for the righteous God to proceed upon, in forgiving such injuries, and restoring such criminals to his favour. The best we do is imperfect ; the utmost we can do is already owing. Here, therefore, the Lord Jesus interposeth ; undertakes to make a full reparation of the injury done to God’s glory by sin ; clothes himself with our nature, and becomes surety for us, as Paul for Onesimus : “ If they have wronged thee, or owe thee ought, put that on mine account ; I have written it with mine own hand,” with mine own blood “ I will repay it.” He was made sin for us, a curse for us, an offering for our sin. He “ bore our sins in his own body on the tree ;” and thus the justice of God was not only satisfied, but greatly glorified. Come and see how bright it shines here.

God manifested his justice, in dealing as he did with him who undertook to make satisfaction. Having “ laid upon him the iniquity of us all,” he laid it home to him ; for “ it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief.” He was not only “ despised and rejected of men,” who knew him not, but he was “ stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” The ancient way in which God testified his acceptance of sacrifices, was by consuming them with fire from heaven. The wrath of God, which the offerers deserved should have fallen upon them, fell upon the offering ; and so the destruction of the sacrifice was the escape of the sinner. Christ becoming a sacrifice for us, the fire of God’s wrath descended upon him, which troubled his soul, put him into an agony, and made him cry out, “ My God, my God, why hast thou for-

saken me?" "Come, then, and behold the goodness and severity of God." "Christ being made sin for us," God did not spare him. "By the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, he was delivered to them who, with wicked hands, crucified and slew him." "Awake, O sword," the sword of divine justice, furbished and bathed in heaven!—awake "against my Shepherd, and against the Man that is my Fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd."

Let us look on the sufferings of Christ, and say, as he himself hath taught us, "If this be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" What was done to him, shows what should have been done to us if Christ had not interposed, and what will be done to us if we reject him. If this were done to the Son of God's love, what shall be done to the generation of his wrath? If this were done to one that had but sin imputed to him, who, as he had no corruptions of his own for Satan's temptations to fasten upon, so he had no guilt of his own for God's wrath to fasten upon; who was as a green tree, not apt to take fire; what shall be done to those who have sin inherent in them, which makes them as a dry tree, combustible and proper fuel for the fire of God's wrath? If this were done to one that had done so much good, what shall be done to us that had done so little? If the Lord Jesus himself was put into an agony by the things that were done to him, was sorrowful, and very heavy, can our hearts endure, or can our hands be strong, when God shall deal with us? Who would "set the briars and thorns against him in battle?" From the sufferings of Christ, we may easily infer what a "fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God."

(III.) Come and see the love of Christ.—This is that which, with a peculiar regard, we are to observe and contemplate in this ordinance: where we see Christ and him crucified, we cannot but see the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. When Christ did but drop a tear over the grave of Lazarus, the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" Much more reason have we to say, when we commemorate the shedding of his blood for us, "See how he loved us!" Greater love hath no man than this, to lay down his life for his friend. Thus Christ hath loved us; nay, he laid down his life for us when we were enemies. Herein is love,—love

without precedent, love without parallel. Come and see the wonders of this love.

It was free love.—Christ gave himself for us; and what more free than a gift? It was free, for it was unasked: nothing cried for this mercy, but our own misery. When no eye pitied us, of his own good will he relieved us; “said to us, when we were in our blood, Live: yea, he said to us, Live.” That was a time of love indeed. It was free, for it was unmerited: there was nothing in us desirable, nothing promising; the relation we stood in to God as creatures, did but aggravate our rebellion, and make us the more obnoxious. As he could not obtain any advantage by our happiness, so he would not have sustained any damage by our misery. If there was no profit in our blood, yet for certain there would have been no loss by it; no, but the reasons of his love were fetched from within himself, as God’s love of Israel was. He loved them, because he would love them. It was free, for it was unforced: he willingly offered himself. “Here am I, send me.” This sacrifice was bound to the horns of the altar, only with the cords of his own love.

It was distinguishing love.—It was good-will to fallen man, and not to fallen angels. He did not lay hold on a world of sinking angels; as their tree fell, so it lies, and so it is like to lie for ever: but on the seed of Abraham he taketh hold. The nature of angels was more excellent than that of man, their place in the creation higher, their capacity for honouring God greater; and yet they were passed by. Man that sinned, was pitied and helped; while angels that sinned, were not so much as spared. The deplorable state of devils serves as a foil to set off the blessed state of the ransomed of the Lord.

It was condescending love.—Never did love humble itself and stoop so low as the love of Christ did. It was great condescension, that he should pitch his love upon creatures so mean, “man that is a worm, the son of man that is a worm;” so near akin to the brutal part of the creation, especially since the fall, that one would think he should rather be the scorn than the love of the spiritual and purely intellectual world: yet this is the creature that is chosen to be the darling of heaven, and in whom Wisdom’s delights



are. But especially that, in prosecution of his love, he should humble himself as he did: humble himself to the earth in his incarnation; humble himself into the earth in the meanness of life; humble himself into the earth, when he went to the grave, the place where mankind appears under the greatest mortification and disgrace.

It was expensive love.—His washing the feet of his disciples is spoken of as an act of love to them; and that was condescending love, but not costly like this. He loved us, and bought us, and paid dear for us, that we might be unto him a purchased people. Because he loved Israel, he gave “men for them, and people for their life, even Egypt for their ransom.” But because he loved us, he gave himself for us, even his own blood for the ransom of our souls.

It was strong love, strong as death, and which many waters could not quench.—This was the greatness of his strength, in which the Redeemer travelled, who is mighty to save; it was strong to break through great difficulties, and trample upon the discouragements that lay in his way. When he had this baptism of blood to be baptized with, it was love that said, “How am I straitened till it be accomplished!” It was love that said, “With desire have I desired to eat this passover,” which he knew was to be his last. It was the strength of his love that reconciled him to the bitter cup which was put into his hand, and made him waive his petition, that it might pass from him; which, for ought we know, if he had insisted upon, it had been granted, and the work undone.

It was an everlasting love.—It was from everlasting in the counsels of it, and will be to everlasting in the consequences of it. Not like our love, which comes up in a night, and perisheth in a night. He loved to the end, and went on with his undertaking till he said, “It is finished.” Never was there such a constant lover as the blessed Jesus, whose gifts and callings are without repentance.

(iv.) Come and see the conquest of Satan.—And this is a very pleasing sight to all those who through grace are turned from the power of Satan unto God; as it was to the Israelites, when they had newly shaken off the Egyptian yoke, to see their taskmasters and pursuers dead upon the sea shore. Come and see our Joshua discomfiting the

Amalekites ; our David, with a sling and a stone, vanquishing that proud Goliath, who not only himself basely deserted, but then boldly defied, the armies of the living God. Come and see, not Michael and his angels, but Michael himself ; Michael our Prince, who trode the wine-press alone, entering the lists with the dragon and his angels, and giving them an effectual overthrow ; the Seed of the woman, though bruised in the heel, yet breaking the serpent's head, according to that ancient promise made unto the fathers. Come and see the great Redeemer, not only making peace with earth, but making war with hell ; dispossessing the strong man armed, "spoiling principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, and triumphing over them in his cross."

(v.) Come and see Christ triumphing over Satan at his death.—Though the war was in heaven, yet some fruits of the victory even then appeared on earth. Though, when Christ was in the extremity of his sufferings, there was darkness over all the land, which gave the powers of darkness all the advantage they could wish for ; yet he beat the enemy upon his own ground. Satan, some think, terrified Christ in his agony ; but then he kept possession of his own soul, and steadily adhered to his Father's will, and to his own undertaking : so he baffled Satan. Satan put it into the heart of Judas to betray him ; but in the immediate ruin of Judas, who presently went and hanged himself, Christ triumphed over Satan, and made a show of him openly. Satan tempted Peter to deny Christ, desiring to have him, that he might sift him as wheat ; but, by the speedy repentance of Peter, who, upon a look from Christ, went out and wept bitterly, Christ triumphed over Satan, and baffled him in his designs. Satan was ready to swallow up the thief upon the cross ; but Christ rescued him from the gates of hell, and raised him to the glories of heaven, and thereby spoiled Satan, who was as a lion disappointed of his prey.

Come and see Christ triumphing over Satan by his death ; the true Samson, that did more towards the ruin of the Philistines dying than living : having by his life and doctrine destroyed the works of the devil, at length by his death he destroyed the devil himself, "that had the power of death." In him was fulfilled the blessing of the tribe of Gad : "A troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome

at the last ;” and “through him that loved us we are conquerors, yea, more than conquerors.”

Christ, by dying, made atonement for sin ; and so conquered Satan. By the merit of his death he satisfied God's justice for the sins of all that should believe in him ; and if the judge remit the sentence, the executioner hath nothing to do with the prisoner. We were ready to fall under the curse, to be made an anathema, that is, to be delivered unto Satan ; Christ said, “Upon me be the curse :” this blotted out the handwriting that was against us, took that out of the way, nailed that to the cross ; and so Satan is spoiled. “Who shall condemn ? It is Christ that died.” When God forgives the iniquities of his people, he brings back their captivity. If we shall not come into condemnation, we are saved from coming into execution.

Christ, by dying, sealed the Gospel of grace, and purchased the Spirit of grace ; and so conquered Satan. The Spirit acting by the Gospel as the instrument, and the Gospel animated by the Spirit as the principal, are become “mighty to the pulling down of Satan's strongholds.” Thus a foundation is laid for a believer's victory over the temptations and terrors of the wicked one. Christ's victory over Satan is our victory, and we overcome him “by the blood of the Lamb.” Thus “kings of armies did flee apace,” and even they that tarried at home, and did themselves contribute nothing to the victory, yet “divided the spoil.” Christ having thus trodden Satan under our feet, he calls to us, as Joshua to the captains of Israel, “Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings.” “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you ;” for he is a conquered enemy.

(VI.) Come and see the worth of souls.—We judge of the value of a thing by the price which a wise man that understands it gives for it. He that made souls, and had reason to know them, provided for their redemption, not “corruptible things as silver and gold, but the precious blood of” his own Son. It was not a purchase made hastily, for it was the contrivance of infinite Wisdom from eternity ; it was not made for necessity, for he neither needed us nor could he be benefitted by us ; but thus he was pleased to teach us what account we should make of our own souls, and their salvation and happiness. The incarnation of Christ put a

great honour upon the human nature : never was it so dignified, as when it was taken into union with the divine nature in the person of Emmanuel. But the death and sufferings of Christ add much more to its value ; for he laid down his own life to be a ransom of ours, when nothing else was sufficient to answer the price. " Lord, what is man, that " he should be thus visited, thus regarded,—that the Son of God should not only dwell among us, but die for us ?

Now, let us see this, and learn how to put a value upon our own souls. Not so as to advance our conceit of ourselves,—nothing can be more humbling and debasing, than to see our lives sold by our own folly, and redeemed by the merit of another ; but so as to increase our concern for ourselves, and our own spiritual interests. Shall the souls, the precious souls, upon which Christ put such a value, and paid such a price for, debase and undervalue themselves so far as to become slaves to Satan, and drudges to the world and the flesh ? We are bought with a price ; and therefore we not only injure the purchaser's right to us, if we alienate ourselves to another, but we reproach his wisdom in paying such a price, if we alienate ourselves for a thing of nought. It is the apostle's argument against uncleanness, and against making themselves the servants of men. Christ having purchased our souls at such a rate, we disparage them if we stake them to the trifles of this world, or pawn them for the base and sordid pleasures of sin. Shall that birthright be sold for a mess of pottage, which Christ bought with his own blood ? No ; while we live, let our souls be our darling, for his sake to whom they were so dear. If Christ died and suffered so much to save our souls, let us not hazard the losing of them, though it be to gain the whole world.

Let us see this, and learn how to put a value upon the souls of others. This forbids us to do any thing that may turn to the prejudice of the souls of others, by drawing them to sin, or discouraging them in that which is good. The apostle lays a great stress upon this argument, against the abuse of our Christian liberty, to the offence of others : " Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died." Shall not we deny ourselves and our own satisfaction, rather than occasion guilt or grief to them for whom Christ humbled himself, even to the death of the cross ? Shall we

slight those upon whom Christ put such a value? Shall we set those with the dogs of our flock, whom Christ purchased with his own blood, and set among the lambs of his flock? God forbid.

This also commands us to do all we can for the spiritual welfare and salvation of the souls of others. Did Christ think them worth his blood? and shall not we think them worth our care and pains? Shall not we willingly do our utmost to save a soul from death, and thereby hide a multitude of sins, when Christ did so much, and suffered so much, to make it possible? Shall not we pour out our prayers for them for whom Christ poured out his soul unto death, and bear them upon our hearts whom Christ laid so near his? Blessed Paul, in consideration hereof, not only made himself the servant of all, to please them for their edification, but was willing to be "offered upon the sacrifice and service of their faith," and so to fill up what was behind of the afflictions of Christ for his body's sake. And if we be at any time called upon even to lay down our lives for the brethren, we must remember that in that, as well as in washing their feet, Christ hath left us an example.

(VII.) Come and see the purchase of the blessings of the new covenant.—The blood of Christ was not only the ransom of our forfeited lives, and the redemption of our souls from everlasting misery; but it was the valuable consideration upon which the grant of eternal life and happiness is grounded. Christ's death is our life; that is, it is not only our salvation from death, but it is the fountain of all our joys, and the foundation of all our hopes. All the comforts we have in possession, and all we have in prospect; all the privileges of our way, and all those of our home, are the blessed fruits of that accursed tree on which our Redeemer died.

See the blood of Christ, the spring from whence all the blessings of the covenant flow. That is the price of all our pardons: "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:" without the shedding of blood, that precious blood, there had been no remission. That is the purchase of the divine favour, which is our life: we are made accepted only in the beloved. Peace is made, a covenant of peace settled, and peace secured to all the sons,—

peace by the blood of his cross, and not otherwise. That is the price paid for the "purchased possession, that they which are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance." Christ was made a curse for us, not only to redeem us from the curse of the law, but that we through him might inherit the blessing. Thus, "out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness." Behold, he shows us a mystery.

See the blood of Christ, the stream in which all the blessings of the covenant flow to us. The blood of Christ, as it is exhibited to us in this ordinance, is this vehicle, the channel of conveyance by which all graces and comforts descend from heaven to earth. "This cup is the new testament in the blood of Christ," and so it becomes a cup of blessing, a cup of consolation, a cup of salvation. All the hidden manna comes to us in this dew. It is the blood of Christ speaking for us, that pacifies an offended God: it is the blood of Christ sprinkled on us, that purifies a defiled conscience. As it was the "blood of Jesus that consecrated for us the new and living way," and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers; so it is by that blood that we have boldness "to enter into the holiest."

(VIII.) Come and see how much we owe to the death of Christ, the rich purchases he made for us, that he might cause us to inherit substance, and might fill our treasures.— Let this increase our esteem of the love of Christ, which was not only so very expensive to himself, but so very advantageous to us. Let this also enhance the value of covenanting blessings in our eyes. The blessings of this life we owe to the bounty of God's providence, but spiritual blessings in heavenly things we owe to the blood of his Son. Let these, therefore, be to us more precious than rubies; let these always have a preference: let us be willing to part with any thing, rather than hazard the favour of God, the comforts of the Spirit, and life eternal, remembering what these cost: let us never make light of wisdom's preparations, when we see at what rate they were brought in. To them who believe, they are precious; for they know they were purchased by the precious blood of Christ, which we undervalue as a common thing, if we prefer farms and merchandise before heaven and the present earnest of it.

## CHAPTER IX.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE PRECIOUS BENEFITS WHICH ARE  
TO BE RECEIVED BY FAITH IN THIS ORDINANCE.

- I. THE pardon and forgiveness of our sins: a renewed pardon of daily trespasses, and a confirmed pardon of all trespasses. II. The adoption of sons: the privileges of adoption, and the Spirit of adoption. III. Peace and satisfaction to our minds: opened in two things. IV. Supplies of grace, confirming gracious habits, quickening gracious acts: instances of both. V. The earnestness of eternal bliss and joy, the assurances of it, and the foretastes of it.

IN the Lord's Supper, we not only "show the Lord's death," and see what is to be seen in it, as many who, when he was upon the cross, stood afar off beholding;—no; we must there be more than spectators,—we must eat of the sacrifice, and "so partake of the altar." The bread which came down from heaven was not designed merely for shew-bread, bread to be looked upon; but for household bread, bread to be fed upon, bread to strengthen our hearts, and wine to make them glad; and Wisdom's invitation is, "Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine that I have mingled." Christ's feeding great multitudes miraculously, more than once, when he was here upon earth, was (as his other miracles) significant of the spiritual provision he makes in the everlasting Gospel, for the support and satisfaction of those that leave all to follow him. If we do not all eat, and be not all filled abundantly with the goodness of his house, it is our own fault. Let us not then straiten and starve ourselves, for the Master of the feast has not stinted us; he has not only invited us, and made provision for our entertainment, but he calls to us as one that bids us hearty welcome: "Eat, O my friends! drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!"

All people are for what they can get: here is something

to be got in this ordinance, if it be rigidly improved, which will turn to your account infinitely more than the "merchandise of silver, or the gain of fine gold." Christ and all his benefits are here not only set before us, not only offered to us, but settled upon us, under certain provisoes and imitations; so that a believer, who sincerely consents to the covenant, receives some of the present benefits of it, in and by this ordinance, both in the comfortable experiences of communion with God in grace, and the comfortable expectations of the vision and fruition of God in glory.

Gospel ordinances in general, and this in particular, which is the seal of Gospel promises, are wells of salvation, out of which we may draw water with joy; breasts of consolation, from which we may suck and be satisfied; golden pipes, through which the oil of grace is derived from the good olive, to keep our lamps burning. We receive the grace of God herein in vain, if we take not what is here tendered,—Gospel blessings upon Gospel terms. We are here to receive Jesus Christ the Lord; and since "with him God freely gives us all things," we must with him by faith take what he gives,—“all spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ Jesus.”

I. Here we may receive the pardon and forgiveness of our sins.—This is that great blessing of the new covenant, which makes way for all other blessings, by taking down that wall of partition which separated between us and God, and hinders good things from us; it is the matter of that promise which comes in as a reason for all the rest,—I will do so and so for them, "for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness." This is that great blessing which Christ died to purchase for us: his blood was shed for many, for the remission of sins; and perhaps he intimated this to be in a special manner designed by him in his sufferings, when the first word we find recorded that he spoke, after he was nailed to the cross, was, "Father, forgive them;" which seems to look not only to those that had an immediate hand in his death, but to those that are remotely accessory to it, as all sinners are, though they know not what they do.

The everlasting Gospel is an act of indemnity,—an act of oblivion we may call it; for it is promised that our sins and iniquities he will remember no more: it is indeed an act of grace; repentance and remission of sins is by it published in



Christ's name to all nations. It is proclaimed to the rebels that, if they will lay down their arms, acknowledge their offence, return to their allegiance, approve themselves good subjects for the future, and make the merits of him whom the Father hath appointed to be the Mediator, their plea in suing out their pardon, the offended Prince will be reconciled to them, their attainder shall be reversed, and they shall not only be restored to all the privileges of subjects, but advanced to the honours and advantages of favourites. Now, it concerns us all to be able to make it out that we are entitled to the benefit of this act, that we are qualified, according to the tenor of it, for the favour intended by it; and if we be so indeed, in the Lord's Supper we receive that pardon to us in particular, which in the Gospel is proclaimed to all in general. We do here receive the atonement, as the expression is. God hath received it for the securing of his honour, and we receive it for the securing of our happiness and comfort; we claim the benefit of it, and desire to be justified and accepted of God for the sake of it.

The sacrament should therefore be received with a heart thus lifting up itself to God: "Lord, I am a sinner, a great sinner; I have done very foolishly; forfeited thy favour, incurred thy displeasure, and deserve to be for ever abandoned by thee. But Christ died; yea rather, is risen again, hath finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness; he gave his life a ransom for many, and if for many, why not for me? In him a free and full remission is promised to all penitent, obedient believers; by him all that believe are justified, and to them there is no condemnation. Thou, even thou, art he that blottest out their transgressions for thine own sake, and art gracious and merciful; nay, thou art faithful and just to forgive them their sins. Lord, I repent,—I believe, and take the benefit of those promises, those exceeding great and precious promises, which are to my soul as life from the dead. I flee to this city of refuge, I take hold of the horns of this altar; here I humbly receive the forgiveness of my sins, through Jesus Christ, the great propitiation, to whom I entirely owe it, and to whom I acknowledge myself infinitely indebted for it, and under the highest obligations imaginable to love him

and live to him. He is the Lord our righteousness, so accept I him : let him be made of God to me righteousness, and I have enough ; I am happy for ever."

Every time we come to the Lord's Supper, we come to receive the remission of sins ; that is,

1. A renewed pardon of daily trespasses.—In many things we offend daily, and even he that is washed, that is, in a justified state, needs to wash his feet ; and, blessed be God, there is a fountain opened for us to wash in, and encouragement given to pray for daily pardon as duly as we do for daily bread. We have to do with a God that multiplies pardon. Lord, the guilt of such a sin lies upon me like a heavy burden ; I have lamented it, confessed it, renewed my covenants against it, and now in this ordinance I receive the forgiveness of that sin : and here it is said to my soul, "The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die." Many a fault I have been overtaken in since I was last with the Lord at his table ; and, having repented of them, I desire to apply the blood of Christ to my soul, in a particular manner, for the forgiveness of them.

2. A confirmed pardon of all trespasses.—I come here to receive further assurances of the forgiveness of my sins, and further comfort arising from those assurances. I come to hear again that voice of joy and gladness, which hath made many a broken bone to rejoice,—"Son, daughter, be of good cheer ; thy sins are forgiven thee : " I come for the father's kiss to a returning prodigal, which seals his pardon, so as to silence his doubts and fears. When God would by his prophets speak comfortably to Zion, thus he saith,—"Thy warfare is accomplished, thine iniquity is pardoned." And the inhabitant shall not say, "I am sick ; " that is, he shall see no cause to complain of any outward calamity, if his iniquity be forgiven. O that I might here have the white stone of absolution, and my pardon written more legibly ! O that Christ would say to me, as he did to that woman to whom much was already forgiven, "Thy sins are forgiven !" This is what I come to receive, O let me not go away without it !

II. Here we may receive the adoption of sons.—The covenant of grace not only frees us from the doom of criminals, but advanceth us to the dignity of children : Christ redeemed us

from the curse of the law, in order to this, that "we might receive the adoption of sons." The children's bread given us in this ordinance is, as it were, livery and seisin, to assure us of our adoption upon the terms of the Gospel, that if we will take God in Christ to be to us a Father, to rule and dispose of us, and to be feared and honoured by us, he will take us to be his sons and daughters. "Behold, what manner of love is this!" Be astonished, O heavens! and wonder, O earth! Never was there such compassionate, such condescending love! God here seals us the grant both of the privileges of adoption, and the Spirit of adoption.

Here is a grant of the privileges of adoption sealed to us.—Here we are called the children of God, and he calls himself our Father, and encourages us to call himself so. "Seemeth it to you a light thing," saith David, "to be a king's son-in-law, seeing I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?" And shall it not seem to us a great thing, an honour infinitely above all those which the world can pretend to confer, for us who are worms of the earth, and a generation of vipers, children of disobedience and wrath by nature, to be the adopted children of the King of kings? "This honour have all the saints." Nor is it an empty title that is here granted us, but real advantages of unspeakable value.

The eternal God here saith it, and seals it to every true believer: Fear not, I will be a Father to thee, an ever-loving, ever-living Father: leave it to me to provide for thee; on me let all thy burdens be cast; with me let all thy cares be left, and to me let all thy requests be made known; "the young lions shall lack and suffer hunger," but thou shalt want nothing that is good for thee, nothing that is fit for thee; my wisdom shall be thy guide, my power thy support, and "underneath thee the everlasting arms." As the tender father pities his children, so will I pity thee, and spare thee "as a man spareth his son that serves him." Thou shalt have my blessing and love, the smiles of my face, and the kisses of my mouth; and in the arms of my grace will I carry thee to glory, as the nursing father doth the sucking child. Doth anything grieve thee? Whither shouldst thou go with thy complaint, but to thy Father? saying to him as that child, "My head, my head;" and thou shalt find that "as

one whom his mother comforteth, so will the Lord thy God comfort thee." Doth anything terrify thee? "Be not afraid, for I am thy God; when thou passest through the rivers, I will be with thee; and through the waters, they shall not overflow thee." Art thou in doubt? Consult me, and "I will instruct thee in the way that thou shouldst go; I will guide thee with mine eye." Acknowledge me, and I will direct thy steps. Dost thou offend? Is there foolishness bound up in thy heart? Thou must expect fatherly correction: "I will chasten thee with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; but my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from thee;" thine afflictions shall not only consist with, but flow from, covenant love; and but for a season, when need is, shalt thou be in heaviness.

"I will be a Father to" thee; and, son, thou shalt be "ever with me, and all that I have is thine;" "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are thine," as far as is necessary to thine happiness; nor shall any thing ever be able to separate thee from my love. I will be a Father to thee, and then Christ shall be thy Elder Brother, the Prophet, Priest, and King of the family, as the firstborn among many brethren. Angels shall be thy guard; with the greatest care and tenderness shall they bear thee up in their arms, as ministering spirits charged to attend the heirs of salvation.

Providence shall be thy protector, and the disposer of all thine affairs for the best; so that whatever happens, thou mayest be sure it shall be made to work for thy good, though as yet thou canst not see how or which way. The assurances of thy Father's love to thee in his promises, and communion with him in his ordinances, shall be thy daily bread, thy continual feast, the manna that shall be rained upon thee, the water out of the rock that shall follow thee in this wilderness, till thou come to Canaan.

Now art thou a child of God, but it doth not yet appear what thou shalt be. When you were predestinated to the adoption of sons, you were designed for the inheritance of sons; if a child, then an heir. Thy present maintenance shall be honourable and comfortable, and such as is fit for thee in thy minority, while thou art under tutors and

governors; but what is now laid out upon thee is nothing, in comparison with what is laid up for thee; an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away. If God be thy Father, no less than a crown, a kingdom, shall be thy portion, and heaven thy home, where thou shalt be for ever with him. In thy Father's house there are many mansions, and one for thee, if thou be his dutiful child. It is thy Father's good pleasure to give thee the kingdom.

Here is a grant of the Spirit of adoption sealed to us.—As the giving of Christ for us was the great promise of the Old Testament, which was fulfilled in the fulness of time, so the giving of the Spirit to us is the great promise of the New Testament, and a promise that is sure to all the seed. This promise of the Father, which we have heard of Christ, we in this ordinance wait for, and it follows upon the former; for, wherever God gives the privileges of children, he will give the nature and disposition of children; regeneration always attends adoption: "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." Great encouragement we have to ask this gift, from the relation of a Father, wherein God stands towards us: if earthly parents "know how to give good gifts to their children," such as are needful and proper for them, "much more shall our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." He will give the Spirit to teach his children, and, as their tutor, to lead them into all truth, to govern his children; and, as the best of guardians, to dispose their affections, while Providence disposeth their affairs for the best. His Spirit will renew and sanctify them, and make them meet for his service in this world, and his kingdom in a better; to be the Guide of their way, and the Witness of their adoption, and to seal them to the day of redemption.

An earnest of this grant of the Spirit to all believers in this ordinance, Christ gave, when, in his first visit he made to his disciples after his resurrection, having showed them his hands and his side, his pierced hands, his pierced side, (which in effect he doth to us in this sacrament,) he breathed on them, and said unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." What he said to them, he saith to his disciples, making them an offer of this inestimable gift, and bestowing it effectually on all believers, who are all "sealed with that Holy

Spirit of promise." Receive then the Holy Ghost, in the receiving of this bread and wine; the graces of the Spirit, as bread to strengthen the heart; his comfort, as wine to make it glad. Be willing and desirous to receive the Holy Ghost: let the soul and all its powers be put under his operations and influences: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and then this King of Glory shall come in," to all that invite him and will bid him welcome.

"But will God in very deed thus dwell with men," with such men upon the earth? And shall they become temples of the Holy Ghost? Shall he come upon them? Shall the power of the Highest overshadow them? Shall Christ be formed in me a holy thing? Say, then, my soul, say as the blessed virgin did, Here I am, "be it unto me according to thy word." I acknowledge myself unworthy the being of a man, having so often acted like a brute; much more unworthy the dignity of a son; I have been an undutiful, rebellious prodigal; I deserve to be turned out of doors, abandoned and disinherited, and forbidden my Father's house and table. But who shall set bounds to infinite mercy, and to the compassions of the Everlasting Father? If, notwithstanding this, he will yet again take me into his family, and clothe me with the best robe, though it is too great a favour for me to receive, who am a child of disobedience, yet it is not too great for him to give, who is the Father of mercies. To thee, therefore, O God, I give up myself, and I will "from this cry unto thee, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth." Though I deserve not to be owned as a hired servant, I desire and hope to be owned as an adopted son. Be it unto thy servant according to thy promise!

III. Here we may receive peace and satisfaction in our minds.—This is one of the precious legacies Christ hath left to all his followers; and it is here in this ordinance paid, or secured to be paid, to all those that are ready and willing to receive it: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you:" such a peace as the world can neither give nor take away. This is the repose of the soul in God, our reconciliation to ourselves, arising from the sense of our reconciliation to God; the conscience being thus fully purged from dead works, which not only defile, but disturb and disquiet us. When the Spirit is poured out on high, then "the work

of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." The guilt of sin lays the foundation of trouble and uneasiness ; where that is removed by pardoning mercy, there is ground for peace : but there must be a further act of the divine grace to put us in the actual possession of that peace ; when he who alone can open the ear to comfort, as well as discipline, makes us to hear joy and gladness, then the storm ceaseth, and there is a calm. The mind that was disturbed with the dread of God's wrath, is quieted with the tokens of his favour and love.

This we should have in our eye at the Lord's table : here I am waiting to hear what God the Lord will speak, and hoping that he, who speaks peace to his people and to his saints, will speak that peace to me, who make it the top of my ambition to answer the character, and have the lot, of his people and saints. This peace we may here expect to receive for two reasons :—

1. Because this ordinance is a seal of the promise of peace : in it God assures us that his thoughts towards us are thoughts of peace, and then ours towards ourselves may be so. We are here among his people, whom he hath promised to bless with peace, and we may apply that promise to ourselves, plead it, and humbly claim the benefit of it. This is that rest to the soul which our Master hath promised to all those that come to him, and take his yoke upon them ; and this promise, among the rest, is here ratified, as yea and amen in Christ.

The covenant of grace is indeed a covenant of peace, in the ever-blessed soil of which "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." And this covenant of peace is that which eternal Truth hath said shall never be removed, but shall stand firm as a rock, when the "everlasting mountains shall melt," like wax, and the "perpetual hills shall bow." Hath God so far consulted my present repose, as well as my future bliss, that he hath provided not only for the satisfaction of his own justice, but for the satisfaction of my conscience ; and shall I indulge my own disturbance, and refuse to be comforted ? No ; welcome the promised peace, the calm so long wished for, the desired haven of a troubled spirit, tossed with tempest. Come, my soul, and take possession of this Canaan ; by faith enter into

this rest, and let not thine own unbelief exclude thee. If the God of peace himself speak peace, though with a still small voice, let that silence the most noisy and clamorous objections of doubts and fears; and if he give quietness, let not them make trouble.

2. Because this ordinance is an instituted means of obtaining the peace promised. As the sacrifice was ordained to make atonement for the soul, so the feast upon the sacrifice was intended for the satisfaction of the soul concerning the atonement made, to remove that amazement and terror which arose from the consciousness of guilt. This ordinance is a feast appointed for that purpose. God doth here not only assure us of the truth of his promise to us, but gives us an opportunity of solemnizing our engagements to him, and sealing to be his, which is appointed not to satisfy him, (he that knows all things knows if we love him,) but to satisfy ourselves, that, thus taking hold of the hope set before us, we may have strong consolation. The blood of Christ is in this ordinance sprinkled upon the conscience, to pacify that; having been already sprinkled upon the mercy-seat, to make atonement there, so making the comers thereunto perfect.

When the Lord Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, the first word he said to them was, "Peace be unto you;" and he saith the same to us in this ordinance, "Peace be unto this house, peace to this heart." But the disciples of Christ, like those that are apt to be terrified "and affrighted, supposing that they had seen a spirit," or apparition, fearing that it is but all a delusion, it is too good news to be true; what have they to do with peace, think they, while their corruptions, follies, and infirmities are so many? But Christ, by this sacrament, checks those fears; as these, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet!" There is that in the marks of the nails, which is sufficient to stop the mouth of unbelief, and to heal the wounds of a broken and contrite spirit. There is merit enough in Christ, though in us there is nothing but meanness and unworthiness. Such considerations this ordinance offers as have often been found effectual, by the grace of God, to create the fruit of the lips, peace, and to restore comfort to the mourners. In it Christ saith again, "Peace be unto you," as he did unto the disciples.



And sometimes a mighty power had gone along with that word to lay a storm, as it did with that, (Mark iv. 39,) "Peace, be still;" so that the soul so calmed, so quieted, hath gone away, and said with wonder, "What manner of man is this, for even the winds and the seas obey him?"

IV. Here we may receive supplies of grace.—Jesus Christ is, in this ordinance, made of God to all believers, not only righteousness, but sanctification: so we must receive him; and having received him, so we must walk in him. It is certain we have as much need of the influences of the Spirit to furnish us for our duties, as we have of the merit of Christ to atone for our sins; and as much need of divine grace to carry on the good work, as to begin it. We are in ourselves not only ungodly, but without strength, impotent in that which is good, and inclined to that which is evil; and in the Lord alone have we both righteousness and strength. If, therefore, we have it in him, hither we must come, to have it from him; for Gospel ordinances, and this particularly, are the means of grace, and the ordinary vehicle in which grace is conveyed to the souls of believers. Though God is not tied to them, we are, and must attend with an expectation to receive grace from God by them, and an entire submission of soul to the operation and conduct of that grace. This ordinance is as the pool of Bethesda, which our weak and impotent souls must lie down by, waiting for the moving of the waters, as those that know there is a healing virtue in them which we may experience benefit by as well as others. Here, therefore, we must set ourselves, expecting and desiring the effectual workings of God's free grace in us, attending at wisdom's gates for wisdom's gifts, and endeavouring to improve the ordinance to this end.

From the fulness that is in Jesus Christ, in whom "it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell," we are waiting to receive grace for grace, that is, "abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness." Where there is true grace, there is need of more, for the best are sanctified but in part; and there is a desire of more forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before, pressing towards perfection; and there is a promise of more; for to him that hath shall be given, and "he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." Therefore, in a

sense of our own necessities, and a dependence on God's promises, we must by faith receive and apply to ourselves the grace offered us. What things soever we desire according to the will of God, if we believe that we receive them, our Saviour hath told us, we shall have them. "According to thy faith be it unto thee."

Reach forth a hand of faith, therefore, and receive the promised grace, both for the confirming of gracious habits, and for the quickening of gracious acts.

1. Let us here receive grace for the confirming of gracious habits, that they may be more deeply rooted.—We are conscious to ourselves of great weakness in grace: it is like a grain of mustard seed, as a bruised reed and smoking flax. We are weak in our knowledge, and apt to mistake; weak in our affections, and apt to cool; weak in our resolutions, and apt to waver. How weak is my heart! But here is bread that strengthens man's heart, signifying that grace of God which confirms the principles and invigorates the powers of the spiritual and divine life in the souls of the faithful. Come, my soul, come eat of this bread, and it shall strengthen thee: though perhaps thou mayest not be immediately sensible of this strength received,—the improvement of habits is not suddenly discerned,—yet, through this grace, thou shalt find hereafter that thy path hath been like the shining light, which shineth more and more.

We find there is much lacking in our faith, in our love, in every grace; here, therefore, we must desire and hope, and prepare to receive from Christ such gifts of the Holy Ghost as will be mighty, through God, to increase our faith, that its discoveries of divine things may be more clear and distinct, and its assurances of the truth of them more certain and confident; that its consent to the covenant may be more free and resolved, and its complacency in the covenant more sweet and delightful. And that which thus increaseth our faith will be effectual to inflame our love, and make that strong as death in its desires towards God, and resolutions for him. We must here wait to be strengthened with all might by his Spirit in the inner man, unto all patience in suffering for him, and diligence in doing for him, and both with joyfulness. We here put ourselves under the happy influence of that great and glorious power which worketh mightily in them that believe.

2. Let us here receive grace for the quickening of gracious acts, that they may be more strongly exerted.—We come to this throne of grace, this mercy-seat, this table of our God, that here we may not only obtain mercy to pardon, but may find “grace to help in every time of need,” grace to excite us, to direct us in, and thoroughly furnish us for, every good word and work, according as the duty of every day requires. It was a very encouraging word which Christ said to Paul, when he prayed for the removal of that messenger of Satan which was sent to buffet him: “My grace is sufficient for thee;” and all true believers may take the comfort of it: what was said to him is said to every person, whatever the exigence of the case is; they that commit themselves to the grace of God, with a sincere resolution in every thing to submit to the conduct and government of that grace, shall be enabled to do all things through Christ strengthening them.

3. Let a lively faith here descend to particulars, and receive this grace with application to the various occurrences of the Christian life.—When I go about any duty of solemn worship, I find I am not sufficient of myself for it, not so much as to think one good thought of myself, much less such a chain of good thoughts as is necessary to an acceptable prayer, to the profitable reading and hearing of the word, and the right sanctification of a Lord's day; but all our sufficiency for these services is of God, and of his grace. That grace I here receive according to the promise, and will always go forth and go on in the strength of it.

When an opportunity offers itself of doing good to others, —to their bodies, by relieving their necessities, or contributing any way to their comfort and support; or to their souls, by seasonable advice, instruction, reproof, or other good discourse,—we must depend on this grace for ability to do it prudently, faithfully, and successfully, and so as to be accepted of God in it. I find I want wisdom for these and such like services, and for the ordering of all my affairs; and whither shall I go for it but to Wisdom's feasts, whose preparations are not only good for food, and pleasant to the eye, but greatly to be desired to make one wise? Here therefore I receive “Christ Jesus the Lord, as made of God unto me wisdom;” wisdom dwelling with prudence; wisdom to understand my way; that wisdom which in every doubtful case is

profitable to direct. Having many a time prayed Solomon's prayer, for a wise and understanding heart, I here receive the sealed grant in answer to it: "Wisdom and knowledge are given thee," so much as shall be sufficient for thee in thy place and station, to guide thee in glorifying God, so as that thou mayest not come short of enjoying him.

When we are assaulted with temptations to sin, we find how weak and ineffectual our resistance hath often been: here, therefore, we receive grace to fortify us against all those assaults, that we may not be foiled and overcome by them. All that in this sacrament list themselves under the banner of the Captain of our salvation, and engage themselves as his faithful soldiers in a holy war against the world, the flesh, and the devil, may here be furnished with the whole armour of God, and that power of his might, as it is called, wherewith they shall be able to stand and withstand in the evil day. I now receive from God and his grace strength against such a sin that hath oft prevailed over me, such temptation that hath oft been too hard for me: "now, therefore, O God, strengthen my hands." "Through God I shall do valiantly."

When we are burdened with affliction, we find it hard to bear up; we faint in the day of adversity, which is a sign our strength is small; we grieve too much and are full of fears in a day of trouble; our hearts many a time are ready to fail us. Hither therefore we come, to receive grace sufficient for our support under the calamities of this present time, that, whatever we lose, we may not lose our comfort, and, whatever we suffer, we may not sink; grace to enable us, whatever happens, to keep possession of our own souls, by keeping up our hope and joy in God; that, when flesh and heart fail, we may find God the strength of our heart; and if he be so, "as thy day is, so shall thy strength be." Such assurances are here given to all believers of God's presence with them in all their afflictions, and the concurrence of all for their good, that, being thus encouraged, they have all the reason in the world to say, "Welcome the will of God; nothing can come amiss."

We know not how we may be called on to bear our testimony to the truths and ways of God in suffering for righteousness' sake; we are bid to count upon them, and to

prepare for them. We must in this ordinance faithfully promise, that, however we may be tried, we will never forsake Christ, nor turn from following after him; though we should die with him, yet will we not deny him. But we have no reason to confide in any strength of our own, for the making good of this promise; nor can we pretend to such a degree of resolution, steadiness, and presence of mind, as will enable us to encounter the difficulties we may meet with. Peter, when he shamed himself, warned us to take heed lest we fall, when we think we stand. Here, therefore, we must receive strength for such trials, that we may overcome them by the blood of the Lamb, and by not loving our lives unto the death, and that the prospect of none of these things may move us.

4. How near our great change may be we cannot tell, perhaps nearer than we imagine: we are not sure that we shall live to see another opportunity of this kind; but this we are sure of, that it is a serious thing to die: it is a work we never did, and when we come to do it, we shall need a strength we never had. In this sacrament, therefore, from the death of Christ we must fetch in grace to prepare us for death, and to carry us safely and comfortably through that dark and dismal valley. I depend not only on the providence of God, to order the circumstances of my removal hence for the best to me, but upon the grace of God to take out the sting of death, and then to reconcile me to the stroke of death, and to enable me to meet death's harbinger, and bear its agonies, not only with the constancy and patience that become a wise man, but with the hope and joy that become a good Christian.

V. Here we may receive the earnest of eternal bliss and joy.—Heaven is the crown and centre of all the promises, and the perfection of all the good contained in them; all the blessings of the new covenant have a tendency to this, and are in order to it. Are we predestinated? It is to the inheritance of sons. Called? It is to his kingdom and glory. Sanctified? It is that we may be made meet for the inheritance, and wrought to the self-same thing. This, therefore, we should have in our eye, in our covenant and communion with God,—that eternal life which God that cannot lie promiseth. We must receive the Spirit in his

graces and comforts, as the earnest of our inheritance. They that deal with God, must deal upon trust, for a happiness in reversion, a recompense of reward to come; must forsake the world in sight and present, for a world out of sight and future. All believers consent to this; they lay up their treasure in heaven, and hope for what they see not. This they depend upon; and in prospect of it they are willing to labour and suffer, to deny themselves, and take up their cross, knowing that heaven will make amends for all: though they may be losers for Christ, they shall not be losers by him in the end; this is the bargain. In the Lord's Supper Christ gives us earnest upon this bargain; and what we receive there, we receive as earnest. An earnest not only confirms the bargain and secures the performance of it, but is itself part of payment, though but a small part in comparison with the full sum.

We here receive the earnest of our inheritance; that is,

We here receive the assurance of it.—The royal grant of it is here sealed and delivered by the King of kings. God here saith to me as he did to Abraham, "Lift up thine eyes now, and look from the place where thou art." Take a view of the heavenly Canaan, that land which eternally flows with better things than milk and honey,—Emmanuel's land. Open an eye of faith, and behold the pleasures and glories of that world, as they are described in Scripture, such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; and know of a surety that all the land which thou seest, and that which is infinitely more and better than thou canst conceive, to thee will I give it, to thee for ever. "Fear not, little flock," fear not, ye little ones of the flock: "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Follow Christ and serve him, and you shall be for ever with him; continue with him now in his temptations, and you shall shortly share with him in his glories. Only be faithful unto death, and the crown of life is as sure to you as if it were already upon your heads. Here is livery and seisin upon the deed. Take this and eat it, take this and drink it: in token of this "I will be to thee a God;" that is, a perfect and everlasting happiness, such as shall answer the vast extent and compass of that great word. "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city."

Come now, my soul, and accept the security offered. The inheritance secured is unspeakably rich and invaluable; the losses and sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with it; the title is good, it is a purchased possession; he that grants it hath power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life. The assurances are unquestionably valid, not only the word and oath, but the writing and seal, of the eternal God, in the Scriptures and sacraments: here is that, my soul, which thou mayest venture thyself upon, and venture thine all for; do it then, do it with a holy boldness. Lay hold on eternal life, lay fast hold on it, and keep thy hold. Look up, my soul, look as high as heaven, the highest heaven; look forward, my soul, look as far forward as eternity; and let eternal life, eternal joy, eternal glory, be thine aim in thy religion, and resolve to take up with nothing short of these. God hath been "willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel," and therefore hath thus confirmed it, so as to leave no room for doubting, that by all these "immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." Take him at his word then, and build thy hope upon it. Be not faithless, but believing; be not careless, but industrious. Here is a happiness worth striving for; "run with patience the race that is set before us," with this prize in thine eye.

We receive the foretastes of it.—We have in this ordinance, not only a ratification of the promise of the heavenly Canaan, but a pattern or specimen given us of the fruits of that land, like the bunch of grapes which was brought from the valley of Eshcol to the Israelites in the wilderness; a view given us of that land of promise, like that which Moses had of the land of Canaan from the top of Pisgah. As the law was a type and figure of the Messiah's kingdom on earth, so the Gospel is of this kingdom in heaven; both are as "shadows of good things to come," like the map of a rich and large country in a sheet of paper. Our future happiness is, in this sacrament, not only sealed to us, but shown to us; and we here taste something of the pleasures of that better country. In this ordinance we have a sight of Christ, he is evidently set forth before us; and what is

heaven, but to see him as he is, and to be for ever beholding his glory? We are here receiving the pledges and tokens of Christ's love to us, and returning the protestations and expressions of our love to him; and what is heaven but an eternal interchanging of love between a holy God and holy souls? We are here praising and blessing the Redeemer, celebrating his honour, and giving him the glory of his achievements; and what is that but the work of heaven? It is what the inhabitants of that world are doing now, and what we hope to be doing with them to eternity. We are here in spiritual communion with all the saints coming, in faith, hope, and love, to the general assembly and church of the first-born; and what is heaven but that in perfection? In a word, heaven is a feast, and so is this; only this is a running banquet, that is an everlasting feast.

Come, my soul, and see a door here opened in heaven; look in at that door now, by which thou hopest to enter shortly. Let this ordinance do something of the work of heaven upon thee, God having provided in it something of the pleasures of heaven for thee. Heaven will for ever part between thee and sin; let this ordinance, therefore, set thee at a greater distance from it. Heaven will fill thee with the love of God; in this ordinance, therefore, let that love be shed abroad in thine heart. In heaven thou shalt enter into the joy of the Lord; let that joy now enter into thee, and be thy strength and thy song. Heaven will be perfect holiness; let this ordinance make thee more holy, and more conformable to the image of the holy Jesus. Heaven will be everlasting rest; here, therefore, return to God as thy rest, O my soul, and repose thyself in him. Let every sacrament be to thee a heaven upon earth, and each of these days of the Son of man, as one of the days of heaven.



## CHAPTER X.

HELPS FOR THE EXCITING OF THOSE PIOUS AND DEVOUT AFFECTIONS WHICH SHOULD BE WORKING IN US WHILE WE ATTEND THIS ORDINANCE.

- I. HERE we must be sorry for sin : three things here to excite this sorrow. II. Confiding in Christ, in his power, in his promise. III. Delighting in God : three things to be thought of with pleasure. IV. Admiring the mysteries and miracles of redeeming love : seven things instanced as marvellous. V. Caring what we shall render : seven things which we must render.

WONDROUS sights are here to be seen where the Lord's death is shown forth ; precious benefits are here to be had where the covenant of grace is sealed ; the transaction is very solemn, very serious, nothing more so on this side death. But what impressions must be made hereby upon our souls ? How must we stand affected while this is doing ? Is this service only a show, at which we may be unconcerned spectators ? Or is it a market-place, in which we may stand all the day idle ? No, by no means : here is work to be done, heart-work, such as requires a very close application of mind, and a great liveliness and vigour of spirit, and in which all that is within us should be employed, and all little enough. Here is that to be done which calls for fixed thoughts and warm affections, which needs them, and well deserves them. What sensible movings of affection we should aim at, is not easy to direct ; tempers vary. Some are soon moved, and much moved with everything that affects them : from such it may be expected that their passions, which are strong at other times, should not be weak at this ordinance : and yet, no doubt, there are others whose natural temper is happily more calm and sedate, that are not conscious to themselves of such stirring of affections as some experience at this ordinance, and yet have as

comfortable communion with God, as good evidence of the truth and growth of grace, and as much real benefit by the ordinance, as those that think themselves even transported by it. The deepest rivers are scarce perceived to move, and make the least noise. On the other hand, there may be much heat where there is little light, and strong passions where there are very weak resolutions; like the waters of a land flood, which make a great show, but are shallow and soon gone. We must not, therefore, build a good opinion of our spiritual state upon the vehemence of our affection. A romance may represent a tragical story so pathetically as to make a great impression upon the minds of some, who yet know the whole matter to be both feigned and foreign; bodily exercise, if that be all, profits little. And, on the other hand, there may be a true and strong faith, informing the judgment, bowing the will, and commanding the affections, and purifying the heart and life, where yet there are not any transports, or pathological expressions. There may be true joy, where the mouth is not filled with laughter, nor the tongue with singing; and true sorrow, where yet the eye doth not run down with tears. They whose hearts are firmly fixed for God, may take the comfort of that, though they do not find their hearts sensibly flowing out towards him.

And yet in this sacrament, where it is designed that the eye should affect the heart, we must not rest in the bare contemplation of what is here set before us, but the consideration thereof must make an impression upon our spirits, which should be turned as wax to the seal. If what is here done do not affect us for the present, it will not be likely to influence us afterwards; for we retain the remembrance of things better by our affections than by our notions. "I shall never forget thy precepts, when by them thou hast quickened me." Here, therefore, let us stir up the gift that is in us, endeavouring to affect ourselves with the great things of God and our souls; and let us pray to God to affect us with them by his Spirit and grace, and to testify his acceptance of the sacrifice of a devoted heart, which we are to offer, by kindling it with this holy fire from heaven. "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; and blow upon my garden." Come, thou blessed Spirit, and move upon these waters, these dead waters, to

set them a-moving in rivers of living water: come and breathe upon these dry bones, that they may live. O that I might now be in the mount with God! That I might be so taken up with the things of the Spirit, and the other world, that for the time I may even forget that I am yet in the body, and in this world! O that I might now be soaring upwards, upwards towards God, pressing forwards, forwards towards heaven, as one not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; for here it is no time to trifle!

Let us then see, in some particulars, how we should be affected, when we are attending on the Lord in this solemnity, and in what channels these waters of the sanctuary should run; that we may take our work before us, and apply our minds to the consideration of those things that are proper to excite those affections.

I. Here we must be sorrowful for sin, after a godly sort, and blushing before God at the thought of it.—Penitential grief and shame are not at all unsuitable to this ordinance, though it is intended for our joy and honour, but excellent preparatives for the benefit and comfort of it. Here we should be, like Ephraim, bemoaning ourselves; like Job, abhorring ourselves, renewing those sorrowful reflections we made upon our own follies, when we were preparing for this service, and keeping the fountain of repentance still open, still flowing. Our sorrow for sin needs not hinder our joy in God, and therefore our joy in God must not forbid our sorrow for sin.

1. Our near approach to God in this ordinance should excite and increase our holy shame and sorrow. When we see what an honour we are advanced to, what a favour we are admitted to, it is seasonable to reflect upon our own unworthiness, by reason of the guilt of sin, to draw near to God. A man's deformity and defilement is never such a mortification to him, as when he comes into the presence of those that are comely, clean, and fashionable; and when we are conscious to ourselves that we have dealt basely and disingenuously with one we are under the highest obligations to love and honour, an interview with the person offended cannot but renew our grief.

I am here drawing nigh to God, not only treading his courts with Christians at large, but sitting down at his table.

with select disciples; but when I consider how pure and holy he is, and how vile and sinful I am, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face before him. To me belongs shame and confusion of face. I have many a time heard of God by the hearing of the ear, but now, how am I taken to sit down with him at his table? Mine eyes see him, see the King in his beauty: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. What a fool, what a wretch have I been, to offend a God who appears so holy in the eyes of all who draw nigh unto him, and so great to all them that are about him! Woe is me, for I am undone, lost and undone for ever, if there were not a Mediator between me and God, because I am a man of unclean lips, and an unclean heart. Now I perceive it, and my own degeneracy and danger by reason of it; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. I have reason to be ashamed to see one to whom I am so unlike, and afraid to see one to whom I am so obnoxious. The higher we are advanced by the free grace of God, the more reason we shall see to abase ourselves, and cry, "God be merciful to us, sinners!"

2. A sight of Christ crucified should increase, excite our penitential shame and sorrow, and that evangelical repentance, in which there is an eye to the cross of Christ. It is prophesied, nay, it is promised, as a blessed effect of the pouring out of the Spirit, in Gospel times, "upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn." Here we see Christ pierced for our sins, nay, pierced by our sins: our sins were the cause of his death, and the grief of his heart. The Jews and Romans crucified Christ; but, as David killed Uriah with his letter, and Ahab killed Naboth with his seal, so the handwriting that was against us for our sins nailed Christ to the cross, and so he nailed it to the cross. We had eaten the sour grapes, and his teeth were set on edge. Can we see him thus suffering for us, and shall we not suffer with him? Was he in such pain for us, and shall not we be in pain for him? Was his soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and shall not ours be exceeding sorrowful, when that is the way to life? Come, my soul, see by faith the holy Jesus made sin for thee; the glory of heaven made a reproach of men for thee; his Father's joy made a Man of Sorrows for

thy transgressions: see thy sins burdening him when he sweat, spitting upon him, and buffeting him, and putting him to open shame; crowning him with thorns, and piercing his hands and his side: and let this melt and break this hard and rocky heart of thine, and dissolve it into tears of godly sorrow. Look on Christ dying; and weep not for him, (though they who have any thing of ingenuity and good nature, will see reason enough to weep for an innocent sufferer,) but weep for thyself, and thine own sins; for them be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for an only son.

Add to this, that our sins have not only pierced him, as they were the cause of his death, but as they have been the reproach of his holy name, and the grief of his Holy Spirit. Thus we have crucified him afresh, by doing that which he has often declared to be a vexation and dishonour to him, as far as the joys and glories of his present state can admit. The consideration of this should greatly humble us; nothing goes nearer to the quick with a true penitent, nor touches him in a more tender part, than this: "They shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me." A strange expression, that the great God should reckon himself broken by the sins of his people! No wonder it follows, they "shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed." Can we look upon an humbled broken Christ, with an unhumbled unbroken heart? Do our sins grieve him, and shall they not grieve us? Come, my soul, and sit down by the cross of Christ, as a true mourner; let it make thee weep to see him weep, and bleed to see him bleed. That heart is frozen indeed, which these considerations will not thaw.

3. The gracious offer here made us, of peace and pardon, should excite and increase our godly sorrow and shame. This is a Gospel motive: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" that is, the promise of pardon upon repentance is published and sealed, and whoever will, may come and take the benefit of it. The terrors of the law are of use to startle us, and put us into a horror for sin, as those that are afraid of God; but the grace of the Gospel contributes more to an ingenuous repentance, and makes us more ashamed of ourselves. This rends the heart, to consider God

so gracious and merciful, so slow to anger, and ready to forgive. Let this loving-kindness melt thee, O my soul! and make thee to relent more tenderly than ever. Wretch that I have been, to spit in the face, and spurn at the bowels, of such mercy and love, by my wilful sin! to despise the riches of Gospel grace! I am ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I do bear the reproach of my youth. Doth God meet thee thus with terms of reconciliation? Doth the party offended make the first motion of an agreement? Shall such an undutiful, disobedient, prodigal son as I have been, be embraced, and kissed, and clothed with the best robe? This kindness overcomes me. Now, it cuts me to the heart, and humbles me to the dust, to think of my former rebellions; they never appeared so heinous, so vile, as they do now I see them pardoned. The more certain I am that I shall not be ruined by them, the more reason I see to be humbled for them. When God promised to establish his covenant with repenting Israel, he adds, "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee." To see God provoked, causeth a holy trembling; but to see God pacified, causeth a holy blushing. The day of atonement, when the sins of Israel were to be sent to a land of forgetfulness, must be a day to afflict the soul. The blood of Christ will be the more healing and comforting to the soul, for its bleeding afresh thus upon every remembrance of sin.

II. Here we must be confiding on Christ Jesus, and relying on him alone, for life and salvation.—When we mourn for sin, blessed be God, we do not sorrow as those that have no hope; true penitents are perplexed, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed. Faith in Christ turns even their sorrows into joy, gives them their vineyards from thence, and even the valley of Achor (of trouble for sin) for a door of hope. We have not only all-sufficient happiness to hope for, but an all-sufficient Saviour to hope in. Here, therefore, let us exercise and encourage that hope; let us trust in the name of the Lord Jesus, and stay ourselves upon him; come up out of this wilderness, leaning upon your Beloved. Come, my soul, weary as thou art, and rest in Christ; cast thy burden upon him, and he shall sustain thee; commit thy way to him, and thy thoughts shall certainly be established;

commit thyself to him, and it shall be well with thee; he will keep, through his own name, that which thou committest to him.

Commit thyself to him, as the scholar commits himself to his teacher, to be instructed, with a resolution to take his word for the truth of what he teacheth; as the patient commits himself to the physician, to be cured, with a resolution to take whatever he prescribes, and punctually to observe his orders; as the client commits himself to his counsel, to draw his plea, and to bring him off when he is judged, with a resolution to do all things as he shall advise; as the traveller commits himself to his guide, to be directed in his way, with a resolution to follow his conduct; as the orphan commits himself to his guardian, to be governed and disposed of at his discretion, with a resolution to comply with him. Thus must we commit ourselves to Christ.

We must confide in his power, trusting in him as one that can help and save us. He hath an incontestable authority, is a Saviour by office, sanctified, and sealed, and sent into the world for this purpose; help is laid upon him. We may well offer to trust him with our part of this great concern, which is the securing of our happiness; for God trusted him with his part of it, the securing of his honour, and declared himself well pleased in him. He hath likewise an unquestionable ability to save to the uttermost; he is mighty to save, and every way qualified for the undertaking; he is skilful, for treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in him; he is solvent, for there is in him an inexhaustible fulness of merit and grace, sufficient to bear all our burdens, and to supply all our needs. We must commit ourselves and the great affairs of our salvation unto him, with a full assurance that he is "able to keep what we commit to him against that day," that great day, which will try the foundation of every man's work. We must consider him in this promise, trusting in him as one that will certainly help and save us, on the terms proposed. We may take his word for it; and this is the word which he hath spoken: "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;" a double negative, "I will not, no, I will not." He is engaged for us in the covenant of redemption, and engaged to us in the covenant of grace; and in both he is the Amen, the faithful Witness. On this, therefore, we

must rely, the word on which he hath caused us to hope. God hath spoken in his holiness, that he will accept us in the Beloved, and in that "I will rejoice; I will divide Shechem; Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine." Pardon is mine, and peace mine, and Christ mine, and heaven mine: "for faithful is he that promised, who also will do it."

Come then, my soul, come thou, and all thy concerns, into this ark, and there thou shalt be safe when the deluge comes; flee, flee to this city of refuge, and in it thou shalt be secured from the avenger of blood. Quit all other shelters; for every thing but Christ is a "refuge of lies, which the hail will sweep away." There is not salvation in any other but in him; trust him for it therefore, and depend upon him only. Reach hither thy finger, and, in this ordinance, "behold his hands; reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into his side," and say, as Thomas did, "My Lord, and my God!" Here I cast anchor, here I rest my soul. "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again," and is, and will be, "the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." To him I entirely give up myself, to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him; and in him I have a full satisfaction. I will draw near to God for mercy and grace, in a dependence upon him as my righteousness; I will go forth and go on in the way of my duty, in a dependence upon him as my strength; I will shortly venture into the invisible, unchangeable world, in a dependence upon him as the "captain of my salvation;" who is able to bring many sons to glory, and as willing as he is able. "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief."

Having thus committed thyself, my soul, to the Lord Jesus, comfort thyself on him. Please thyself with the thoughts of having disposed of thyself so well, and of having lodged the great concern of thy salvation in so good a hand; now "return to thy rest, O my soul," and be easy. Every good Christian may by faith triumph as the prophet doth, pointing at Christ: "The Lord God will help thee: therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint," in a holy defiance of Satan and all the powers of darkness; "and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me: who will contend with me?" Take the Bible, turn to the eighth of the Romans, and read from verse 31 to the end of the chapter: if ever blessed Paul



rode in a triumphant chariot on this side heaven, it was when he wrote these lines, "What shall we then say to these things," &c. Apply those comforts to thyself. "O my soul, thou hast said of the Lord, He is my Lord; rejoice in him, then, and be exceeding glad." Thy Redeemer is mighty, and he rides upon the heavens for thy help, and in his excellency on the sky: do thou, then, "ride upon the high places of the earth, and suck honey out of this rock, and oil out of this flinty rock." Having made sure of thy interest in Christ, live in a continual dependence upon him; and being satisfied of his love, be satisfied with it: thou hast enough, and needest no more.

III. Here we must be delighting in God, and solacing ourselves in his favour.—If we had not Christ to hope in, being guilty and corrupt, we could not have a God to rejoice in; but, having an Advocate with the Father, so good a plea as Christ dying, and so good a pleader as Christ interceding, we may not only "come boldly to the throne of grace, but may sit down under the shadow of it with delight, and behold the beauty of the Lord." That God who is love, and the God of love, here showeth us his marvellous loving-kindness; causeth his goodness to pass before us; proclaims his name, gracious and merciful. Here he gives us his love, and thereby invites us to give him ours. It is a love-feast, the love of Christ is here commemorated, the love of God here offered; and the frame of our spirits is disagreeable, and a jar in the harmony, if our hearts be not here going out in love to God, the chief good, and our felicity. They that come hither with holy desires, must refresh themselves here with holy delights. If we must "rejoice in the Lord always," much more now; for a feast was made for laughter, and so was this for spiritual joy. If ever "Wisdom's ways be ways of pleasantness," surely they must be so when we come to "eat of her bread, and to drink of the wine which she hath mingled."

Put thyself then, my soul, into a pleasant frame, let the joy of thy Lord be thy strength, and let this ordinance "put a new song into thy mouth." Come, and hear the voice of joy and gladness.

Let it be a pleasure to thee to think, that there is a God, and that he is such a one as he hath revealed himself

to be. The being and attributes of God are a terror to those that are unjustified and unsanctified ; nothing can be more so : they are willing to believe " there is no God, or that he is altogether such a one as themselves," because they heartily wish there were none, or one that they could be at peace with, and yet continue their league with sin : but to those who, through grace, partake of a divine nature themselves, nothing is more agreeable, nothing more acceptable, than the thoughts of God's nature and infinite perfections. Delight thyself, therefore, in thinking that there is an infinite and eternal Spirit, who is self-existent and self-sufficient, the best of beings, and the first of causes ; the highest of powers, and the richest and kindest of friends and benefactors ; the fountain of being and fountain of bliss ; the " Father of lights, the Father of mercies." Love to think of him whom thou canst not see, and yet canst not but know ; who is not far from thee, and yet between thee and him there is an infinite, awful distance. Let these thoughts be thy nourishment and refreshment.

Let it be a pleasure to think of the obligations thou liest under to this God as the Creator. He that is the Former of my body, and the Father of my spirit, in whom I live, and move, and have my being, is upon that account my rightful owner, my sovereign ruler, whom I am bound to serve. Because he made me, and not I myself, therefore I am not mine own, but his. Please thyself, my soul, with this thought, that thou art not thine own, but his that made thee ; not left to thine own will, but bound up by his ; not made for thyself, but designed to be to him for a name and a praise. Noble powers are then intended for a nobler purpose. Delight thyself in him, as the felicity and end of thy being, who is the fountain and cause of it. Were I to choose, I would not be mine own master, my own carver, mine own centre ; no, I would not, it is better as it is. I love to think of the eternal God, as the just director of all my own actions, to whom I am accountable, and the wise disposer of all my affairs, to whom I must submit. I love to think of him as my chief good, who, having made me, is alone able to make me happy ; and as my highest end, " of whom and through whom, and to whom, are all things."

Let it be a pleasure to thee to think of the covenant

relations wherein this God stands to thee in Jesus Christ. This is especially to be our delight in this sealing ordinance : though the sacrament directs us immediately to Christ, yet through him it leads us to the Father. He died, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." To God therefore we must go as our end and rest, by Christ as our way ; to God as a Father, by Christ as Mediator. Come then, my soul, and see with joy and the highest satisfaction the God that made thee entering into covenant with thee, and engaging to make thee happy. Hear him saying to thee, my soul, "I am thy salvation, thy shield, and not only thy bountiful rewarder, but thine exceeding great reward ; I am and will be to thee a God all-sufficient ;" a God that is enough. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee," wherever thou art ; "be not dismayed, for I am thy God ;" whatever thou wantest, whatever thou lovest, call me God, even thine own God : when thou art weak, I will strengthen thee ; yea, when thou art helpless, I will help thee ; yea, when thou art ready to sink, "I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." The God that cannot lie hath said, and here seals it to thee, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Let this be to thee, my soul, the voice of joy and gladness, making even broken bones to rejoice. Encourage thyself in the Lord thy God. He is thy Shepherd, thou shalt not want any thing that is good for thee. "Thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of hosts is his name ;" and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee. He shall rest in his love to thee : rest then in thy love to him, and rejoice in him always. The Lord is thy Lawgiver, thy King that will save thee : swear allegiance to him, then, with gladness and loud hosannas. "Let Israel rejoice in him that made Him, (that new-made him ;) let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." What wouldst thou more ? This God is thy God for ever and ever.

Stir up thyself, my soul, to take the comfort which is here offered thee. Let this strengthen the weak hands, let it confirm the feeble knees. If God be indeed the "health of thy countenance and thy God, why art thou cast down ? why art thou disquieted ?" Die not for thirst when there is such a fountain of living waters near thee ; but draw water

with joy out of these wells of salvation. Shiver not for cold when there is such a reviving, a quickening heat in these promises; but say with pleasure, "Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire!" Faint not for hunger, now thou art at a feast of fat things; but be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of God's house. The God whose wrath and frowns thou hast incurred, here favours thee and smiles on thee; let this therefore give thee a joy greater than the joy of harvest, and far surpassing what they have that divide the spoil. Though thou canst not reach to holy raptures, yet compose thyself to a holy rest. Delight thyself always in the Lord, especially at this ordinance, and, by thus taking the comfort of what thou hast received, thou qualifiest thyself to receive more; for then he shall give thee the desire of thy heart. The way to have thine heart's desire is to make God thy heart's delight. Triumph in his love, and thine interest in him: his benignity is better than life, let it be to thee sweeter than life itself." "Behold, God is my Saviour, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength, and therefore my song; the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." When you come to the altar of God, call him, "God thy exceeding joy;" "thy God, thy glory."

IV. Here we must be admiring the mysteries and miracles of redeeming love.—They that worshipped the beast are said to wander after him; so must they that worship the Lamb, for he hath done marvellous things. We have reason to say that we were fearfully and wonderfully made; but, without doubt, we were more fearfully and wonderfully redeemed. We were made with a word, but we were bought with a price: stand still, then, and see the salvation of the Lord, see it with admiration. Affect thyself, my soul, with a pleasing wonder, while thou art seeing this great sight. The everlasting Gospel is here magnified and made honourable, let it be so in thine eyes: call it "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." Let us take a view of some of the marvellous things which are done in the work of our redemption.

1. The contrivance of the salvation is marvellous. It would have for ever puzzled the wisdom of angels and men, to have found out such a method of salvation as might

effectually satisfy God's justice, and yet secure men's happiness; save the life of the law-breaker, and yet maintain the honour of the law-maker. This is that mystery which the angels desire to look into, and of which the most piercing eye of those inquisitive spirits, that see by the light of the upper world, will not be able to eternity to discern the bottom. O the depth of this hidden wisdom!

2. The purposes of God's love concerning it from eternity are marvellous. Be astonished, O my soul, at this, that the God who was infinitely happy in the contemplation and enjoyment of himself and his own perfections, should yet entertain thoughts of love towards a remnant of mankind, and towards thee amongst the rest, and design such favours for them, such favours for thee, before the worlds were! "How precious should these thoughts be unto us, for how great is the sum of them!"

3. The choice of the person who should undertake it is marvellous:—the Son of his love, that in parting with him for us he might commend his love; the eternal Wisdom, the eternal Word, that he might effectually accomplish this great design, and might not fail nor be discouraged. A person every way fit, both to do the Redeemer's work, and to wear the Redeemer's crown. It is spoken of as "an admirable invention: "I have found a ransom;" and, "I have found David my servant." On earth there was not his like, nor in heaven either.

4. The Redeemer's consent to the undertaking is marvellous. Considering his own dignity and self-sufficiency, our unworthiness and obnoxiousness, the difficulty of the service, and the ill requitals he foresaw from an ungrateful world, we have reason to admire that he should be so free, so forward to it; and should say, "Lo, I come: where am I, send me." Never was there such a miracle of love and pity; verily it passeth knowledge.

5. The carrying on of his undertaking in his humiliation is marvellous. His name was Wonderful. His appearance in the world, from first to last, was a continued series of wonders; "without controversy, great was this mystery of godliness." The bringing of the first-begotten into the world was attended with the adorations of wondering angels. His doctrine and miracles, while he was in the world, were

admirable ; they that heard the one, and saw the other, were beyond measure astonished. But his going out of the world was the greatest wonder of all : it made the earth to shake, the rocks to rend, and the sun to cover his face. Never was there such a martyr, never such a sacrifice, never such a paradox of love as that was. "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of Christ," which is so much the wisdom of God and the power of God.

6. The honours of this exalted state are marvellous. He that was made a little lower than the angels, a worm and no man, is now the Lord of angels. One in our nature is advanced to the highest honours, invested with the highest powers, having an incontestable authority to execute judgment, even for this reason, that he is the Son of man ; not only though he is so, but because he is so. This is the Lord's doing, and it is, and should be, marvellous in our eyes.

7. The covenant of grace, made also with us in him, is marvellous. The terms of the covenant are wonderful, reasonable, and easy ; the treasures of the covenant are wonderful, rich, and valuable. The covenant itself is well ordered in all things, and sure ; admirably well, both for the glory of God, and the comfort of all believers. God in it "showeth us his marvellous loving-kindness ;" and we answer not the design of the discovery, if we do not admire it. Other things, the more they are known, the less they are wondered at ; but the riches of redeeming love appear more admirable to those that are best acquainted with them.

V. Here we must be caring what we shall render to him that hath thus loved us.—This wondrous love is love to us ; and not only gives the greatest encouragements to us to come to God for mercy and peace, but lays the strongest engagements upon us to walk with God in duty and obedience. We are bound in conscience, bound in honour and in gratitude, to love him, and to live to him who loved us and died for us. This concern should much affect us, and lie very near our hearts, how we may answer the intentions of this love.

We should be affected with a jealous fear, lest we prove ungrateful, and, like Hezekiah, "render not again according to the benefit done unto us." We cannot but know something, by sad experience, of the treachery and deceitfulness of our own hearts, and how apt they are to start aside like a broken

bow ; and therefore we have no reason to presume upon our strength and sufficiency. We are told of many who eat and drink in Christ's presence, and yet are found at last unfaithful to him ; and what if I should prove one of those ? This thought is not suggested here to amuse any that tremble at God's word, or to weaken the hands and sadden the hearts of those that are truly willing, though very weak ; but to awaken those that slumber, and humble those that are wise in their own conceit. Distrust thyself, O my soul, that thou mayest trust in Christ only ; fear thine own strength, that thou mayest hope in his. He that hath done these great things for thee, must be applied to and depended on to work those great things in thee, which are required of thee. Go forth, therefore, and go on in his strength. If the same that grants us those favours, give us not wherewithal to make suitable returns for them, we shall perish for ever in our ingratitude.

We should be filled with serious desires to know and do our duty, in return for that great love wherewith we are loved. The affections of a grateful mind are very proper to be working in us at this ordinance. Doth not even nature teach us to be grateful to our friends and benefactors ? Let us be so to Christ then, the best of friends, and kindest of benefactors. Come, my soul, here I see how much I am indebted, and how I owe my life, my joy, and hope, and all, to the blessed Jesus : and is it not time to ask with holy David, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me ?" Shall I not take the cup of salvation, as he doth, with this thought, "What shall I render ?" Let David's answer to that question, which we find in the 116th Psalm, be mine.

"I love the Lord." (Verse 1.) Love is the loadstone of love ; even the publicans love those that love them. Lord, thou hast loved me with an everlasting love ; from everlasting in the counsels of it, to everlasting in the consequences of it : and shall not my heart, with this loving-kindness, be drawn to thee ? Lord, I love thee ; the world and the flesh shall never have my love more : I have loved them too much, I have loved them too long ; the best affections of my soul shall now be consecrated to thee, O God, to thee, O blessed Jesus ! "Whom have I in heaven but thee ?" "Lord, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love

thee." It is my sorrow and shame that I am so weak and defective in my love to thee: what a wretched heart have I, that I can think, and speak, and hear, and see so much of thy love to me, and be so little affected with it! so low in my thoughts of thee, so cool in my desires towards thee, so unsteady in my resolutions for thee! Lord, pity me! Lord, help me! for yet I love thee, I love to love thee. I earnestly desire to love thee better, and long to be where love shall be made perfect.

"I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving." (Verse 17.) As love is the heart of praise, so praise is the language of love. What shall I render? I must render to all their due; tribute to whom tribute is due; the tribute of praise to God, to whom it is due. We do not accommodate ourselves to this thanksgiving feast, if we do not attend it with hearts enlarged in thanksgiving: this cup of salvation must be a cup of blessing; in it we must bless God, because in it God blesseth us. Thankful acknowledgments of God's favour to us are but poor returns for rich receivings; yet they are such as God will accept, if they come from an upright heart. "Bless the Lord, therefore, O my soul, and let all that is within me bless his holy name." Speak well of him who hath done well for thee. Thank him for all his gifts both of nature and grace, especially for Jesus Christ, the spring of all. "As long as I live I will bless the Lord; yea, I will praise my God while I have my being;" for he is the God of my life, and the Author of my well-being: and when I have no life, no being on earth, I hope to have a better life, a better being, in a better world, and to be doing this work for ever in a better manner.

"O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant." (Verse 16.) I acknowledge myself already bound to be so, and further oblige myself by solemn promise to approve myself so. What will I render? Lord, I render myself to thee, my whole self, body and soul and spirit, not in compliment, but in truth and sincerity; I own myself thy servant, to obey thy commands, to be at thy disposal, and to be serviceable to thine honour and interest: it will be my credit and ease, my safety and happiness, to be under thy government; make me as one of thy hired servants.

"I will call upon the name of the Lord." (Verse 13.)



This is an immediate answer to that question, "What shall I render?" and it is a surprising answer. It is uncommon among men to make petitions for further favours, or returns for former favours; yet such a return as this, the God that delights to hear prayers will be well pleased with. Is God my Father? I will apply myself to him as a child, and call him "Abba, Father." Have I an Advocate with the Father? Then I will come boldly to the throne of grace. Are there such exceeding great and precious promises made me, and sealed to me? Then will I never lose the benefit of them for want of putting them in suit. As I will love God the better, so I will love prayer the better, as long as I live; and having given myself unto God, I will give myself unto prayer, as David did, till I come to the world of everlasting praise.

"Return unto thy rest, O my soul." (Verse 7.) The God who hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants, would have them easy to themselves; and that they can never be but by reposing in him: this, therefore, we must render. It is work that has its own wages: honour God by resting in him, please him by being well pleased in him. Having received so much from him, let us own that we have enough in him, and that we can go nowhere but to him with any hopes of satisfaction. Lord, whither shall we go? He hath "the words of eternal life."

"I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." (Verse 9.) A holy life, though it cannot profit God, yet it glorifieth him; and therefore it is insisted upon as a necessary return for the favours we have received from God. While I am here in the land of the living, I will walk by faith, having mine eyes ever towards the Lord, to see him as he reveals himself, hoping that shortly, in that land which is truly the land of the living, above, I shall walk by sight, having mine eyes ever upon the Lord, to see him as he is. God hath here sealed to be to me a God all-sufficient: here, therefore, I seal to him, according to the tenor of the covenant, that, his grace enabling me, I will "walk before him and be upright."

"I will pay my vows unto the Lord." (Verses 14, 18.) Those that receive the blessing of the covenant, must be willing, not only to come, but always to abide under the bonds of the covenant. Here we must make vows, and then go away and make them good. More of this in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER XI.

DIRECTIONS CONCERNING THE SOLEMN VOWS WE ARE TO  
MAKE TO GOD IN THIS ORDINANCE.

FOUR reasons why, at the Lord's Supper, we must make vows. I. We must, by solemn vows, bind ourselves up from all sin : largely opened in five things. II. We must bind ourselves up to all duty. To the duties of religion in general : opened in four things. To some duties of religion especially : opened in four things. Duties which we have most neglected, which we have experienced most benefit by, which we have most opportunity for ; and the duties of our respective callings and relations.

A RELIGIOUS vow is a bond upon the soul ; so it is described, Num. xxx. 2, where he that voweth a vow unto the Lord is said thereby to bind his soul with a bond. It is a solemn promise, by which we voluntarily oblige ourselves to God and duty, as a "willing people in the day of his power." The cords of a man, and bonds of love, wherewith God draws us and holds us to himself, call upon us by our own act and deed to bind ourselves : and these vows also are cords of a man, for they are highly reasonable ; and bonds of love, for to the renewed soul they are an easy yoke, and a light burden.

From all other parts of our work at the Lord's table, we may infer that this is one part of it : we must there make solemn vows to God, that we will diligently and faithfully serve him.

We are here to renew our repentance for sin, and it becomes penitents to make vows. When we profess ourselves sorry for what we have done amiss, it is very natural and necessary to add, that "we will not offend any more as we have done ; if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more." We mock God when we say we repent that we have done foolishly, if we do not at the same time resolve that we will

never return again to folly. Times of affliction are proper times to make vows; and what is repentance but self-affliction? Trouble for sin was not the least of that trouble which David was in, when his lips uttered those vows which he spoke so feelingly of: "I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings; I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble." Probably it was under this penitential affliction that he "sware unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob, that he would find a place for the ark." Vows against sin, resulting from sorrow for sin, shall not be rejected as extorted by the rack, but graciously accepted as the genuine language of a broken heart, and fruits meet for repentance.

We are here to ask and receive mercy from God, and it becomes petitioners to make vows. When Jacob found himself in special need of God's gracious presence, he vowed a vow, and set up a stone, for a memorial of it. And Hannah, when she prayed for a particular mercy, vowed a vow, that the comfort she prayed for should be consecrated to God. Great and precious things we are here waiting to receive from God; and therefore, though we cannot offer anything as a valuable consideration for his favours, yet it becomes us to promise such suitable returns as we are capable of making. When God encourageth us to seek to him for grace, we must engage ourselves not to receive his grace in vain, but to improve and employ for him what we have from him.

We are here to give God thanks for his favours to us; now, it becomes us in our thanksgivings to make vows, and to offer to God, not only the calves of our lips, but the work of our hands. Jonah's mariners, when they offered a sacrifice of praise to the Lord for a calm after a storm, as an appendix to that sacrifice, made vows. The most acceptable vows are those which take rise from gratitude, and which are drawn from us by the mercies of God. Here I see what great things God hath done for my soul, and what greater things he designs for me: shall I not therefore freely bind myself to that, which he hath by such endearing ties bound me to?

We are here to join ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting

covenant; and it is requisite that our general covenant be explained and confirmed by particular vows. When we present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, with those cords we must bind that sacrifice to the horns of the altar: and, while we experience in ourselves such a bent to backslide, we shall find all the arts of obligation little enough to be used with our own souls. As it is not enough to confess sin in the gross, saying, "I have sinned," but we must enter into the detail of our transgressions, saying, with David, "I have done this evil;" so it is not enough, in our covenanting with God, that we engage ourselves in the general to be his; but we must descend to particulars in our covenants, as God doth in his commands, that thereby we may the more effectually both bind ourselves to duty, and mind ourselves of duty. If the people must distinctly say Amen to every curse pronounced on Mount Ebal, much more to every precept delivered on Mount Horeb.

Come then, my soul, thou hast now thy hand upon the book to be sworn; thou art lifting up thy hand to the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth; think what thou art doing, and adjust the particulars, that this may not become a rash oath, inconsiderately taken. God is here confirming his promises to us by an oath, to show the immutability of his counsels of love to us. Here, therefore, we must confirm our promise to him by an oath, to walk in God's law, and to "observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our God." Some of the oriental writers tell us, that the most solemn oath which the patriarchs before the flood used, was, "By the blood of Abel;" and we are sure that the blood of Jesus is infinitely more sacred, and speaks much greater and much better things than that of Abel. Let us therefore testify our value for that blood, and secure to ourselves the blessings purchased by it, by our sincere and faithful dealing with God in that covenant, of which this is the blood.

The command of the eternal God is, that we "cease to do evil, and learn to do well;" that we put off the old man, and put on the new. And our vows to God must accordingly be against all sin, and to all duty; and under each of these heads we must be particular, according as the case is.

I. We must here, by a solemn vow, bind ourselves against

all sin ; so as not only to break our league with it, but to enter into league against it. The putting away of the strange wives, in Ezra's time, was not the work of one day or two, but a work of time ; and therefore Ezra, when he had the people under convictions, and saw them weeping sore for their sin in marrying them, very prudently bound them, by a solemn covenant, that they would put them away. If ever we conceive an aversion to sin, surely it is at the table of the Lord ; and therefore we should improve that opportunity to invigorate our resolutions against it, that the remembrance of those resolutions may quicken our resistance of it, when the sensible impressions we are under from it are become less lively. Thus we must, by a solemn vow, cast away from us all our transgressions, saying, with Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols ?"

We must solemnly vow, that we will not indulge or allow ourselves in any sin. Though sin may remain, it shall not reign ; though those Canaanites be in the land, yet we will not be tributaries to them. However it may usurp and oppress as a tyrant, it shall never be owned as a rightful prince, nor have a peaceful and undisturbed dominion. I may be in some particular instances, through the surprise of temptations, led into captivity by it ; but I am fully resolved, through Christ, never to join in affinity with it, never espouse its cause, never plead for it, nor strike in with its interest.

Bind thyself with this bond, O my soul, that though, through the remainders of corruptions, thou canst not say thou hast no sin ; yet, through the beginnings of grace, thou wilt be able to say thou lovest none ; that thou wilt give no countenance or connivance to any sin ; no, not to secret sins, which, though they shame thee not before men, yet shame thee before God and thine own conscience ; no, not to heart sins, those firstborn of the corrupt nature, the beginning of its strength. Vain thoughts may intrude, and force a lodging in me, but I will never invite them, never bid them welcome, nor court their stay ; corrupt affections may disturb me, but they shall never have the quiet and peaceable possession of me : no, whatever wars against my soul, by the grace of God I will war against it, hoping in due time to get the dominion, and have its yoke broke from off my neck, when "judgment shall be brought forth into victory," and grace perfected in glory.

We must solemnly vow, that we will never yield to any gross sin, such as lying, injustice, uncleanness, drunkenness, profanation of God's name, and such like, which are not the spots of God's children. Though all the high places be not taken away, yet there shall be no remains of Baal, or of Baal's priests and altars, in my soul. However my own heart may be spotted by sins of infirmity, and may need to be daily washed, yet, by the grace of God, I will never spot my profession, nor stain the credit of that by open and scandalous sin. I have no reason to be ashamed of the Gospel, and therefore it shall be my constant endeavour, not to be in any thing a shame to the Gospel; it is an honour to me, I will never be a dishonour to it; I will never do any thing, by the grace of God I will not, which may give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme that worthy name by which I am called. So shall it appear that I am upright, if I be innocent from these great transgressions.

We must solemnly vow, that with a particular care we will keep ourselves from our own iniquity. That sin, with which, in our penitent reflections, our own consciences did most charge us, and reproach us for, that sin we must in a special manner renew our resolutions against. Was it pride? Was it passion? Was it distrust of God, or love of the world? Was it an unclean fancy, or an idle tongue?—Whatever it was, let the spiritual force be mustered and drawn out against that. The instructions which Samuel gave to Israel, when they were lamenting after the Lord, are observable to this purpose: "If ye do return to the Lord with all your hearts," and would be accepted of him therein, "then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth." Was not Ashtaroth one of the strange gods or goddesses? Yes; but that is particularly instanced in, because it had been a beloved idol, dearer than the rest, that especially must be put away. Thus, in our covenanting with God, we must engage against all sin, but in particular against that which, by reason of the temper of our minds, the constitution of our bodies, or the circumstances of our outward affairs, doth most easily beset us, and we are most prone to.

Knowest thou thine own self, O my soul? If thou dost, thou "knowest thine own sickness, and thine own sore," that is, thine own iniquity: bring that hither and slay it:

let not thine eyes spare, neither do thou pity it. Hide it not, excuse it not, stipulate not for leave to reserve it, as Naaman did for his house of Rimmon : though it hath been to thee as a right eye, as a right hand, as thy guide and thine acquaintance, it hath been a false guide, an ill acquaintance ; pluck it out, cut it off, and cast it from thee. Now come and fortify thy resolutions in the strength of Christ against that ; fetch in help from heaven against that ; be vigorous in thy resistance of that ; and how many soever its advantages are against thee, yet despair not of a victory at last.

We must solemnly vow, that we will abstain from all appearance of evil ; not only from that which is manifestly sin, and which carries the evidences of its own malignity written on its forehead, but from that which looks like sin, and borders upon it. Wisdom is here profitable to direct, so as that we may not on the one hand indulge a scrupulous conscience, and yet on the other hand may preserve a tender conscience. Far be it from us to make that to be sin which God hath not made so ; and yet in doubtful cases it must be our care and covenant to keep the safer side, and to be cautious of that which is suspicious : “ he that walks uprightly walks surely.” What we find to be rather a snare to us, and an occasion of sin, or a blemish to us, and an occasion of scandal, or a terror to us in the reflection, and an occasion of grief or fear, it may do well expressly to resolve against, though we be not very clear that it is in itself sinful, nor dare censure it as an evil in others ; provided that this vow be made with such limitations as that it may not afterwards prove an entanglement to us, when, either by the improvement of our knowledge, or the change of our circumstances, it ceaseth to have in it an appearance of evil.

And art thou willing, my soul, to come under this bond ? Wilt thou put far from thee the accursed thing ? Wilt thou, in this ordinance, make a covenant with thine eyes, and oblige them not to look on the wine when it is red, nor to look on a woman to lust after her ? Wilt thou shun sin as the plague, and engage thyself, not only never to embrace that adulteress, but never to come nigh the door of her house ? Thy vow being like that of the Nazarite, not to drink of this intoxicating wine ; let it be then like his, not to eat any thing that cometh of the wine, “ from the kernel to the husk.”

Abandon sin and all appurtenances, cast out Tobiah and all his stuff. Resolve to deny thyself in that which is most desirable, rather than give Satan any advantage; to abridge thyself even in that which is lawful, rather than come within the confines of sin, or bring thyself into danger of that which is unlawful. "Happy is the man that feareth always."

We must solemnly vow, that we will have no fellowship "with the unfruitful works of darkness, neither be partakers of other men's sins." We live in a corrupt and degenerate age, in which iniquity greatly abounds. Our business is not to judge others; to their own masters they stand or fall: but our care must be, to preserve ourselves, and the purity and peace of our own minds; our covenant therefore must be, that we will never "walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners." When David engaged himself to keep the commandments of his God, pursuant to that engagement, he said to evil-doers, "Depart from me." And St. Peter reminded his new converts of the necessity of this care: "Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

Let the Psalmist's vow be mine then: Having hated the congregation of evil-doers, such as drunkards, swearers, filthy talkers, and scoffers at godliness, "I will not sit with the wicked." Though I cannot avoid being sometimes in the sight and hearing of such, yet I will never take those for my chosen companions and bosom friends in this world, with whom I should dread to have my portion in the other world. Religion in rags shall be always valued by me, and profaneness in robes despised. Having chosen God for my God, his people shall always be my people: "Lord, gather not my soul with sinners." If thou art in good earnest for heaven, resolved to swim against the stream, thou wilt find that sober singularity is an excellent guard to serious piety. On all that glory let there be this defence.

II. We must here, by a solemn vow, bind ourselves up to all duty.—It is not enough that we depart from evil, but we must do good; that we separate ourselves from the service of sin, and shake off Satan's iron yoke; but we must devote ourselves to the service of Christ, and put our necks under the sweet and easy yoke of God's commandments, with a solemn promise faithfully to draw in that yoke all our days. We need not bind ourselves to more than we are already



bound to by the divine law, either expressly or by consequence; either as primary duties, or secondary, in order to them. We are not called to lay upon ourselves any other burden than necessary things, and they are not heavy burdens, nor grievous to be borne; but we must bind ourselves by additional ties to that which we are already bound to.

1. We must, by a solemn vow, oblige ourselves to all the duties of religion in general. Jacob's vow must be ours: "Then the Lord shall be my God." Having avouched him for mine, I will fear him and love him, delight in him and depend upon him, worship him and glorify him, as my Lord and my God. Having owned him as mine, I will even eye him as mine, and "walk in his name." David's vows must be ours: that we will "keep God's judgments;" that we will keep in them as our way, keep to them as our rule; that we will keep them as the apple of our eye, keep them always unto the end.

In the strength of the grace of Jesus Christ, we must here solemnly promise and vow,—

(1.) That we will make religion our business. It is our great business in this world, to serve the honour of him that made us, and secure the happiness we are made for: this we must mind as our business, and not, as they must do, make a bye-business of it. Religion must be our calling; the calling we resolve to live in, and hope to live by: in the services of it we must be constant and diligent, and as in our element. Other things must give way to it, and be made, as much as they may be, serviceable to it. And this must be our covenant with God here, that, however we have trifled hitherto, henceforward we will mind religion as the one thing needful, and not to be slothful in the business of it, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. And art thou willing, my soul, thus to devote thyself entirely to the service of God? Shall that engage thy cares, fill thy thoughts, command thy time, and give law to the whole man? Let this matter be settled, then, in this day's vows, and resolve to live and die by it.

(2.) That we will make conscience of inside godliness. Having in our covenant given God our heart, which is what he demands, we must resolve to employ it for him; for, without doubt, he is a Jew, he is a Christian, that is one inwardly; and that is circumcision, that is baptism, that is true and

pure religion, "which is of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter;" that we are really, which we are inwardly; and they only are the true worshippers, that worship God in the spirit. This is the power of godliness, without which the form is but a carcass, but a shadow. "The king's daughter is all glorious within." This, therefore, we must resolve in the strength of the grace of God, that we will keep our hearts with all diligence, keep them fixed, fixed upon God; that the desire of our souls shall ever be towards God; our hearts shall be lifted up to God in every prayer, and their doors and gates thrown open to admit his word; and that our constant care shall be about the "hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible;" so approving ourselves to God in our integrity in every thing we do in religion.

(3.) That we will live a life of communion with God. Without controversy, great is this mystery of godliness; if there be a heaven upon earth, certainly this is it, by faith to set the Lord always before us, having an eye to him with suitable affections, as the first cause, and last end, of all things that concern us; and so having communion with him in providence as well as ordinances. When we receive the common comforts of every day from his hand with love and thankfulness; and bear the common crosses and disappointments of every day, as ordered by his will, with patience and submission; when we commit every day's care to him, and manage every day's business and converse for him, having a constant habitual regard to God in the settled principles of the divine life, and frequent actual outgoings of soul towards him in pious ejaculations, the genuine expressions of devout affections; then we live a life of communion with God. Did we know by experience what it is to live such a life as this, we would not exchange the pleasures of it for the peculiar treasures of kings and provinces.

Engage thyself, then, my soul, elevate thyself to this spiritual and divine life, and every day may be thus with thee a communion day, and thy constant fellowship may be with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ, by the Spirit. Let me resolve henceforward to live, more than I have hitherto done, a life of complacency in God, in his beauty, bounty, and benignity; a life of dependence upon

God, upon his power, providence, and promise; a life of devotedness to God, to the conduct of his Spirit, and the disposal of his providence; and thus to walk with God in all holy conversation.

(4.) That we will keep heaven in our eye, and take up with nothing short of it. We are made for another world, and we must resolve to set our hearts upon that world, and have it always in our eye; seeking the things that are above, and slighting things below in comparison with them, as those that are born from heaven, and bound for heaven. Bind thyself, my soul, with this bond, that, "forgetting the things that are behind, as one that hath not yet attained, neither is already perfect," thou wilt reach forth to those things that are before, "pressing forwards toward the mark for the prize of the high calling." My treasure is in heaven,—my heart, hope, and home are there: I shall never be well till I am there: there, therefore, shall my heart be, and to that recompense of reward I will ever have respect; with an eye to that joy and glory set before me in the other world, I will, by the grace of God, patiently run the race of godliness set before me in this world.

2. We must, by a solemn vow, oblige ourselves to some duties of religion in particular. As it is good to engage ourselves by covenant against particular sins, that, by the help of resolution, our resistance of them may be invigorated; so it is good to engage ourselves to particular duties, that we may be quickened diligently to apply ourselves to them, and may see our work before us.

(1.) We should particularly oblige ourselves to those duties, of which our own consciences have charged us with the neglect. We have known that good which our own hearts tell us we have not done; we find upon reflection, it may be, that we have not been constant in our secret devotion, that we have not done that good in our families which we should have done; we have been barren in good discourse, careless of our duty to the souls of others, backward to works of charity, unfurnished for and indisposed to religious exercises. In these, or other things, wherein we are conscious to ourselves that we have been defective, we covenant for the future to be more circumspect and industrious, that our works may be found filled up before God. When the Jews

in Nehemiah's time made a sure covenant, wrote it, and sealed to it, they inserted particular articles, relating to those branches of God's service which had been neglected, and made ordinances for themselves, according to the ordinances that God had given them: so should we do, as an evidence of the sincerity of our repentance for our former omissions, both of duty and in duty. That work of our Lord, wherein we have been most wanting, in that we must covenant to abound most, that we may redeem the time.

(2.) We should particularly oblige ourselves to those duties which we have found by experience to contribute most to the support and advancement of the life and power of godliness in our hearts. They that have carefully observed themselves, perhaps can tell what those religious exercises are, which they have found to be most serviceable to the prosperity of their souls, and by which they have reaped most spiritual benefit and advantage. Have our hearts been most enlarged in secret devotion? Hath God sometimes met us in our closets with special comforts, and the unusual manifestations of himself to our souls? Let us from thence take an indication, and covenant to be more alone in secret communion with God. Have public ordinances been to us as green pastures, and have we sat down by them with delight? Let us resolve to be so much the more diligent in our attendance on them, and wait more closely at those gates where we have so often been abundantly satisfied. Though one duty must never be allowed to intrench upon another, yet those duties which we have found to be the most effectual means of increasing our acquaintance with God, confirming our faith in Christ, and furthering us in our way to heaven, we should, with a peculiar care, engage ourselves to.

Though God hath strictly commanded us the great and necessary acts of religious worship, yet, for the trial of our holy ingenuity and zeal, he hath left it to us to determine many of the circumstances. That even instituted sacrifices may be in some respects free-will offerings, he hath commanded us to pray and read the Scriptures, but hath not told us just how oft and how long we must pray and read. Here, therefore, it is proper for us to bind ourselves to that which will best answer the intention of the command in general, best agree with the circumstances we are in, and best advance

the interests of our souls ; in which we must take heed, on the one hand, that we indulge not spiritual sloth, by contenting ourselves with the least proportions of time that may be, much less by confining ourselves to them ; and, on the other hand, that we make not religious exercises a task and burden to ourselves, by binding ourselves to that at all times, which, in an extraordinary pang of devotion, is easy and little enough. In making resolutions of this kind, we ought to be cautious, and not hasty to utter anything before God, that we may not afterwards say before the angel, "It was an error." Though such is the decay of Christian zeal in the age that we live in, that few need this caution ; yet it must be inserted, "because it is a snare to a man to devour that which is holy, and after vows to make inquiry."

(3.) We should particularly oblige ourselves to those duties by which we have opportunities of glorifying God, adorning our profession, and doing good in our places. We are not born for ourselves, nor bought for ourselves ; we are born for God, and bought for Christ : and both as men and as Christians, we are members one of another : and we ought to sit down and consider how we may trade with the talent with which we are intrusted, though it be but one, to the glory of our Creator, the honour of our Redeemer, and the good of our brethren. The liberal and pious devise liberal and pious things, and oblige themselves to them. Think then, my soul, not only, "What must I do ?" but, "What may I do, for God, who hath done such great things for me ?" How may I be serviceable to the interests of God's kingdom among men ? What can I do to promote the strength and beauty of the church, and the welfare of precious souls ? And if we have thought of anything of this kind that falls within the sphere of our activity, though but a low and narrow sphere, it may do well, when we find ourselves in a good frame at the table of the Lord, by a solemn vow, with due caution, to oblige ourselves to it, that we may not leave room for a treacherous heart to start back. Thus Jacob, for the perpetuating the memory of God's favour to him, made it a part of his vow : "This stone which I have set for a pillar shall be God's house." Thus Hannah vowed, that if God would give her a son, she would give him to the Lord. It is one of the rules prescribed concerning cost or pains be-

stowed for pious and charitable uses: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give," so let him do. Now, lest that purpose should fail and come to nothing, it is good, when the matter of it is well digested, to bring it to a head in a solemn promise, that the tempter seeing us steadfastly resolved, he may cease soliciting us to alter our purpose.

(4.) We should particularly oblige ourselves to the duties of our respective callings and relations. Much of Christian obedience lies in these instances; and in them we are especially called to serve God and our generation, and should therefore bind ourselves to do so.

They that are in places of public trust and power, should here oblige themselves, by a solemn vow, to be faithful to the trust reposed in them, and to use their power for the public good. They that rule over men, must here covenant that they will be just, ruling in the fear of God. Their oaths must here be ratified, and David's promise must be theirs: "When I shall receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly." This ought to be seriously considered by all those who receive this holy sacrament at their admission into the magistracy. When publicans and soldiers submitted to the baptism of John, and thereby obliged themselves to live a holy life, they asked and received of John instructions how to discharge the duty of their respective employments; for, when we vow to keep God's commandments, though we must have a universal respect to them all, yet we must have a special regard to those precepts which relate to the calling wherein we are called, whatever it is.

The stewards of the mysteries of God, when they administer this ordinance to others, receive it themselves as an obligation upon them to stir up the gift that is in them, that they may make full proof of their ministry. Their ordination vows are repeated and confirmed in every sacrament, and they are again sworn to be true to Christ and souls. He that ministereth about holy things, must here oblige himself to "wait on his ministering; he that teacheth, on teaching; he that exhorteth, on exhortation."

Governors of families must here oblige themselves, as David did, to walk before their houses in a perfect way, with a perfect heart; and they must affix this seal to Joshua's

resolution, that, whatever others do, "they and their houses will serve the Lord." Here they must consecrate to God a church in their house, and bind themselves to set up, and always to keep up, both an altar and a throne for God in their habitation, that they may approve themselves the spiritual seed of faithful Abraham, who was famous for family religion. It is with this intent, I suppose, that the rubric of the public establishment declares it convenient, "that new married persons should receive the holy communion at the time of their marriage, or at the first opportunity after their marriage;" that, being engaged to each other in a new relation, they may solemnly engage themselves to discharge the duties of that relation in the fear of God. And inferior relations must here oblige themselves to do the duty they owe to their superiors: children to be dutiful to their parents, servants to be obedient to their masters; yea, all of us to be subject one to another.\* They that are under the yoke, as the apostle speaks, may here make the yoke they are under easy to them, by obliging themselves to draw in it from a principle of duty to God, and gratitude to Christ, which will both sanctify and sweeten the hardest services and submission.

Whatever our employments are, and our dealings with men, we must here promise and avow that we will be strictly just and honest in them; that whatever temptations we may be under to the contrary at any time, we will make conscience of "rendering to all their due, and of speaking the truth from the heart;" that we will walk uprightly, and work righteousness, despise the gain of oppression, and shake our hand from holding of bribes; knowing that they who do so "shall dwell on high, their place of defence shall be the munition of rocks; bread shall be given them, and their waters shall be sure." We find it upon record, to the honour of Christ's holy religion, when it was first planted in the world, that Pliny, a heathen magistrate, and a persecutor of Christianity, giving an account to the Emperor Trajan of what he had discovered concerning the Christians, in an epistle yet extant, acknowledgeth, that in their religious assemblies they bound themselves by a sacrament, that is, they bound themselves not to do anything evil; that they would not rob or steal, or commit adultery; that they would

never be false to any trust reposed in them, never deny anything that was put into their hands to keep ; and the like. The same is still the true intent and meaning of this service ; it is the bond of a covenant, added to the bond of a command, that we “do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.”

Come then, my soul, come under these bonds, come willingly and cheerfully under them ; for he that bears an honest mind doth not startle at assurances : be not afraid to promise that which thou art already bound to do ; for these vows will rather facilitate thy duty, than add to the difficulty of it ; the faster thou findest thyself fixed to that which is good, the less there will be of uneasy hesitation and wavering concerning it, and the less danger of being tempted from it.

Only remember, that all those vows must be made with an entire dependence upon the strength and grace of Jesus Christ, to enable us to make them good. We have a great deal of reason to distrust ourselves, so weak and treacherous are our hearts. Peter betrayed himself by confiding in himself, when he said, “Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.” But we have encouragement enough to trust in Christ : in his name therefore let us make our vows, in his grace let us be strong ; surely “in the Lord alone have we righteousness and strength ;” he is the surety of the covenant for both parties : into his custody, therefore, and under the protection of his grace, let us pour out our souls, and we shall find he is able to keep what we commit to him.



## CHAPTER XII.

DIRECTIONS CONCERNING THE FRAME OF OUR SPIRITS  
WHEN WE COME AWAY FROM THIS ORDINANCE.

- I. WE must come from this ordinance admiring the condescension of the divine grace to us ; considering our meanness by nature, and our vile-ness by sin. II. Lamenting our manifold defects, either trembling, or at least blushing. III. Rejoicing in Christ, and the great love where-with he hath loved us ; expressing itself in praises to God, and encouragements to ourselves. IV. Much quickened to every good work. V. With a watchful fear of Satan's wiles, and a firm resolution to stand our ground against them. Let us therefore fear, and therefore fix. VI. Praying that God will fulfil his promises to us, and enable us to fulfil ours to him. VII. With a charitable disposition, to love our fellow Christians, to give to the poor, and forgive injuries. VIII. Longing for heaven. Our complaints and our comforts should make us long for heaven.

THEY that have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, at the table of the Lord, whose hearts are enlarged to send forth the workings of pious and devout affections towards God, and to take in the communication of divine light, life, and love from him, cannot but say, as Peter did upon the holy mount, "Lord, it is good for us to be here ; here let us make tabernacles." They sit down under the refreshing shadow of this ordinance with delight, and its fruit is sweet unto their taste. Here they could dwell all the days of their life, beholding the beauty of the Lord, and inquiring in his temple. But it is not a continual feast : we must come down from this mountain ; these sweet and precious minutes are soon numbered and finished ; supper is ended, thanks are returned, the guests are dismissed with a blessing, the hymn is sung, and we go out to the Mount of Olives ; even in this Jerusalem, the city of our solemnities, we have not a continuing city. Jacob hath an opportunity of wrestling with the angel a while, but he must "let him

go; for the day breaks," and he hath a family to look after, a journey to prosecute, and the affairs thereof call for his attendance. We must not be always at the Lord's table; the high priest himself must not be always within the veil; he must go out again to the people when his service is performed. Now, it ought to be as much our care to return in a right manner from the ordinance, as to approach in a right manner to it. That caution is here needful: "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought," "which we have gained,"—so some read it. Have we in this ordinance wrought anything, or gained anything that is good? We are concerned to see to it, that we do not undo what we have wrought, and let slip what we have gained.

When the solemnity is done, our work is not done; still we must be pressing forwards in our duty. This perhaps is the mystery of that law in Ezekiel's temple service, that they should not return from worshipping before the Lord, in the solemn feasts, "through the same gate by which they entered in, but by that over against it." Forgetting those things which are behind, still we must reach forth to those things which are before.

Let us inquire, then, What is to be done, at our coming away from the ordinance, for the preserving and improving of the impressions of it?

I. We should come from this ordinance admiring the condescensions of the divine grace to us.—Great are the honours which have here been done us, and the favours to which here we have been admitted: that God that made us hath taken us into covenant and communion with himself; the King of kings hath entertained us at his table, and there we have been feasted with the dainties of heaven, abundantly satisfied with the goodness of his house; exceeding great and precious promises have been here sealed to us, and earnest given us of the eternal inheritance. Now, if we know ourselves, this cannot but be the matter of our wonder, our joyful and yet awful wonder.

Considering our meanness by nature, we have reason to wonder that the great God should thus advance us. Higher than heaven is above the earth, is God above us; between heaven and earth there is, though a vast, yet only a finite

distance ; but between God and man there is an infinite disproportion. What is man, then, (man that is a worm, and the son of man that is a worm,) that he should be thus visited and regarded, thus dignified and preferred? That favour done to Israel sounds great: "Man did eat angels' food;" but here man is feasted with that which was never angels' food, the "flesh and blood of the Son of man," which gives life to the world. Solomon himself stood amazed at God's condescending to take possession of that magnificent temple he had built; "but will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?" And, which is more, shall men on the earth dwell in God, and make the Most High their habitation? If great men look with respect upon those that are much their inferior, it is because they expect to receive honour and advantage by them; "but can a man be profitable unto God?" No, he cannot; "our goodness extendeth not unto him." He was from eternity happy without us, and would have been so to eternity, if we had never been, or had been miserable; but we are undone, undone for ever, if his goodness extends not to us; he needs not our services, but we need his favours; men adopt because they are childless, but God adopts us purely because we are fatherless. It was no excellency in us that recommended us to his love, but poverty and misery made us proper objects of his pity.

Come then, my soul, and compose thyself as king David did, when, having received a gracious message from heaven, assuring him of God's kind intentions to him and his family, he went in, and with a great fixedness of mind sat before the Lord; and say, as he said, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" that I should be so kindly invited to the table of the Lord, and so splendidly treated there? that one so mean and worthless as I am, the poorest dunghill worm that ever called God Father, should be placed among the children, and fed with the children's bread? And yet, as if this were a "small thing in thy sight, O Lord God, thou hast spoken also concerning thy servant for a great while to come," even as far as eternity itself reaches; and thus thou "hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree," though I am nothing, yea, less than nothing, and vanity. "And is this the manner of men, O Lord God?" Could men ex-

pect thus to be favoured? No; but thou givest to men, not according to their poverty, but according to thy riches in glory. Do great men use to condescend thus? No; it is usual with them to take state upon them, and to oblige their inferiors to keep their distance; but we have to do with one that is God, and not man; whose thoughts of love are as much above ours, as his thoughts of wisdom are; and therefore, as it follows there, "What can David say more unto thee?" What account can I give of this unaccountable favour? "It is for thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart," for the performance of thy purposes and promises, that "thou hast done all these great things, to make thy servant know them."

Considering our vileness by sin, we have yet more reason to wonder that the holy God should thus favour us. We are not only worms of the earth, below his cognizance, but a generation of vipers, obnoxious to his curse; not only unworthy of his love and favour, but worthy of his wrath and displeasure. How is it, then, that we are brought so near unto him, who deserved to have been sentenced to an eternal separation from him? He hath said, "The foolish shall not stand in his sight." Foolish we know we are, and yet we are called to sit at his table, being through Christ reconciled to him, and brought into covenant with him. Justice might have set us as criminals at his bar; but, behold, mercy sets us as children at his board: and it is a miracle of mercy, mercy that is the wonder of angels, and will be the eternal transport of glorified saints. See how much we owe to the Redeemer, by whom we have access into this grace.

Let me therefore set myself, and stir myself, to admire it. I have more reason to say than Mephibosheth had, when David took him to eat bread at his table continually, "What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?" I am less than the least of God's mercies, and yet he hath not withheld the greatest from me! I have forfeited the comforts of my own table, and yet I am feasted with the comforts of the Lord's table! I deserve to have had the cup of the Lord's indignation put into my hand, and to have drunk the dregs of it; but, behold, I have been treated with the cup of salvation! Were ever traitors made favourites? such traitors made such favourites? Who can sufficiently

admire the love of the Redeemer, who "received gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious also," upon their return to their allegiance, "that the Lord God might dwell among them?" And have I shared in these gifts, notwithstanding my rebellions? This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous. Whence is this to me, that not the mother of my Lord, but my Lord himself, should come to me? that he should thus prevent me, thus distinguish me with his favours? "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to me, and not unto the world?"

II. We should come from this ordinance lamenting our own manifold defects and infirmities in our attendance upon God in it.—When we look back upon the solemnity, we find, that as we cannot speak well enough of God and of his grace, so we cannot speak ill enough of ourselves, and of the folly and treachery of our own hearts. Now, conscience, thou art charged in God's name to do thine office, and to accomplish a diligent search; review the workings of the soul in this ordinance distinctly and impartially.

And if upon search thou findest cause to suspect that all hath been done in hypocrisy, then set thy soul a-trembling; for its condition is sad, and highly dangerous. If I have been here pretending to join myself in a covenant with God, while I continue in league with the world and the flesh; pretending to receive the pardon of my sins, when I never repented of them, nor designed to forsake them; I have but deceived myself, and have reason to fear that I shall perish at last with a lie in my right hand. While this conviction is fresh and sensible, let care be taken to mend the matter; and, blessed be God, it may be mended. Have I reason to fear that my heart is not right in the sight of God, and that therefore I have no lot nor part in the matter, but am in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity? I must then take the advice which Peter gave to Simon Magus, when he perceived that to be his condition, after he had received the sacrament of baptism: "Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thoughts of thine heart may be forgiven thee." Let that be done with a double care after the ordinance, which should have been done before.

But if upon search thou findest that there hath been, through grace, truth in the inward part, yet set thy soul a-blushing; for it hath not been cleansed according to

the purification of the sanctuary. When we would do good, evil is present with us; our wine is mixed with water, and our gold with dross; and who is there that "doeth good, and sinneth not," even in his doing good? We find, by sad experience, that the sons of God never come together but Satan comes also among them, and stands at their right hand to resist them; and that, wherever we go, we carry about with us the remainders of corruption, a body of death, which inclines to that which is evil, and indisposes us to that which is good. If the spirit be willing, yet, alas! the flesh is weak, and we cannot do the things that we would.

O what reason have I to be ashamed of myself, and blush to lift up my face before God, when I review the frame of my heart during my attendance on this ordinance! How short have I come of doing my duty, according as the work of the day required! My thoughts should have been fixed; and the subjects presented to them to fix upon were curious enough to engage them, and copious enough to employ them; and yet they went with the fool's eyes unto the end of the earth, and wandered after a thousand impertinences. A little thing served to give them a diversion from the contemplation of the great things set before me. My affections should have been raised and elevated, but they were low and flat, and little moved; if sometimes they seemed to soar upwards, yet they soon sunk down again, and the things which remained were ready to die. My desires were cold and indifferent, my faith weak and inactive; nor were there any workings of soul in me proportionable to the weightiness of the transaction. Through my own dulness, deadness, and inadvertency, I lost a deal of time out of a little, and slept much of that which might have been done and got there, if I had been close and diligent.

This thought forbids us to entertain a good conceit of ourselves, and our own performances, or to build any confidence upon our own merit. While we are conscious to ourselves of so much infirmity cleaving to our best services, we must acknowledge that boasting is for ever excluded; we have nothing to glory of before God, nor can we challenge a reward as of debt, but must ascribe all to free grace. What good there is in us, is all of God, and he must have the honour of it; but there is also much amiss, which is all of ourselves, and we

must take the shame of it, lamenting those sad effects of the remainder of sin in us, which we feel to our loss when we draw nigh to God in holy ordinances.

This thought obligeth us, likewise, to rely on Christ alone for acceptance with God in all our religious duties : he is that great and gracious High Priest, who "bears the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel hallow in their holy gifts," that, notwithstanding that iniquity which is repented of, "the gifts may be accepted before the Lord." Of his righteousness therefore we must make mention, even of his only ; for the most spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God only through him. (1 Peter ii. 5.)

III. We should come from this ordinance rejoicing in Jesus Christ, and in that great love wherewith he hath loved us.— From this feast we should go to our tents, as the people went from Solomon's feast of dedication, "joyful and glad in heart, for all the goodness that the Lord hath done by David his servant, for Israel his people." They that went forth weeping, must come back rejoicing, as they have cause, if they "bring their sheaves with them." Hath God here lifted up the light of his countenance upon us ? That should "put gladness into our heart." Have we here lifted up our souls to God, and joined ourselves to him in an everlasting covenant ? We have reason, with the baptized eunuch, to "go on our way rejoicing." The day of our espousals should be the day "of the gladness of our hearts." This cup of blessing was designed to be a cup of consolation, and its wine ordained to make glad man's heart, to make glad the heart of the new man : having therefore drunk of this cup, let our souls "make their boast in the Lord, and sing in his ways, and call him their exceeding joy."

Let this holy joy give check to carnal mirth ; for, having seen so much reason to rejoice in Christ Jesus, we deceive ourselves, if we rejoice in a thing of nought : we are not forbidden to rejoice, but our joy must be turned into the right channel, and our mirth sanctified, which will suppress and silence the laughter that is mad. The frothiness of a vain mind must be cured by a religious cheerfulness, as well as by a religious seriousness.

Let it give check also to the sorrow of the world, and that inordinate grief for outward crosses, which sinks the spirits,

dries the bones, and worketh death. Why art thou cast down? and why disquieted for a light affliction, which is but for a moment? when even that is so far from doing thee any real prejudice, that it works for thee a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Learn, my soul, to sit down upon the ruins of all thy creature-comforts, by a withered fig-tree, a fruitless vine, and a blasted crop, and even then to sing to the praise and glory of God, as the God of thy salvation. When thou art full, enjoy God in all; when thou art empty, enjoy all in God.

Let this holy joy express itself in praises to God, and encouragement to ourselves.

Let it express itself in the thankful acknowledgment of the favours we have received from God. As spiritual joy must be the heart and soul of divine praise, so divine praise must be the breath and speech of spiritual joy. Whatever makes us joyful, must make us thankful. Do we come from this ordinance easy and pleasant, and greatly refreshed with the goodness of God's house? Let the high praises of God then be in our mouths, and in our hearts. This is a proper time for us to be engaged with great fixedness, and enlarged with great fluency in this service. If we must give thanks for the mercies we receive at our own table, which relate only to a perishing body and a dying life, much more ought we to give thanks for the mercies we receive at God's table, which relate to an immortal soul and eternal life.

"When thou hast eaten, and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God, for the good land which he hath given thee." Bless him for a Canaan on earth, a land of light, and a valley of vision, in which God is known, and his name great; and for the comfortable lot thou hast in that land, a name among God's people, and a nail in his holy place, a portion in Emmanuel's land; bless him for a Canaan in heaven which he hath given thee the promise and prospect of, that land flowing with milk and honey. Rejoice in hope of that, and sing in hope.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within thee," all thy thoughts, and all thy powers, be employed in blessing his holy name; and all little enough. "O give thanks unto the Lord: for he is good;" good to all, good to Israel, good to me. "I will mention the loving-kindnesses



of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us." Give glory to the exalted Redeemer, and mention to his praise the great things he hath done for us. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," to take the book, and open the seals; worthy to wear the crown, and sway the sceptre for ever; worthy to receive blessing, and honour, and glory; worthy to be adored by the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect; worthy to be attended with the constant praises of the universal church; worthy of the innermost and uppermost place of my heart, of the best affections I can consecrate to his praise, and the best services I can do to his name; for he was slain, and hath "redeemed us to God by his blood; and hath made us to our God kings and priests. He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood;" a note of praise, which the angels themselves cannot sing, though they have many a song to which we are strangers. "He loved me, and gave himself for me," to satisfy for my sin, and to obtain eternal redemption for me. Blessed, and for ever blessed, be the great and holy name of the Lord Jesus,—that name which is as ointment poured forth,—that name which is above every name, which is worthy of, and yet "exalted far above, every blessing and praise."

And whenever we confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, let it always be done to the glory of God the Father. His kindness and love to men was the original spring and first wheel in the work of our redemption. It was he that "gave his only-begotten Son, delivered him up for us all, and who was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." Glory, therefore, eternal glory be unto God in the highest; for in Christ there is on earth eternal peace and good-will towards men. God hath in Christ glorified himself; we must therefore in Christ glorify him, and make all our joys and praises to centre in him. In the day of our rejoicing, this must be the burden of all our songs, "Blessed be God for Jesus Christ; thanks be unto God for this unspeakable gift, the foundation of all other gifts."

Let this holy joy speak encouragement to ourselves, cheerfully to proceed in our Christian course. The comfort we have had in our covenant relation to God, and interest in

Christ, should put a sweetness into all our enjoyments, and sanctify them to us. We must see the love of God in them, and taste that he is gracious, and this must make them comforts indeed to us; see the curse removed from them, see a blessing going along with them, and then "go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works." Have we good ground to hope, that through grace our works are accepted of God? If we sincerely aim at God's acceptance, make that our end, and labour for it, with an eye to Christ as Mediator, we may hope that our persons and performances are accepted; if we accept of God's works, accept the disposals of his providence, and the offers of his grace, with an humble acquiescence in both, that will be a good evidence that he accepts our works. And if so, we have reason to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. "Eat thy bread with joy," for it is thy Father's gift, the bread wherewith the Lord thy God feeds thee in this wilderness, through which he is leading thee to the land of promise; "drink thy wine with a merry heart," remembering Christ's love more than wine; what thou hast, though mean and scanty, thou hast it with the blessing of God, which will make the little thou hast "better than the riches of many wicked."

Rejoice in the Lord now, O my soul, rejoice in him always; having kept his feast with gladness, as Hezekiah and his people did, carry with thee some of the comforts of God's table to thine own, and there eat thy meat with gladness, as the primitive Christians did. Live a life of holy cheerfulness, and the joy of the Lord will be thy strength.

IV. We should come from this ordinance much quickened to every good work.—Seeing ourselves compassed about here with so great a cloud of witnesses, bound by so many engagements, invited by so many encouragements, and obliged to God and godliness by so many ties of duty, interest, and gratitude; let us "lay aside every weight, and the sin that most easily besets us," whatever it is, especially the evil heart of unbelief, which is our great hinderance, and "let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus." Let the covenant we have renewed, and the comforts we have received, make us more ready to every good duty, and more lively in it; more active and zealous

for the glory of God, the service of our generation, and the welfare and prosperity of our own souls. From what we have seen and done here, we may fetch powerful considerations to shame us out of our slothfulness and our backwardness to that which is good, and to stir us up to the utmost diligence in our Master's work.

When Jacob had received a gracious visit from God, and had made a solemn vow to him, it follows, "Then Jacob went on his way." The original phrase is observable: "Then Jacob lift up his feet." After that comfortable night he had at Bethel, knowing himself to be in the way of his duty, he proceeded with a great deal of cheerfulness; that strengthened the weak hands, and confirmed the feeble knees. Thus should our communion with God in the Lord's Supper enlarge our hearts to run the way of God's commandments. After such an ordinance we should lift up our feet in the way of God; that is, as it is said of Jehoshaphat, we should lift up our hearts in those ways, abiding and abounding in the work of the Lord.

Rouse up thyself now, my soul, from thy spiritual slumber: up, and be doing, for the Lord is with thee. Awake, awake, put on thy strength, put forth thy strength, that thou mayest push on thy holy war, thy holy work, with vigour; shake thyself from the dust, to which thou hast too much cleaved; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, with which thou hast been too much clogged. Meditate more fixedly, pray more earnestly, resist sin more resolutely, keep Sabbaths more cheerfully, do good more readily. Thou hast heard the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, plain indications of the presence of God with thee: therefore now "thou shalt bestir thyself." Let the comforts of this ordinance employ thy wings, that thou mayest soar upwards, upwards towards God; let them oil thy wheels, that thou mayest press forwards, forwards towards heaven: let God's gifts to thee stir up his gifts in thee.

V. We should come from this ordinance with a watchful fear of Satan's wiles, and a firm resolution to stand our ground against them.—Whatever comfort and enlargement we have had in this ordinance, still we must remember, that we are but girding on the harness, and therefore we have no reason to boast, or be secure, as though we have it put off.

When we return to the world again, we must remember that we go among snares, and must provide accordingly; it is our wisdom so to do.

1. Let us therefore fear. He that travels with a rich treasure about him, is in most danger of being robbed. The ship that is richly laden, is the pirate's prize. If we come away from the Lord's table replenished with the goodness of God's house, and the riches of his covenant, we must expect the assaults of our spiritual enemies, and not be secure. A strong guard was constantly kept upon the temple, and there needs one upon the living temples. The mystical Song represents the bed which is Solomon's thus surrounded by valiant men of the valiant of Israel, "because of fear in the night;" the Holy Ghost thus signifying, that believers in this world are in a military state, and the followers of Christ must be his soldiers. They that work the good work of faith, must fight the good fight of faith.

We must always stand upon our guard, for the good man of the house knows not at what hour the thief will come; but this we know, that immediately after our Saviour was baptized, and owned by a voice from heaven, "he was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." And immediately after he had administered the Lord's Supper to his disciples, he told them plainly, "Satan hath desired to have you," he hath challenged you, "that he may sift you as wheat;" and what he said to them, he saith to all, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." We must then double our guard against temptations to rash anger, and study to be more than ordinarily meek and quiet, lest, by the tumults and transports of passion, the Holy Spirit be tempted to withdraw. If we have in this ordinance received Christ Jesus the Lord, let a strict charge be given, like that of the spouse, "by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that nothing be said, nothing done, to stir up or awake our love, until he please." Peace being spoken, peace made, let us be afraid of everything that may give disturbance to it. We should also watch against the inroads of worldly cares and fears, lest they make a descent upon us after a sacrament, and spoil us of the comforts we have there received.

But with a particular care we must watch against the

workings of spiritual pride, after a sacrament. When our Lord Jesus first instituted this ordinance, and made his disciples partakers of it, they were so elevated with the honour of it, that, not content to be all thus great, a contest immediately arose among them, which of them should be greatest. And when St. Paul had been in the third heaven, he was in danger of being "exalted above measure with the abundance of the revelations." We therefore have cause to fear lest this dead fly spoil all our precious ointment, and to keep a very strict and jealous eye upon our own hearts, that they be not lifted up with pride, "lest we fall into the condemnation of the devil." Let us dread the first risings of self-conceit, and suppress them; for, "What have we that we have not received? And if we have received it, why then do we boast?"

2. Let us therefore fix; and let our hearts be established with the grace here received. What we have done in this ordinance, we must go away firmly resolved to abide by all our days. I am now fixed immoveably for Christ and holiness, against sin and Satan. The matter is settled, never to be called in question again, "I will serve the Lord." The bargain is struck, the knot is tied, the debate is come up to a final resolve; and here I fix, as one steadfastly resolved, with purpose of heart, to cleave unto the Lord. No room is left to parley with a temptation; I am a Christian, a confirmed Christian, and, by the grace of God, a Christian I will live and die; and therefore, "get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me." My resolutions, in which before I wavered and was unsteady, are now come to a head, and are as a nail in a sure place; I am now at a point; "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back;" and therefore, by the grace of God, I am determined to go forward, and not so much as look back, or wish for a discharge from those engagements. "I have chosen the way of truth, and therefore in thy strength, Lord, I will stick to thy testimonies." Now my foot stands in an even place, well shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. I am now like a strong man refreshed with wine, resolved to resist the devil, that he may flee from me, and never yield to him.

VI. We should come from this ordinance praying;

lifting up our hearts to God in ejaculatory petitions; and retiring, as soon as may be, for solemn prayer.—Not only before, and in the duty, but after it, we have occasion to offer up our desire to God, and bring in strength and grace from him.

Two things we should be humbly earnest with God in prayer for, after this solemnity; and we are furnished from the mouth of holy David with very emphatical and expressive petitions for them both. We may therefore take with us these words in addressing God:—

1. We must pray that God will fulfil to us those promises which he was graciously pleased to seal to us in this ordinance. David's prayer for this is, "Now, Lord, let the thing that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, be established for ever, and do as thou hast said." God's promises in the word are designed to be our pleas in prayer; and we receive the grace of God in them in vain, if we do not make that use of them, and sue out the benefits conveyed and secured by them. These are talents to be traded with, and improved, as the guide of our desires, and the ground of our faith, in prayer; and we must not hide them in a napkin. Having here taken hold of the covenant, thus we must take hold on God for covenant mercies. "Lord, remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." Thou hast not only given me the word to hope in, but the heart to hope in it. It is a hope of thy own raising, and thou wilt not destroy, by a disappointment, the work of thy own hands.

Come, therefore, O my soul, come, order thy cause before him, and fill thy mouth with arguments. Lord, is not this the word which thou hast spoken, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, the God of peace shall tread Satan under your feet; there shall no temptation take you but such as is common to men, and the faithful God will never suffer you to be tempted above what you are able?" Lord, be it unto thy servant according to these words. Is not this the word which thou hast spoken, that all things shall work for good to them that love thee; that thou wilt be to them a God all-sufficient, their shield, and their exceeding great reward; that thou wilt give them grace and glory, and with-

hold no good thing from them ; that thou wilt never fail them, nor forsake them ?" Now, Lord, let those words which thou hast spoken concerning thy servant (and many other the like) be established for ever, and do as thou hast said ; for they are the words upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

2. We must pray, that he enable us to fulfil those promises which we have made to him in this ordinance. David's prayer for this is, "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the hearts of thy people, and prepare, or confirm, their hearts unto thee." Have there been some good affections, good desires, and good resolutions in the imagination of the thoughts of our hearts at this ordinance, some good impressions made upon us, and some good expressions drawn from us by it ? We cannot but be sensible how apt we are to lose the good we have wrought ; and therefore it is our wisdom by prayer to commit the keeping of it to God, and earnestly to beg of him effectual grace, thoroughly to furnish us for every good word and work, and thoroughly to fortify us against every evil word and work. We made our promises in the strength of the grace of God : that strength we must therefore pray for, that we may be able to make good our promises. Lord, maintain thine own interest in my soul ; let thy name be ever hallowed there, thy kingdom come, and thy will be done in my heart, as it is done in heaven.

When we come away from this ordinance, we return to a cooling, tempting, distracting world ; as, when Moses came down from the mount, where he had been with God, he found the camp of Israel dancing before the golden calf, to his great disturbance. In the midst of such sorrows and such snares as we are compassed about with here, we shall find it no easy matter to preserve the peace and grace which we hope we have obtained at the Lord's table ; we must therefore put ourselves under the divine protection. Methinks it was with an affecting air of tenderness, that Christ said concerning his disciples, when he was leaving them, "Now I am no more in the world," the days of my temptation are at an end ; "but these are in the world," they have their trial yet before them. What then shall I do for

them? "Holy Father, keep through thine own name them which thou hast given me." That prayer of his was both the great example and the great encouragement of our prayers. Now, at the close of a sacrament, it is seasonable thus to address ourselves to God: I have not yet put off this body; I am not yet clear of this world; yet I am a traveller exposed to thieves, yet I am a soldier exposed to enemies. Holy Father, keep through thine own name the graces and comforts thou hast given me; for they are thine. Mine own hands are not sufficient for me; O let thy grace be so, to preserve me to thy heavenly kingdom.

Immediately after the first administration of the Lord's Supper, our Saviour, when he had told Peter of Satan's design upon him, added this comfortable word, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not;" and that is it which we must pray for, that this faith, which we think is so strong in the day of its advantage, may not prove weak in the day of its trial; for, as they who would have the benefit of the Spirit's operation, must strive for themselves; so they that would have the benefit of the Son's intercession, must pray for themselves.

VII. We should come from this ordinance with a charitable disposition.—Anciently, the Christians had their love-feasts, or feasts of charity, annexed to the Eucharist; but what needed that, while the Eucharist itself is a love-feast and a feast of charity? And surely that heart must be strangely hardened and soured, that can go from under the softening, sweetening powers of this ordinance in an uncharitable frame.

The fervent charity which we now should have among ourselves, must be a loving, giving, and forgiving charity. Thus it must have its perfect work.

We must come from this ordinance with a disposition to love our fellow Christians. Here we see how dear they were to Christ, for he purchased them with his own blood; and from thence we may infer how dear they ought to be, and how near they should lie, to our hearts. Shall I look strangely upon them that have acquaintance with Christ? or be indifferent towards them that he has so much concern for? No; we, that are many, being one bread and one body, and having been all made to drink into one Spirit, my heart



shall be more closely knit than ever to all the members of that one body, who are quickened and acted by that one Spirit. I have here beheld the beauty of the Lord, and therefore must love his image wherever I see it on his sanctified ones. I have here joined myself to the Lord in an everlasting covenant, and thereby have joined myself in relation, and consequently in affection, to all those who are in the bond of the same covenant. I have here bound myself to keep Christ's commandments; and this is his commandment, "that we love one another," and that "brotherly love continue."

Those from whom we differ in the less weighty matters of the law, though we agree in the great things of God, we should now think of with particular thoughts of love and kindness, because from them our minds are most in temptation to be alienated; and of those to whom we have given the right hand of fellowship in this and in other ordinances, we should likewise be mindful with particular endearments, because of the particular relation we stand in to them, as our more intimate companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. Yea, after such an ordinance as this, our catholic charity must be more warm and affectionate, more active, strong, and steadfast, and more victorious over the difficulties and oppositions it meets with; and, as the apostle speaks, we should "increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men;" and in all the fruits and instances of that love.

We must come from this ordinance with a disposition to give to the poor and necessitous, according as our ability and opportunity is. It is the laudable custom of the churches of Christ, to close the administration of this ordinance with a collection for the poor; to which we ought to contribute our share, not grudgingly or of necessity, but with a single eye and a willing mind, that our alms may be sanctified and accepted of God; and not only to this, but to all other acts of charity, we must be more forward and free after a sacrament. Though our Saviour lived upon alms himself, yet, out of the little he had, he gave alms to the poor, particularly at the feast of the passover, to set us an example. Days of rejoicing and thanksgiving (and such our sacrament days are) used to be thus solemnized; for when we "eat the fat, and

drink the sweet ourselves, we must send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared," that when our souls are blessing God, the loins of the poor may bless us. If our hearts have here been opened to Christ, we must evidence they are so by being open-handed to poor Christians ; for, since our goodness cannot extend to him, it is his will that it should extend to them. If we have here in sincerity given ourselves to God, we have, with ourselves, devoted all we have to his service and honour, to be employed and laid out for him ; and thus we must testify that we have heartily consented to that branch of the surrender, "As we have opportunity, we must do good to all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith ; remembering that we are but stewards of the manifold grace of God." If our prayers have here come up for a memorial before God, as Cornelius', our alms, like his, must accompany them. We have seen here how much we owe to God's pity and bounty towards us : having therefore obtained mercy, we ought to show mercy ; knowing the grace of the Lord Jesus, "that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich."

We must come from this ordinance with a disposition to forgive those that have been provoking and injurious to us. Our approach to the sacrament made it necessary for us to forgive, but our attendance on it should make it even natural for us to forgive ; and our experience there of God's mercy and grace to us should conquer all the difficulty and reluctance which we are conscious to ourselves of therein, and make it as easy to forgive our enemies as it is to forgive ourselves, when at any time we have had a quarrel with ourselves. That which makes it hard to forgive, and puts an edge upon our resentments, is the magnifying of the affronts we have received, and the losses we have sustained. Now, in this ordinance, we have had honours put upon us sufficient to balance all those affronts, and benefits bestowed on us sufficient to countervail all those losses ; so that we may well afford to forgive and forget both. With ourselves we have offered up to God our names, estates, and all our interests : in compliance therefore with the will of God, (that God who bade Shimei curse David, and who took away from Job that which the Sabeans and Chaldeans robbed

him of,) we must not only bear with patience the damage we sustain in those concerns, but must be charitably affected towards those that have been the instruments of that damage, knowing that men are in God's hand, and to his hand we must always submit.

But the great argument for the forgiving of injuries, when we come from the table of the Lord, is taken from the pardons God hath in Christ there sealed to us. The jubilee trumpet which proclaimed releases, sounded at the close of the day of atonement. Is God reconciled to us? Let us then be more firmly than ever reconciled to our brethren. Let the death of Christ, which we have here commemorated, not only slay all enmities, but take down all partition walls; not only forbid revenge, but remove strangeness; and let all our feuds and quarrels be buried in his grave. Hath our Master forgiven us that great debt,—and a very great debt it was,—and ought we not then to have compassion “on our fellow-servants?” Let us, therefore, who have in this ordinance put on the Lord Jesus Christ, put on, “as becomes the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies and kindness, inclining us to forgive; humbleness of mind and meekness,” enabling us to conquer that pride and passion which object against our forgiving; and if any man have a quarrel against any, it may be passed by, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.

VIII. We should come from this ordinance longing for heaven.—Every good Christian lives in the belief of the life everlasting, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised, looking for the blessed hope; and doubtless much of the power of godliness consists in the joyful expectation of the glory to be revealed. But though we should look upon ourselves as heathens if we did not believe it, and as desperate if we had not some hopes of it; yet we have all reason to lament it, as not only our infelicity, but our iniquity, that our desires towards it are so weak and feeble. We are too apt to take up our rest here, and wish we might live always on this earth; and we need something to make us hunger and thirst after that perfect righteousness, that crown of righteousness, with which only we shall be filled. For this good end the Lord's Supper is very improvable, to hasten us towards the land of promise, and carry out our souls in earnest breathings after the felicity of our future state.

The complaints we find cause to exhibit at this ordinance should make us long for heaven; for whatever is defective and uneasy here we shall be for ever freed from when we come to heaven. When here we set ourselves to contemplate the beauty of God and the love of Christ, we find ourselves in a cloud, we see but through a glass darkly; let us therefore long to be there where the veil shall be rent, the glasses we now make use of laid aside, and we shall not only see face to face, but, which will yield us more satisfaction, we shall see how we are seen, and know how we are known. When here we would soar upwards upon the wings of love, we find ourselves clogged and pinioned; this immortal spirit is caged in a house of clay, and doth but flutter at the best. Let us therefore long to be there, where we shall be perfectly delivered from all the encumbrances of a body of flesh, and all the entanglements of a world of sense; and love, in its highest elevations and utmost enlargements, shall survive both faith and hope. When here we would fix for God, and join ourselves closely to him, we find ourselves apt to wander, apt to waver; and should therefore long to be there, where our love to God will be no longer love in motion, constant motion, as it is here, but love at rest, an everlasting rest. Here we complain, that, through the infirmity of the flesh, we are soon weary of well-doing; and, if the spirit be willing, yet the flesh is weak, and cannot keep pace with it: but there we shall run and not be weary, we shall walk and not faint; and shall not rest, because we shall not need to rest day or night from praising God. O when shall I come to that world where there is neither sin, nor sorrow, nor snare; and to the spirits of just men made perfect there, who are as the angels of God in heaven?

The comforts which through grace we experience in this ordinance, should make us long for heaven. The foretastes of those divine joys should whet our appetites after the full fruition of them. The bunch of grapes that meets us in this wilderness should make us long to be in Canaan, that land of overflowing plenty, where we shall wash our garments in this wine, and our clothes in the blood of the grape. If communion with God and grace here afford us such a satisfaction as surpasseth all the delights of the sons of men, what will the fulness of joy be in God's presence, and those pleasures

for evermore? If the shadows of good things to come be so refreshing, what will the substance be, and the good things themselves? If God's tabernacles be so amiable, what will his temple be? If a day at his courts, an hour at his table, be so pleasant, what then will an eternity within the veil be? If I find myself so enriched with the earnest of the purchased possession, what then will the possession itself be? If the joy of my Lord, as I am here capable of receiving it, and as it is mixed with so much alloy in this imperfect state, be so comfortable, what will it be when I shall enter into that joy, and bathe myself eternally in the spring head of these rivers of pleasure?

Pant then, my soul, pant after those fountains of living water, out of which all these sweet streams arise; that boundless bottomless ocean of delight into which they all run. Rest not content with any of the contentments here below; no, not with those in holy ordinances, (which are of all others the best we meet with in this wilderness,) but long for the enjoyments above in the vision of God. It is good to be here, but it is better to be there; far better to depart, and be with Christ. Whilst thou art groaning under the burdens of this present state, groan after the glorious liberties of the children of God in the future state. Thirst for God, for the living God: "O when shall I come and appear before God?" That the day may break, and the shadows flee away, "make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### AN EXHORTATION TO ORDER THE CONVERSATION ARIGHT AFTER THIS ORDINANCE.

- I. In general, 1. We must live so as to adorn our profession. 2. To fulfil our engagements. 3. To make grateful returns for favours shown us. 4. To preserve the comforts we have tasted. 5. To evidence our communion with God. II. In particular, 1. We must be sincerely devout and pious. 2. Conscientiously just and honest. 3. Religiously meek and peaceable. 4. Strictly sober and chaste. 5. Abundantly charitable and beneficent. 6. More weaned from this world, and more taken up with another.

WE will now suppose the new moon to be gone, the Sabbath to be past, and the solemnities of the sacrament day to be over; and is our work now done? No: now the most needful and difficult part of our work begins; which is, to maintain such a constant watch over ourselves, as that we may, in the whole course of our conversation, exemplify the blessed fruits and effects of our communion with God in this ordinance. When we come down from this mount, we must, as Moses did, bring the tables of the testimony with us in our hands, that we may in all things have respect to God's commandments, and frame our lives according to them. Then we truly get good by this ordinance, when we are made better by it, and use it daily as a bridle of restraint to keep us in from all manner of sin, and a spur of constraint to put us on to all manner of duty.

I shall endeavour, first, to give some general rules for the right ordering of the conversation after we have been at the Lord's Supper; and then, secondly, I shall instance, in some particulars, wherein we must study to conform ourselves to the intentions of that ordinance, and abide under the influence of it.

- I. For the first, the Lord's Supper was instituted not only

for the solemnizing of the memorial of Christ's death at certain times, but for the preserving of the remembrance of it in our minds at all times, as a powerful argument against everything that is ill, and a prevailing inducement to everything that is good. In this sense we must "bear about with us continually the dying of the Lord Jesus, so as that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal bodies." It was instituted, not only for the sealing of the covenant, that it may be ratified, but for the imprinting of it upon our minds, that we may be ever mindful of the covenant, and live under the commanding power of it.

We must see to it, that there be an agreement between our performances at the Lord's table; and, at other times, that we be uniform in our religion, and not guilty of a self-contradiction. What will it profit us, if we pull down with one hand what we build up with the other? and undo in our lives what we have done in our devotions? That we may not do so, let us be ruled by these rules:—

1. Our conversation must be such as that we may adorn the profession which in the Lord's Supper we have made.— We have in that ordinance solemnly owned ourselves the disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus; we have done ourselves the honour to subscribe ourselves his humble servants, and he hath done us the honour to admit us into his family; and now we are concerned to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called; that, our relation to Christ being so much an honour to us, we may never be a dishonour to it. We are said to be taken into covenant with God for this very end, that we may be unto him for "a name, and for a praise, and for a glory," that we may be witnesses for him, and for the honour of his name among men.

We must therefore be very cautious, that we never say or do anything to the reproach of the Gospel and Christ's holy religion, or which may give any occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. If those that profess to be devout towards God be unjust and dishonest towards men, this casts reproach upon devotion, as if that would consist with and countenance immorality. If those who call themselves Christians walk as other Gentiles walk, and do Satan's drudgery in Christ's livery, Christianity suffers by it, and religion is wounded in the house of her friends. Injuries are

done which cannot be repaired ; and those will have a great deal to answer for another day, for whose sakes the name of God and his doctrine are thus evil spoken of. By our coming to the Lord's Supper, we distinguish ourselves from those whose profession of Christianity, by their being baptized in infancy, seems to be more their chance than their choice ; and, by a voluntary act of our own, we surname ourselves by the name of Israel : now, if, after we have thus distinguished ourselves, and so raised the expectations of our neighbours from us, we do that which is unbecoming the character we bear ; if we be vain, and carnal, and intemperate ; if we be false and unfair, cruel and unmerciful, what will the Egyptians say ? They will say, " Commend us to the children of this world, if these be the children of God ; for what do they more than others ? " Men's prejudices against religion are hereby confirmed, advantage is given to Satan's devices, and the generation of the righteous is condemned for the sake of those who are spots in their feasts of charity. Let us therefore always be jealous for the reputation of our profession, and afraid of doing that which may in the least be a blemish to it ; and the greater profession we make, the more tender let us be of it, because we have the more eyes upon us, that watch for our halting. When we do good, we must remember the apostle's caution, " Let not your good be evil spoken of."

We must also be very studious to do that which will redound to the credit of our profession. It is not enough that we be not a scandal to religion, but we must strive to be an ornament to it, by excelling in virtue, and being forward to every good work. Our light must shine as the face of Moses did, when he came down from the mount ; that is, our good works must be such as that they who see them may give religion their good word, and thereby " glorify our Father which is in heaven." Our conversation must be " as becomes the Gospel of Jesus Christ ;" that they who will not be won by the word, may be won by it to say, " We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." " If there be any virtue, if there be any praise," more amiable and lovely than another, let us " think on these things." Are we children ? Let us walk as obedient children, well taught and well managed. Are we soldiers ? Let us approve our-



selves good soldiers, well trained and well disciplined; so shall we do honour to him that hath called us. If God's Israel carefully keep and do his statutes, it will be said of them to their honour among the nations, "Surely they are a wise and understanding people." And this will redound to the honour of Christ; for thus Wisdom is justified of her children.

2. Our conversation must be such as that we may fulfil the engagements which at the Lord's Supper we have laid ourselves under.—Having at God's altar sworn that we will keep his righteous judgments, we must conscientiously perform it in all the instances of a holy, righteous, and sober conversation. The vows we have made, express or implicit, must be carefully made good by a constant watchfulness against all sin, and a constant diligence in all duty; because "better it is not to vow, than to vow and not to pay."

When we are at any time tempted to sin, or in danger of being surprised into any ill thing, let this be our reply to the tempter, and with this let us quench his fiery darts: "Thy vows are upon me, O God." Did I not say, "I would take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue?" I did say so, and therefore "I will keep my mouth as with a bridle." Did I not make "a covenant with mine eyes?" I did; that therefore shall be to me a covering of the eyes, that they may never be either the inlets or outlets of sin. Did I not say, "I will not transgress?" I did so; and therefore, by the grace of God, I will "abstain from all appearance of evil, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." An honest man is as good as his word.

When we begin to grow slothful and careless in our duty, backward to it, and slight in it, let this stir up the gift that is in us, and quicken us to every good word and work: "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord;" thou hast said it with the blood of Christ in thy hand; "he is thy Lord then, and worship thou him." When "a lion in the way, a lion in the streets," deters us from any duty, and we "cannot plough by reason of cold, nor sow or reap for fear of winds and clouds," let this help us over the difficulty with a steady resolution: It is what I have promised, and I must perform it; I will not, I dare not,

be false to my God and my covenant with him; "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and," without incurring the guilt of perjury, "I cannot go back."

3. Our conversation must be such as that we may make some grateful returns for the favours which we have here received.—The law of gratitude is one of the laws of nature; for the ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: and some have thought that all our Gospel duty may very fitly be comprised in that of gratitude to our Redeemer. In the Lord's Supper we see what Christ hath done for us, and we receive what he bestows on us; and, in consideration of both, we must set ourselves, not only to love and praise him, but to walk before him in the land of the living; that though we cannot return him any equivalent for his kindness, yet, by complying with his will, and consulting his honour, we may show that we bear a grateful mind, and would render again according to the benefit done unto us.

By wilful sin after a sacrament we load ourselves with the guilt, not only of treachery, but of base ingratitude. It was aggravation of Solomon's apostasy, that "he turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice." More than twice, yea, many a time hath God appeared, not only for us in his providences, but to us in his ordinances, manifesting himself in a distinguishing way to us, and not unto the world. Now, if we carry ourselves strangely to him who hath been such a friend to us, if we affront him who hath so favoured us, and rebel against him who hath not only spared but ransomed us, we deserve to be stigmatized with a mark of everlasting infamy, as the most ungrateful wretches that ever God's earth bore, or his sun shone upon. Foolish people and unwise are we, thus to requite the Lord. Let us therefore reason thus with ourselves, when at any time we are tempted to sin:—After he hath given us such a deliverance as this, shall we again break his commandments? Shall we spit in the face, and spurn at the bowels, of such loving-kindness? After we have eaten bread with Christ, shall we go and lift up the heel against him? No, God forbid; we will not continue in sin after grace has thus abounded.

By an exact and exemplary conversation we show ourselves sensible of the mighty obligations we lie under to

love him, and live to him who loved us, and died for us: we should, therefore, from a principle of gratitude, always abound in the work of the Lord, and lay out ourselves with zeal and cheerfulness in his service; thinking nothing too much to do, too hard to suffer, or too dear to part with, for him that hath done and suffered and parted with so much for us. Let the love of Christ constrain us.

4. Our conversation must be such as that we may preserve the comforts which we have tasted in the Lord's Supper.—Have we been satisfied with the goodness of God's house? Let us not receive the grace of God therein in vain, by the forfeiture or neglect of those satisfactions. Fear the Lord and his goodness; that is, fear lest you sin against that goodness, and so sin it away. Have we received Jesus Christ the Lord? Let us hold fast what we have received, that no man take our crown, and the comfort of it. Hath God here spoken peace to us? Let us then never return to folly, lest we break in upon that peace God hath spoken; it is a jewel too precious to be pawned, as it is by the covetous for the wealth of this world, and by the voluptuous for the pleasures of the flesh. Have we tasted that the Lord is gracious? Let us not put our mouths out of taste to those spiritual and divine pleasures, by any carnal delights and gratifications. Hath God made us to hear joy and gladness? Let us not set ourselves out of the hearing of that joyful sound, by listening to the voice of Satan's charms, charm he ever so wisely.

If we walk loosely and carelessly after a sacrament, we provoke God to hide his face from us, to take from us the cup of consolation, and to put into our hands instead of it the cup of trembling; we cloud our evidences, shake our hopes, and wither our comfort, and undo what we have been doing at this ordinance. That caution, therefore, which the apostle gives to the elect lady and her children should be ever sounding in our ears: "Look to ourselves, that we lose not the things which we have wrought;" or, as the margin reads it, "the things that we have gained." Let us not, by our own folly and neglect, lose the benefit of what we have done, and what we have got at the Lord's table.

Especially, we should take heed lest Satan get an advantage against us, and improve that to our prejudice which we

do not take due care to improve as we ought to our benefit. After the sop, Satan entered into Judas. If the comforts which we think we have received in this ordinance do not make us more watchful, it is well if they do not make us more secure. If they be not a savour of life unto life, by deterring us from sin, there is danger lest they prove a savour of death unto death, by hardening us in sin. It was one of the most impudent words which that adulterous woman spoke,—and she spoke a great many,—when she allured the young man into her snares: “I have peace-offerings with me this day, I have paid my vows; therefore came I forth to meet thee.” “I have confessed, and been absolved, and therefore can the better afford to begin upon a new score; I know the worst of it; it is but being confessed and absolved again.” But shall we continue in sin, because grace hath abounded, and that grace may abound? God forbid; far be it, far be it from us ever to entertain such a thought. Shall we suck poison out of the balm of Gilead, and split our souls upon the rock of salvation? Is Christ the minister of sin? Shall the artifices of our spiritual enemies turn this table into a snare, and that on it, which should be for our welfare, into a trap? Those are but pretended comforts in Christ, that are thus made real supports in sin. “Be not deceived, God is not mocked.” He will be hell indeed to those who thus “trample under foot the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing, and do despite to the Spirit of grace.” Their case is desperate indeed, that are emboldened in sin by their approaches to God.

5. Our conversation must be such as that we may evidence the communion we have had with God in Christ at the Lord's table.—It is not enough to say that we have fellowship with him; the vilest hypocrites pretend to that honour; but, by walking in darkness, they disprove their pretensions, and give themselves the lie. We must therefore show that we have fellowship with him, by walking in the light, and as he also walked. By keeping up communion with God in providences, having our eyes ever towards him, and acknowledging him in all our ways; receiving all our comforts as the gifts of his bounty, and bearing our afflictions as his fatherly chastisements,—we evidence that we have had communion with him in ordi-

nances. They that converse much with scholars, evidence it by the tongue of the learned; as one may likewise discover by the politeness and refinedness of a man's air and mien, that his conversation hath been much with persons of quality: thus they that have communion with the holy God, should make it appear in all holy conversation, not suffering any corrupt communication to proceed out of their mouth, but abounding in that which is good, and to the use of edifying, that, by our speech and behaviour, it may appear to what country we belong.

When Peter and John acquitted themselves before the council with such a degree of conduct and assurance as one could not have expected from unlearned and ignorant men, not acquainted with courts, or camps, or academies; it is said, that they who marvelled at it "took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." And from those who had been with Jesus, who had followed him, sat at his feet, and eaten bread with him, very great things might be expected. In this ordinance we have been with Jesus, we have been seeing his beauty, and tasting his sweetness; and now we should live so as that all who converse with us may discern it, and by our holy, heavenly converse may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus.

II. For the second thing proposed, let us instance in some particulars, wherein we ought, in a special manner, to approve ourselves well after this solemnity, that, "as we have received Jesus Christ the Lord, we may so walk in him."

After we have been admitted into communion with God, and have renewed our covenants with him at his table, it behoves us to be careful in these six things:—

1. We must see to it, that we be sincerely devout and pious.—It is not enough that we live soberly and righteously, but we must live godly, in this present world, and our sacramental engagements should stir us up to abound therein more and more. After an interview with our friends, by which mutual acquaintance is improved, and mutual affections confirmed, we are more constant and endearing in our correspondence with each other: so we should be with God, after this ordinance, more frequent in holy ejaculations, and breathings of soul towards God, intermixed even with common business and conversation; more abundant in

reading, meditation, and solemn prayer; more diligent in our attendances on public ordinances, more fixed and enlarged in closet devotions, and more lively and affectionate in our family worship. Those religious exercises wherein we have formerly been remiss and careless, easily persuaded to put them by, or put them off, we should now be more constant to, and more careful in, more close in our application to them, and more serious in our performance of them.

If we have indeed found that it is good for us to draw near to God, we will endeavour to keep near him, so near him as upon every occasion to speak to him, and to hear from him. If this sacrament has been our delight, the word will be our delight, and we will daily converse with it; prayer will be our delight, and we will give ourselves to it, and continue instant in it. They that have been feasted upon the sacrifice of atonement, ought to abound in sacrifices of acknowledgment, the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise and a broken heart, which are acceptable to God through Christ Jesus; and having in our flock a male, we must offer that, and not a corrupt thing.

It is the shame of many who are called Christians, and have a name and a place in God's family, that they are as backward and indifferent in holy duties as if they were afraid of doing too much for God and their own souls, and as if their chief care were to know just how much will serve to bring them to heaven, that they may do no more. They can be content to go a mile, but they are not willing to go twain. And doth it become those on whom God hath sown so plentifully, to make their returns so sparingly? Ought we not rather to inquire what free-will offerings we may bring to God's altar; and how we may do more in religion than we have used to do? They that have found what a good table God keeps, and how welcome they have been to it, should desire to dwell in his house all the days of their life; and blessed are they that do so, "they will be still praising him."

2. We must see to it, that we be conscientiously just and honest.—We not only contradict our profession, and give ourselves the lie, but we reproach the religion we profess, and give it the lie, if, after we have been at this sacrament, we deceive or defraud our brethren in any matter; for this is

that which the Lord our God requires of us, that we do justly; that is, that we never do wrong to any, in their body, goods, or good name; and that we ever study to render to all their due, according to the relation we stand in, and the obligation we lie under, to them. That, therefore, which is altogether just ("justice, justice," as the word is) "thou shalt follow." There are many who make no great pretensions to religion, and yet natural conscience, sense of honour, and a regard to the common good, keep them strictly just in all their dealings, and they would scorn to do a base and dishonest thing; and shall not the bonds of this ordinance, added to those inducements, restrain us from every thing that hath but the appearance of fraud and injustice? A Christian, a communicant, and yet a cheat! yet a man not to be trusted, not to be dealt with, but standing on one's guard! How can these be reconciled? Will that man be true to his God whom he hath not seen, that is false to his brother whom he hath seen? Shall he be intrusted with the true riches, that is "not faithful in the unrighteous mammon?"

Let the remembrance of our sacramental vows be always fresh in our minds, to give check to those secret covetings, which are the springs of all fraudulent practices. I have disclaimed the world for a portion: shall I then, for the compassing of a little of its forbidden gain, wrong my brother, to whom I ought to do good; wrong my profession, which I ought to adorn; and wrong my own conscience, which I ought to keep void of offence? God forbid! I have likewise renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, and promised not to walk in craftiness; "by the grace of God I will therefore ever have my conversation in the world, in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom." They that are so well skilled in the arts of deceit as to save themselves from the scandal of it, and to be able to say with Ephraim, though he had the balances of deceit in his hands, "In all my labours they shall find no iniquity in me that were sin;" yet cannot thereby save themselves from the guilt of it, and the ruin that attends it; for doubtless "the Lord is the avenger of all such." Those that cheat their neighbours cannot cheat their God, but will prove in the end to have cheated themselves into everlasting misery; and

“what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

3. We must see to it, that we be religiously meek and peaceable.—We must not only come from this ordinance in a calm and quiet frame, but we must always keep ourselves in such a frame. By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, (which the apostle mentions as a most powerful charm,) let us be wrought upon to be always meek and gentle, as those that have learned of him. The storms of passion that are here laid must never be suffered to make head again; nor must the enmities that are here slain ever be revived. Having eaten of this Gospel passover, we must all our life long keep the feast, without the “leaven of malice and wickedness.” Having been feasted at wisdom’s table, we must always abide under the conduct and influence of that wisdom, which is “first pure, and then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated.” God was greatly displeased with those that, after they released their bond-servants, according to the law, recalled their releases, and brought them into subjection again. And so will he be with those who seem to set aside their quarrels when they come to the sacrament; but, as soon as the pang of their devotion is over, the heat of their passion returns, and they resume their quarrels, and revive all their angry resentments; thereby making it to appear, that they did never truly forgive, and therefore were never forgiven of God.

Let those that have had communion with God in this ordinance, be able to appeal to their relations and domestics, and all they converse with, concerning this; and to vouch them for witnesses, that they have mastered their passions, and are grown more mild and quiet in their families than sometimes they have been; and that even when they are most provoked, they know both how to hear reason, and how to speak it. Whatever others do, let us never give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to say, that the seriousness of religion makes men sour and morose, and that zeal in devotion disposeth the mind to peevishness and passion; but let us evidence the contrary, that the grace of God doth indeed make men good-natured, and that the pleasures of serious godliness make men truly cheerful and easy to all about them. Having been here sealed “to the day of



redemption, let us not grieve the Holy Spirit of God," that blessed dove; and that we may not, "let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from us, with all malice."

4. We must see to it, that we be strictly sober and chaste.—Gluttony, and drunkenness, and fleshly lusts, are as great a reproach as can be to those that profess relation to Christ, and the expectation of eternal life. It becomes those that have been feasted at the table of the Lord, and have there tasted the pleasures of the spiritual and divine life, to be dead to all the delights of sense, and to make it appear that they are so, by a holy indifferency to them. Let not the flesh be indulged to the prejudice of the spirit, nor provision made for the fulfilling of the lusts thereof. Have we been entertained with the dainties of heaven? Let us not be desirous of the dainties of sense, nor solicitous to have the appetite gratified, and all our enjoyments to the highest degree pleasing. When our Lord had instituted his Supper, and gave this cup of blessing to his disciples, he added, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine." Now welcome the bitter cup, the vinegar and the gall; teaching us after a sacrament to sit more loose than before to bodily delights, and to be better reconciled to hardships and disappointments in them. It was the sin and shame of the Israelites in the wilderness, that while they were fed with manna, angels' food, they lusted, saying, "Who will give us flesh to eat?" And they sin after the similitude of that transgression, who, when they have eaten of the bread of life, and drunk of the water of life, yet continue to be as curious and careful about their meat and drink, as if they knew no better things, and had their happiness bound up in them; as if the kingdom of God were in this sense meat and drink, and a Turkish paradise were their heaven. Surely they that are of this spirit serve not our Lord Christ, but their own bellies.

But if they thus shame themselves who indulge the flesh, though their reason remaineth with them; what shall we think of those who, by their intemperance, put themselves quite out of possession of their own souls, unfit themselves for the service of God, and level themselves with the beasts? A Christian, a communicant, and yet a tippler, a drunkard, and a companion with those that run to this excess of riot!

This, this is the sin that hath been the scandal and ruin of many who, having begun in the Spirit, have thus ended in the flesh; this is that which hath quenched the Spirit, hardened the heart, besotted the head, debauched the conscience, withered the profession, and so hath slain its thousands, and its ten thousands. Against this sin, therefore, the Lord's prophet must cry aloud, and not spare; of the danger of this the watchmen are concerned to give warning. And dare those who partake "of the cup of the Lord, drink of the cup of devils?" Can there be so much concord between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial? No, there cannot; these are contrary the one to the other. If men's communicating will not break them off from their drunkenness, their drunkenness must break them off from communicating; for these are spots in our feasts of charity; and, if God be true, "drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Let me, therefore, with all earnestness, as one that desires to obtain mercy of the Lord to be faithful, warn all that profess religion and relation to Christ, to stand upon their guard against this snare, which hath been fatal to multitudes. As you tender the favour of God, the comforts of the Spirit, the credit of your profession, and the welfare of your own souls here and hereafter, take heed of being entangled in any temptations to sin; shun the society of these evil-doers, abstain from all the appearances of this sin; watch and be sober. He "that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, hath made us unto our God kings and priests." Are we priests? This was the law of the priesthood,—and it was a law made upon occasion of the death of Nadab and Abihu, who probably had "erred through wine,"—"Do not drink wine or strong drink, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation." Are we kings? "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; lest they drink and forget the law." It is not for Christians to drink to excess, and to allow themselves in those riotings and revellings which even the sober heathen condemned and abhorred.

Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness, are likewise lusts of the flesh, and defiling to the soul, which, therefore, all those must carefully avoid that profess to be led by the Spirit: they are abominable things which the

Lord hates, and which we also must hate. Are not our bodie temples of the Holy Ghost? dare we then defile them? Are they not members of Christ? and shall we make them the members of a harlot? Let those that eat of the holy things be holy both in body and spirit, and "possess their vessels in sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness." Let those eyes never be guilty of a wanton look, that have here seen Christ evidently set forth crucified among us; let not lewd, corrupt communication proceed out of that mouth into which God's covenant hath been taken; let not unclean lascivious thoughts be ever harboured in that heart in which the holy Jesus vouchsafes to dwell. Let those that have eaten of wisdom's bread, and drunk of the wine that she hath mingled, never hearken to the invitations of the foolish woman, who courts the unwary to stolen waters, and bread eaten in secret, under pretence that they are sweet and pleasant; "for the dead are there, and her guests are in the depths of hell."

5. We must see to it, that we be abundantly charitable and beneficent.—It is not enough that we do no hurt; but if we would order our conversation aright, we must, as we have opportunity, do good to all men, as becomes those to whom God in Christ is good, and doth good, and who profess themselves the disciples and followers of him who went about doing good. Shall we be selfish, and seek our own things only, who have here seen how Christ humbled and emptied himself for us? Shall we be sparing of our pains for our brethren's good, who have here seen Christ among us, as one that serveth, as one that suffereth, and as one who came not to be ministered unto, "but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many?" Shall we be shy of speaking to, or speaking for, our poor brethren, who have here seen our Lord Jesus not ashamed to own us, and intercede for us, notwithstanding our poverty and meanness? Shall we be strait-handed in distributing to the necessities of the saints, who have here found Christ so liberal and open-handed in imparting to us, not only the Gospel of God, but even his own soul? After we have been at this ordinance, we should show how much we are affected with our receiving there, by being ready and forward "to every good work." Because our goodness extendeth not to God, it ought to extend to the saints that are

in the earth. Thus we must be "followers of God, as dear children;" we must walk in love, as here we see Christ hath loved us, and given himself for us.

6. We must see to it, that we be more taken off from this world, and more taken up with another world.—A Christian then lives like himself, when he lives above the things that are seen, which are temporal, and looks upon them with a holy contempt, and keeps his eye fixed upon the things that are not seen, which are eternal, looking upon them with a holy concern. We are not of this world, but we are called out of it; we belong to another world, and are designed for it: we must, therefore, "seek the things that are above, and not set our affections on things beneath."

The thoughts of Christ crucified should wean us from this world, and make us out of love with it. The world knew him not, but hated him; the princes of this world crucified him; but he overcame the world, and we also by faith in him may obtain a victory over it; such a victory over it, as that we may not be entangled with its snares, encumbered with its cares, or disquieted by its sorrows. By frequent meditation on the cross of Christ, "the world will be crucified to us, and we to the world;" that is, the world and we shall grow very indifferent one to another, and no love shall be lost between us.

The thoughts of Christ glorified should raise our hearts to that blessed place where Christ "sitteth on the right hand of God, and from whence we look for the Saviour." When we commemorate Christ's entrance within the veil as our forerunner, and have good hopes of following him shortly; when we think of his being in paradise, and of our being with him; how should our affections be carried out towards that joy of our Lord! How studious should we be to do the work of heaven, conform to the laws of heaven, and converse as much as may be with the glorious society there! Having received the adoption of sons, we should improve our acquaintance with, and raise our expectations of, the inheritance of sons.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### SOME WORDS OF COMFORT WHICH THIS ORDINANCE SPEAKS TO SERIOUS CHRISTIANS.

**FOUR** things premised. This ordinance may comfort us, I. Against the remembrance of our former sins and provocations. II. Against the sense of our sins of daily infirmities. III. Against the sad remainders of indwelling corruption. IV. Against prevailing doubts and fears about the spiritual state. V. Against the troubles and calamities of this life. VI. Against the fears of death.

**THE** Lord's Supper was intended for the comfort of good people, not only while they are actually attending on God in it, but ever after; not only that their joy may be full, but that this joy may remain in them. It is a feast which was made for laughter; not that of the fool, which determines in a sigh, and the end of it is heaviness, but that of the truly wise man, who hath learned to rejoice evermore, yea, to rejoice in the Lord always; not that of the hypocrite, whose triumphing is short, and his joys but "for a moment," but that of the sincere Christian, whom God causeth always "to triumph in Christ." The water that Christ here gives, is designed to be a well of water, living water, sending forth "streams that make glad the city of our God." This feast, if it be not our own fault, will be to us a continual feast, a breast of consolation, from which we may daily suck and be satisfied.

It is the will of God that his people should be a comforted people. The most evangelical part of the prophecy of Isaiah begins with this, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." He takes pleasure in their prosperity; he delights to see them cheerful, and to hear them sing at their work, and sing in his ways. Religion was never intended to make people melancholy; wisdom's adversaries do her wrong if they paint her in mourning, and wisdom's children do not do her right if they give them occasion to do so; for though they

are, like St. Paul, as sorrowful, yet they should be like him, always rejoicing; because, though they seem perhaps to have nothing, yet really "they possess all things." So good a Master do we serve, that he hath been pleased to combine interests with us, and so compound his glory and our comfort that, in seeking the one, we seek the other also. He hath made that to be our duty, which is indeed our greatest privilege; and that is, to delight ourselves always in the Lord, and to live a life of complacency in him. And it is the New Testament character of a Christian indeed, that he rejoiceth in Christ Jesus.

Good Christians have, of all people, most reason to rejoice and be comforted. As for those that are at a distance from God, and out of covenant with him, they have reason to be afflicted, and mourn and weep. "Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy as other people; for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God." To them that eat of the forbidden tree of knowledge, this tree of life also is forbidden; but those that devote themselves to God, have all the reason in the world to delight themselves in God. They that "ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, though they go weeping to seek the Lord their God," yet they shall go on rejoicing, when they have found him; for they cannot but find the way pleasantness, and the paths of it peace. Have not they reason to smile, on whom God smiles? If God hath put grace into the heart, hath he not put gladness there, and a new song into the mouth? Is Christ proclaimed King in the soul? and ought it not to be done with acclamations of joy? Is the atonement received, and the true treasure found? and shall we not rejoice with joy unspeakable? Have we good hope through grace of entering shortly into the joy of our Lord? and have we not cause now to rejoice in the hope of it?

Yet those who have so much reason to rejoice are often cast down and in sorrow, and not altogether without cause. This state of probation and preparation is a mixed state; and it is proper enough it should be so, for the trial and exercise of various graces, and that God's power may have the praise of keeping the balance even. In those whose hearts are visited by the day-spring from on high, the light is neither clear nor dark, it is neither day nor night. They have their

comforts, which they would not exchange for the peculiar treasure of kings and provinces; but withal they have their crosses, under which they groan, being burdened. They have their hopes, which are an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil; but withal they have their fears, for their warfare is not yet accomplished; they have not yet attained, neither are already perfect. They have their joys, such as the world can neither give nor take away, joys that a stranger doth not intermeddle with; but withal they have their griefs; their way to Canaan lies through a wilderness, and their way to Jerusalem through the valley of Baca. Their Master was himself a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and they are to be his followers. While we are here, we must not think it strange, if, for a season, when need is, we are in heaviness; we cannot expect to reap in joy hereafter, unless we now sow in tears. We must not therefore think, that either the present happiness of the saints, which in this world they are to expect, or their present holiness, which in this world they are to endeavour, consists in such delights and joys as to leave no room for any mourning and sense of trouble: no, there is a sorrow that is a godly sorrow; a jealousy of ourselves that is a godly jealousy. It is only a perfect love that casts out all fear and all grief, which we are not to expect in this imperfect state. All tears shall not be wiped away from our eyes, nor shall sorrow and sighing quite flee away, till we come to heaven: while we are here, we are in a valley of tears, and must conform to the temper of the climate; we are at sea, and must expect to be tossed with tempests; we are in the camp, and must expect to be alarmed; while without are fighting, no wonder that within are fears.

Our Lord Jesus hath therefore provided such comforts for the relief of his people, in their present sorrowful state, as may serve to balance their griefs, and keep them from being pressed above measure; and he hath instituted holy ordinances, and especially this of the Lord's Supper, for the application of those comforts to them, that they may never fear, may never sorrow as those that have no hope or no joy. The covenant of grace, as it is ministered in the everlasting Gospel, hath in it a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady; so that they who have an interest in that covenant, and know

it, may triumph with blessed Paul: "Though we are troubled on every side, yet we are not distressed; perplexed sometimes, but, thanks be to God, not in despair; persecuted by men, but not forsaken of God; cast down and drooping, but not destroyed and lost." This is that which bears them up under all their burdens, comforteth them in all their griefs, and enables them to rejoice in tribulation: God is theirs, and they are his, and he hath "made with them an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things, and sure; and this is all their salvation, and all their desire," however it be.

The word of God is written to them for this end, "that their joy may be full; and that through patience and comfort of the Scriptures they may have hope." Precious promises are there treasured up, to be the foundations of their faith and hope, and consequently the fountains of their joy. Songs of thanksgiving are there drawn up for them to refresh themselves with in their weary pilgrimage, and to have recourse to for the silencing of their complaints. Ministers are appointed to be the helpers of their joy, and to speak comfort to such as mourn in Zion. The Sabbath is the day which the Lord hath made for this very end, that they may rejoice and be glad in it. Prayer is appointed for the ease of troubled spirits, that in it they may pour out their complaints before God, and fetch in comfort from him. "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." This sacrament was ordained for the comfort of good Christians, for the confirmation of their faith, in order to the preservation and increase of their joy; and they ought to improve it both for the strengthening of the habit of holy cheerfulness, and their actual encouragement against the several particular grievances of this present time. And there is no complaint which a good Christian hath cause to make at any time, which he may not qualify, and keep from growing clamorous, by comforts drawn from what he hath seen and tasted, what he hath done and received, at the Lord's table. Let us therefore be daily drawing water out of these wells of salvation; and when our souls are cast down and disquieted within us, let us fetch arguments from our communion with God in this ordinance, both in chiding them from their despondency, and encouraging them to hope and rejoice in God. What is it that grieves and oppresses us? Why is our countenance sad, and why



go we mourning all the day long? Whatever the occasion of the heaviness is, let it be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and I dare say there is that comfort to be fetched from this ordinance, which is sufficient to be set in the scale against it, and outweigh it. Let us instance in some of the common causes of our trouble, and try what relief we may from hence be furnished with:—

I. Are we disquieted and discouraged by the remembrance of our former sins and provocations?—There is that here which will help to quiet and encourage us in reference to this. Conscience sometimes calls to mind the sins of the unconverted state, and charges them home upon the soul, especially if they were heinous and scandalous; it repeats the reproach of the youth; rips up the old quarrels, and aggravates them; rakes in the old wounds, and makes them bleed afresh; and from hence the disconsolate soul is ready to draw such hard conclusions as these:—Surely it is impossible that so great a sinner as I have been should be pardoned and accepted; that such a prodigal should be welcomed home, and such a publican ever find mercy! Can I expect to share in that grace which I so long slighted and sinned against? or to be taken into that covenant of which I have so often cast away the cords? Will the holy God take one into the embraces of his love, that hath been so vile and sinful, and fitter to be made a monument of his wrath? Can there be any hopes for me? Or, if there be some hope yet, can there be any joy? If I may, through a miracle of mercy, escape hell at last, which I have deserved a thousand times, yet ought I not to weep mine eyes out, and to “go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul?” Ought not I to go down to the grave mourning? Should not my soul refuse now to be comforted, which so long refused to be so convinced?

These are black and sad thoughts, and enough to sink the spirit, if we had not met with that at the Lord's table which gives a sufficient answer to all these challenges. We have been great sinners, but there we have seen the great Redeemer, able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him; and have there called him by that name of his, which is as ointment poured forth, “The Lord our righteousness.” Our sins have reached to the heavens, but there we have seen

God's mercy in Christ reaching beyond the heavens. We have been wretchedly defiled in our own ways, but there we have seen, not only a laver, but a fountain opened for the house of David to wash in; and have been assured that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, even that which, for the heinousness of its nature and the multitude of its aggravations, hath been as scarlet and crimson. That article of the covenant, which is so expressive of a general pardon, hath been sealed to me upon Gospel terms: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more;" and this I rely upon. Great sinners have obtained mercy, and why may not I?

And though an humble remembrance of sin will be of use to us all our days, yet such a disquieting remembrance of it as hinders our faith in Christ, and our joy in God, is by no means good; even sorrow for sin may exceed due bounds, and penitents may be swallowed up with over-much sorrow. The covenant of grace speaks not only pardon, but peace to all believers; and not only sets the broken bones, but makes them to rejoice. When it saith, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," it saith also, "Son, Daughter, be of good cheer." It is the duty of those that have received the atonement, to take the comfort of it, and to "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Acts of self-denial and mortification are means and evidences of our sanctification, and such as we ought to abound in; but they are not the grounds of our justification: it is Christ's blood that makes the sanctification, not our tears. Therefore we must not so remember former sins as to put away present comforts; a life of repentance will very well consist with a life of holy cheerfulness.

II. Are we disquieted and discouraged by the sense of our sins of daily infirmity?—There is that here which will be a relief against this grievance also:—I have not only former guilt to reflect upon, contracted in the days of my ignorance and unbelief, but, alas! I am still sinning, sinning daily. God knows, and my own heart knows, that in many things I do offend. I come short of the rule and short of the glory of God, every day; vain thoughts lodge within me, idle words proceed from me. If I would count either the one or the other, they are more in number than the sand. When I think of the strictness and extent of the divine law, and com-

pare my own heart and life with it, I find that innumerable evils compass me about. Neglects of duty are many, and negligences in duty are more. Who can tell how oft he offends? If the righteous God should enter into judgment with me, and be extreme to mark what I do amiss, I were not able to answer him for one of a thousand. It might have been expected that when the God of mercy had, upon my repentance, forgiven the rebellions of my sinful state, taken me into his family, and made me as one of his hired servants, nay, as one of his adopted children, I should have been a dutiful child and a diligent servant; but, alas! I have been slothful and trifling, and in many instances undutiful. I am very defective in my duty, both to my Master, and to my fellow-servants, and in many things transgress daily. For these things I weep; mine eyes, mine eyes run down with tears.

But there is that in this ordinance which may keep us from sinking under this burden, though we have cause enough to complain of it. It is true, I am sinning daily, and it is my sorrow and shame that I am so; but the memorial of that great sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered once for all upon the cross, is therefore continually to be celebrated on earth, because the merit of it is continually pleaded in heaven, where Christ ever lives to make intercession in the virtue of his satisfaction. Having therefore celebrated the memorial of it at the table of the Lord, here in the outer court, I ought to take the comfort of the continual efficacy of it within the veil, and its prevalency for the benefit of all believers. The water out of the rock, the rock smitten, follows God's Israel through this wilderness, in the precious streams of which they that are washed are welcome to wash their feet from the pollutions they contract in their daily walk through this defiling world; and the best have need of this washing. That needful word of caution, that we sin not, is immediately followed with this word of comfort, "But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father;" one to speak for us, and to plead our cause; and he hath a good plea to put in in our behalf, for "he is the propitiation for our sins."

Add to this, that the covenant of grace, which is sealed to us in this ordinance, is so well ordered in all things, and so sure, that every transgression in the covenant doth not presently throw us out of covenant. We do not stand upon the

same terms that Adam in innocency did, to whom the least failure was fatal. No; to us God hath proclaimed his name, "gracious and merciful, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." If we mourn for our sins of daily infirmity, are ashamed of them, and humble ourselves for them; if we strive, and watch, and pray against them; we may be sure they shall not be laid unto our charge, but in Christ Jesus they shall be forgiven to us; for we are under grace, and not under the law. The God we are in covenant with is a God of pardon; "with him there is forgiveness." We are instructed to pray for daily pardon as duly as we pray for daily bread, and are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace for mercy: so that, though there be a remembrance made of sin every day, yet, thanks be to God, there may be a remembrance made of the sacrifice for sin; by which an everlasting righteousness was brought in.

III. Are we disquieted and discouraged by sad remainders of indwelling corruption?—We may from thence derive support under this burden. All that are enlightened from on high lament the original sin that dwelleth in them, as much as the actual transgressions that are committed by them; not only that they are defective in doing their duty, but that they labour under a natural weakness and inability for it; not only that they are often overtaken in a fault, but that they have a natural proneness and inclination to that which is evil. It was the bitter complaint of blessed Paul himself, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And it is the complaint of all that are spiritually alive, while they are here in this imperfect state.

The most intelligent find themselves in the dark, and apt to mistake; the most contemplative find themselves unfixed, and apt to wander; the most active for God find themselves dull, and apt to tire: when the spirit, through grace, is willing, yet the flesh is weak; and when we would do good, evil is present with us. Corrupt appetites and passions often get head, and betray us into many indecencies. This makes the heart sad, and the hands feeble; and, by reason of these remaining corruptions, many a good Christian loseth the comfort of his graces. Those Canaanites in the land are as thorns in the eyes and goads in the sides of many an Israelite.

But be not cast down, my soul! the covenant which was sealed to thee at the table of the Lord was a covenant of grace, which accepts sincerity as Gospel perfection; not a covenant of innocency, which accepts of nothing less than a sinless, spotless purity. Were not these complaints poured out before the Lord, and did he not say, "My grace is sufficient for thee?" And what canst thou desire more? Were not orders given at the banquet of wine for the crucifying of the adversary and enemy, this wicked Haman; so that, though it be not yet dead, it is a body of death, and ere long it shall be put off for ever? Was it not there said to thee, was it not sealed, "that sin shall not have dominion over thee; but the God of peace shall bruise Satan under thy feet shortly;" so that, though he may for a while disturb thy peace, and his troops may foil thee, yet, like Gad in Jacob's blessing, thou shalt "overcome at the last?" "The bruised reed shall not be broken, nor the smoking flax quenched; but judgment shall in due time be brought forth unto victory." Grace shall get the upper hand of corruption, and be a conqueror, yea, "more than a conqueror, through him that loved us." Come then, come set thy feet upon the necks of these kings, and rejoice in the hope of a complete victory at last. These lusts which war against thee make war with the Lamb too, and oppose his interests; but, for certain, "the Lamb shall overcome them; for he is the Lord of lords, and King of kings, and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." Thou hast seen on how firm a rock the kingdom of God within thee is built, and mayest be sure that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Christ hath given thee a banner to be displayed because of the truth; "and through him thou shalt do valiantly; for he it is that shall tread down thine enemies."

Go on, my soul, go on to fight the Lord's battles, by a vigorous resistance of sin and Satan; maintain a constant guard upon all the motions of thy spiritual enemies, hold up the shield of faith, and draw the sword of the Spirit against their assaults. Suppress the first risings of corruption, make no provision for it, resolve not to yield to it; walk in the Spirit, that thou mayest not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; never make league with these Canaanites, but vex these Midianites, and smite them; mortify this body of death,

and all its members; strengthen such principles, and dwell upon such considerations, as are proper for the weakening of the power of sinful lusts; and then, be of good comfort, this house of Saul shall wax weaker and weaker, and the house of David stronger and stronger. Thou hast seen, my soul, thou hast tasted the bread and wine which the Lord Jesus, that blessed Melchizedek, hath provided for the support and refreshment of all the followers of faithful Abraham, when they return weary (and wounded perhaps) from their spiritual conflicts. Make use of this provision then, feast upon it daily, and go on in the strength of it. Thank God (as St. Paul did in the midst of these complaints) for Jesus Christ, who not only hath prayed for thee, that thou fail not, but is now, like Moses, interceding on the top of the hill, while thou art, like Joshua, fighting with these Amalekites in the valley. Be faithful therefore unto the death, and thou shalt shortly have a place in that New Jerusalem, into which no unclean thing can enter. Now thou groanest, being burdened; but in heaven there shall be none of those complaints, nor any cause for them.

IV. Doth thy trouble arise from prevailing doubts and fears about thy spiritual state?—We may draw that from this ordinance which will help us to silence those fears, and solve those doubts, and to clear it up to us that God in Christ is ours, and we are his, and that all shall be well shortly. Many good Christians, though they are so willing to hope the best concerning themselves as not to decline coming to the Lord's table, and there perhaps they may meet with satisfaction; yet afterwards the tide of their comforts ebbs, a sadness seizeth their spirits, the peace they have had they suspect to have been a delusion, and are ready to give up all for gone; unbelief makes hard conclusions, clouds the evidences, shakes the hopes, withers the joys,—that it is as good to give up all pious pursuits, as thus keep them up in vain; as good make a captain, and return into Egypt, as perish in the wilderness, for this is not the way to Canaan. And thus many are kept by unbelief from entering into the present Sabbatism or rest, which is intended for the people of God in this life.

But, "O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?" Come, call to remembrance the former days, the former sacra-

ment days, and the sweet communion thou hadst with God in them; days never to be forgotten. Thou doubttest whether God loves thee, and thou art ready to say as they did, "Wherein hath he loved me?" But dost thou not remember the love tokens he gave thee at his table, when he embraced thee in the arms of his grace, kissed thee with the kisses of his "mouth, and his banner over thee was love?" Thou doubttest whether thou be a child of God, and a chosen vessel, or not, and art sometimes tempted to say, "Surely the Lord had utterly separated me from his people, and I am a dry tree." "How shall he set me among the children, and give me a pleasant land?" But dost thou not remember the children's bread thou hast been fed with at thy Father's table, and the Spirit of adoption there sent forth into thy heart, teaching thee to cry, Abba, Father? Thou calledst thyself a prodigal, and no more worthy to be accounted a son, because thou didst bear the reproach of thy youth, which made thee ashamed, yea, even confounded. But did not God, at the same time, call thee, as he did penitent Ephraim, "a dear son, a pleasant child?" were not his bowels troubled for thee? and did he not say, "I will surely have mercy on thee?" Did not thy Father meet thee with tender compassion? Did he not call for the best robe, and put it on thee? Did he not invite thee to the fatted calf? and, which was best of all, give thee a kiss, which sealed thy pardon? And wilt thou now call that point in question which was then so well settled? "Is God a man, that he should lie, or the son of man, that he should repent?" No; "He is God, and not man." Thou doubttest whether Christ be thine or not; whether thou hast any interest in his mediation and intercession; whether he died for thee or not. But didst thou not, at his table, accept of him to be thine, and consent to him upon his own terms? Didst thou not say to him, with thy finger in the print of the nails, "My Lord, and my God?" And did he not answer thee with good and comfortable words, saying unto thee, "I am thy salvation?" Hast thou revoked the bargain? or dost thou fear that he will revoke it? Was it not an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten? Why art thou troubled? and why do doubts arise in thy heart? Was not Christ present with thee, and did he not show himself well-affected

to thee, when, at his table, he said unto thee, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself?" Thou doubttest whether thou hast any grace or not, any love to God, any faith, any repentance. But hast thou forgotten God's workings on thy heart, and the workings of thy heart towards God, at his table? Did not thine heart burn within thee when thy Redeemer talked with thee there. Didst thou not sit down under his shadow with delight, and say, "It is good to be here?" Didst thou not desire a sign of the Lord, a token for good? Didst thou not say, "Do not deceive me?" And was there not a token for good shown thee? Was not thy heart melted for sin? Was it not drawn out towards God? Did it not appear that God was with thee of a truth? Wherefore, then, dost thou doubt of that, of which thou hadst then such comfortable evidences? "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?" Why dost thou entertain such hard thoughts of God and thy own state? "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?"

And why art thou fearful and faint-hearted? Why dost thou look forward with terror and trembling, while thou hast so much reason to look forward with hope and rejoicing? "Alas!" saith the troubled spirit, "God hath cast me out of his sight, and I fear will cast off for ever, and will be favourable no more: I shall no more see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living! My comforts are removed, and all pleasant things are laid waste! 'My bones are dried, my hope is lost, and I am cut off for my part.'" But hearken to this, thou that thus fearest continually every day: dost thou not remember the encouragements Christ gave thee at his table to hope in him, and to expect all good from him? Did he not say, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee?" And didst not thou promise, that thou wouldst never leave nor forsake him? Nay, did he not promise "to put his fear into thy heart, that thou mightest not depart from him." He did; "and is not he faithful that hath called thee," faithful that hath promised, who also will do it? Thou art afraid that some time or other Satan will be too hard for thee, and thou shalt one day perish by his hand; but hast



thou not had that precious promise sealed to thee, that the faithful God will never suffer thee to be tempted above what thou art able, but will with the temptation make a way for thee to escape? His providence shall proportion the trial to the strength: or, which comes all to one, his grace shall proportion the strength to the trial. Thou art afraid that, after all, thou shalt come short; that by reason of the violence of the storm, the treachery of the sea, and especially thine own weakness and unskilfulness, thou shalt never be able to weather the point, and get safe into the harbour at last. But shall I ask thee, thou that followest Christ trembling, "Dost thou not know in whom thou hast believed?" Is thy salvation intrusted with thyself, and lodged in your own hands? No; it is not. If it were, thou wouldst have reason to fear loss of it. But hath not God committed it, and hast not thou committed it, to the Lord Jesus? And is not he "able to keep that which is committed to him against that day," that great day, when it shall be called for? Is not that a divine power that keeps thee? a divine promise that secures thee? Be not fearful, then. "Be not faithless, but believing."

V. Are we disquieted and discouraged by the troubles and calamities of this life?—From our communion with God in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper we may bring comfort and support under all the afflictions of this present time, whatever they be. Our Master instituted this sacrament on the night wherein he was betrayed; and soon after he put off the body, and pleasantly said, "Now I am no more in the world:" but when we have received this sacrament, we find ourselves still in a house of clay, liable to many shocks; and so close is the union between the soul and the body, that what toucheth the bone and the flesh cannot but affect the spirit at second hand. We are born and born again to trouble; besides that we are exposed with others to the common calamities of human life, and the persecutions which all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must count upon; we are under the discipline of sons, and must look for chastisement. Afflictions are not only consistent with the love of God, but they flow from it: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." They are not only reconcileable with the covenant, but a branch of it. "I will chasten their trans-

gressions with the rod, and their sins with stripes," is an article of the agreement with David and his seed, with this comfortable clause added, "Nevertheless, my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him; my covenant will I not break."

There is no disputing against sense. Christianity was not designed to make men stocks and stones and Stoics under their calamities. "No affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous." Hence the best men, as they have their share of trouble, so cannot but have the sense of it; that is allowed them; they groan, being burdened: but this sense of trouble is apt to exceed due bounds: it is hard to grieve, and not to overgrieve; to lay to heart an affliction, and not to lay it too near the heart. When grief for an outward trouble overwhelms our spirits, embitters our comforts, and hinders our joy in God, stops the mouth of praise, takes off our chariot wheels, and makes us drive heavily on our way to heaven; then it is excessive and inordinate, and turns into sin to us. When sorrow fills the heart and plays the tyrant there, when it makes us fretful and impatient, breaks out in quarrels with God in his providence, and robs us of the enjoyment of ourselves, our friends, and our God; it is an enemy that we are concerned to take up arms against.

And from our sacramental covenants and comforts we may fetch plenty of arguments against the unreasonable insinuations of inordinate grief. Did I not see at the table of the Lord a lively representation of the sufferings of Christ, the variety and extremity of his sufferings? Did I not see his tears, his sweats, his agonies, his stripes, the pain and shame he underwent? And is the servant better than his master, and the disciple than his Lord? Did Christ go by the cross to the crown, and shall a Christian expect to go any other way? The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings; have not we much more need of them for the perfecting of what is lacking in us? Is not this one part of our conformity to the image of Christ, that, as he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, so we should be, that he might be the first-born among many brethren? A sight of Christ's afflictions should reconcile us to our own, especially if we consider not

only what he suffered, but how he suffered; and with what an invincible patience and cheerful submission to his Father's will, "leaving us an example." (1 Peter ii. 21.) Have we celebrated the memorial of Christ's sufferings? and have we not yet learned of him to say, "The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Though it be a bitter cup, "Father, not my will, but thine be done." Have we not yet learned of him, who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, to be dumb, and not to open our mouths against any thing that God doth? to forgive our enemies, and pray for our persecutors, and cheerfully submit ourselves to him that judges righteously? Let the same mind be in us which here we have seen to be in Jesus Christ.

Yet this is not all: in the Lord's Supper we give up ourselves, and all we have, unto the Lord, with a promise to acquiesce in all the disposals of his providence concerning us and ours; let us not, therefore, by our discontent and uneasiness, revoke the surrender that we then made, or go counter to it. We there said it, and sealed it, that we would be the Lord's; and may he not do what he will with his own, especially when it is so by our own consent? God there said it, and sealed it to us, that he would be to us a Father; and can we take anything amiss from a Father? such a Father, who never chastens us but for our own profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness? Inviolable assurances were there given to us, that all things should work together for our present good, and for our future glory; that, as afflictions abound, consolations should so much the more abound; and some experience we there had of the sweetness and power of those consolations, which we ought to treasure up, that we may have them ready for our supports in the evil day. Can we forget how sweet God's smiles were, which there we saw? how reviving his comforts were, which we there tasted? And are not those sufficient to countervail the loss of the world's flattering smiles, and the comforts we have in the creature? It is generally supposed, that the comfortable sermon which Christ preached to his disciples on that text, "Let not your heart be troubled," immediately followed the administration of the Lord's Supper; for it is the will of Christ, that those whom he hath raised up to sit with him by faith in heavenly

places, should not be cast down or disquieted for any cross or disappointment in earthly things.

Art thou sick, languishing perhaps under some wasting distemper, which consumes thy strength and beauty like a moth? or chastened, it may be, with pain upon thy bed, and the multitude of thy bones with strong pain? or labouring under the infirmities and decays of old age? Take comfort, then, from thy communion with the Lord at his table. Didst thou not see there how Christ himself bore our sickness, and carried our sorrows then, when he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree, and so took away the sting of them; extracted out of them the wormwood and gall, which he himself drank in a bitter cup, and infused into them the comforts of his love, which he hath given us to drink of? Didst thou not there receive a sealed pardon? Did not God, in love to thy soul, cast all thy sins behind his back, and tell thee so? Thou hast then no reason to complain of bodily distempers. "The inhabitants shall not say, I am sick." How so? Can one that is sick avoid saying, "I am sick?" Why, it follows, "The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Sickness is next to nothing to those who know that their sins are pardoned. When thou didst present thy body to God in that ordinance a living sacrifice, and didst engage that it should be for the Lord, was it not graciously added, "And the Lord for the body?" (1 Cor. vi. 13.) And if the Lord be for the body, he will strengthen thee upon the bed of languishing; and though he may not presently help thee off it, yet he will sit by thee; and "he will make all thy bed in thy sickness." And that bed cannot but be easy which he maketh.

Art thou poor, crossed in thine affairs, disappointed in lawful and hopeful designs, clogged with cares, and perhaps reduced to straits? Let the spiritual riches secured to thee in that sealing ordinance be a balance to the affliction of outward poverty. The God of truth hath said it, and thou mayest rely upon it, that those that fear him and seek him shall not want any good thing, not anything that infinite Wisdom sees really good for them. "Trust in the Lord, therefore, and do good" with the little thou hast; "so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be

fed." It is not promised that thou shalt be feasted with varieties and dainties; those that are feasted at God's table need not to complain, though they be not feasted at their own; but thou shalt be fed, fed with food convenient for thee. Some good Christians that have been in a very poor condition have said, that they have made many a meal upon the promises, when they wanted bread: "Verily thou shalt be fed," be fed with faith. "The just shall live by his faith." "Though the fig-tree do not blossom, and there be no fruit in the vine;" yet, while thou hast in the Lord's Supper seen the rose of Sharon blossoming, tasted of the true vine, thou hast reason enough to "rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of thy salvation."

Are thy relations a grief to thee? Do those afflict thee of whom thou saidst, "These same shall comfort me?" Suppose thy yoke-fellow unsuitable, children undutiful, parents unkind, friends ungrateful, neighbours injurious; the comfort of our relation to God may suffice to make up the loss of any earthly comfort. If man be harsh, yet God is gracious. Though the waters of our rivers may be mudded or turned into blood, yet the fountain of life runs away clear, and its streams pure as crystal. On the supposition of family disappointments, David in his last words took comfort from the covenant of grace made with him.

Are those dear to thee removed by death? It is fit that that which is sown should be watered. But sacrament comforts will keep us from sorrowing as those that have no hope. We have lost the satisfaction we used to have in them; but is not God better to us than ten sons? Far better than ten thousand such relations could have been. And yet they are not lost, they are only gone before, and death itself cannot wholly cut us off from communion with them; for we are come to the spirits of just men made perfect, and hope to be with them shortly.

Are the calamities of the church and of the nation our affliction? It is fit they should be so; for we have eaten and drunk into the great body, and, as living members, must feel its grievances; but in the Lord's Supper we have seen what provision the grace of God hath made for his household, and from thence may infer the protection under which the providence of God will always keep it safe. The

promises that are sealed to us, are sure to all the seed, and the covenant of grace is the rock on which the church is built, so firm that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The Lord, we see, hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust to that. Let us at this ordinance learn this new song, and sing it oft: "Hallelujah! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

VI. Are the fears of death a trouble and terror to us?— We may fetch from the Lord's Supper that which will enable us through grace to triumph over those fears. This is a fear which is often found to have torment, and by reason of it many weak Christians have been all "their life-time subject to bondage." It is also a fear which often brings a snare, exposeth us to many temptations, and gives Satan advantage against us. There are many who, we hope, through grace, are saved from the second death, and yet are afraid of the first death, being more solicitous than they need be about a dying life, and more timorous than they need to be of a living death, a death that is their way to life. But the arrests of death, and its harbingers, would not be at all dreadful, if we did but know how to make a due improvement of the comforts we are made partakers of at the table of the Lord. We there saw Christ dying, dying so great a death, a death in pomp, armed and attended with all its terrors, dying in pain, in shame, in darkness, in agonies; and yet the Son of God, and the Heir of all things. This takes off the reproach of death, so that now we need not be ashamed to die: if Christ humbled himself, and became obedient to death, why should not we? It likewise takes off the terror of death, so that now we need not be afraid to die. When we walk through that dark and dismal valley, we have no reason to fear any evil, while the great Shepherd of the sheep is not only gone before us, but goes along with us; "his rod and his staff they comfort us." He is our leader; and we do not approve ourselves his good soldiers, if we be not willing to follow him whithersoever he goes. He went through death to the joy set before him, and by that way can we follow him. Through this Jordan we must enter Canaan.

Christ's death hath broken the power of death, and taken from it all the armour wherein it trusted; so that now,

let it do its worst, it cannot do a good Christian any real prejudice; for it cannot "separate him from the love of God." Surely the bitterness of death is now past, by Christ's tasting it. The sharpness of death Christ hath overcome by submitting to it, and so hath opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. "The sucking child may now play upon the hole of the asp, and the weaned child may put his hand on the cockatrice' den; for death itself shall not hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain."

Nay, the death of Christ hath quite altered the property of death. It not only ceaseth to be an enemy, but it is become a friend: the covenant of grace, sealed to us in the Lord's Supper, assures us of the unspeakable kindness that even death itself shall do us: "All things are yours," and death amongst the rest. As the death of Christ was the purchase of our happiness, so our own death is the passage to our happiness; it dischargeth us from our prison, and conveys us to our palace. The promise of eternal life sealed to us, and its earnest communicated to us, in this ordinance, enable us to look with comfort on the other side death: then we look without terror on this.

Art thou afraid to give up thy soul? Thou hast already given it up to God in Christ to be sanctified, and therefore thou mayest, with holy cheerfulness, give it up to God in Christ to be saved. The dying Jesus, by committing his spirit into the hands of his Father, hath emboldened all his followers in a dying hour to do the same. Why should that soul be afraid to go out of the body and leave this world of sense, which is by faith acquainted with the blessed world of spirits, and is sure of a guard of angels ready to convey it to that world, and a faithful Friend ready to receive it?

Art thou afraid to put off thy body? The covenant sealed to thee at the Lord's table is a covenant with thy bones. Fear not the return of thine earth to its earth; it is in order to its being refined, and in due time restored to its soul, a glorious and incorruptible body. Spiritual blessings are, perhaps for this reason, in the sacraments, represented and applied by outward and sensible signs, in the participation of which the body is concerned, that we might thereby be confirmed in our believing hope of the glory prepared and

reserved for these bodies of ours, these vile bodies, which, even while they lie in the grave, still remain united to Christ, and, when they shall be out of the grave, shall be made like unto his glorious body.

Let the sinners in Zion be afraid to die; let fearfulness surprise the hypocrites, when their souls shall be required of them; let their hearts meditate terror, and their faces gather blackness, who, having lived a carnal, worldly, sensual life, have no interest in Christ and the promises; for they shall call in vain to rocks and mountains to shelter them from the wrath of the Lamb. But let them that have joined themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant, and have obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful to that covenant, lift up their heads with joy, for their redemption draws nigh. Death will shortly rend the interposing veil of sense, and time will shortly scatter all the darkening and threatening clouds which hang over our heads, and open to us a bright and glorious scene in that blessed world of life and love, where we shall enjoy the substance of those things of which at the Lord's table we are refreshed with the shadow, and the full vintage of those joys of which here we have the first fruits.

Learn then, my soul, learn thou to triumph over death and the grave. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Having laid up thy treasure within the veil, and remitted thy best effects and best affections thither, and having received the earnest of the purchased possession, be still looking, still longing for that blessed hope. Fear not death, for it cannot hurt thee; but desire it rather, since it will greatly befriend thee. When the "earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved," thou shalt remove to the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Wish then, wish daily, for the coming of the Lord; for he shall appear to thy joy. "The vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and shall not lie." Look through the windows of this house of clay, like the mother of Sisera, when she waited for her son's triumph; and cry through the lattice, "Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot? Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."



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