

The Christian Feast

by Samuel Davies

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament that represents spiritual things, commemorates the sufferings of Christ, and signifies our union with Him.

Scripture: Joshua 24:15, Psalm 50:16, Matthew 7:13, Matthew 11:28, 1 Corinthians 5:8, 1 Corinthians 11:23, Hebrews 13:5, James 5:16

Topics: "Lord's Supper", "Christian Communion"

Description

Samuel Davies preaches about the importance of preparing for the Lord's Supper by understanding its end and design, and the necessary qualifications for worthy participation. He emphasizes the need for sincere repentance, love for Christ, faith in His sacrifice, and dedication to His service. Davies explains that the Lord's Supper serves as a memorial of Christ's sufferings, a badge of Christian profession, a seal of the covenant of grace, and a means of communion with God and fellow believers. He warns against unworthy participation, hypocrisy, and neglecting this sacred ordinance, urging all to examine their hearts, repent, and seek proper preparation before partaking.

Transcript

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"Therefore let us keep the Feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth." 1 Corinthians 5:8

As we have the agreeable prospect of celebrating the Lord's supper on the next Lord's day, we cannot spend this day to better purpose than preparing for it. And no preparative can be of more importance than a right knowledge of the end and design of that solemn ordinance, and the qualifications necessary in those that would worthily partake of it. To this I would devote the present discourse: and so important a design, certainly demands the attention of all, especially of such of you as intend to join in the participation of the sacred supper.

Though my text may be taken in a larger latitude--yet it is justly supposed to have a particular reference to this institution, which has the same place under the gospel dispensation, which the Passover had under the law. Paul had very naturally glided into the style of the Jewish law concerning the paschal supper, in

the directions he had been giving concerning a scandalous member of the Corinthian Church: and he carries on the metaphor with a beautiful uniformity, when he comes to speak of the gospel-dispensation, and particularly of the Lord's supper.

He had directed the Church of Corinth to cast the offender out of their communion, while he continued impenitent, because if they should tolerate such a corrupt member among them, it would tend to corrupt the whole church. Wickedness is of a spreading, infectious nature, and the indulgence of it in one instance, may occasion extensive mischief; for, says he, Don't you know--that a little leaven ferments and diffuses itself, till at length it has leavened the whole lump! Just so one corrupt member in a church may spread a contagion through the whole. Therefore purge out the old leaven; cast out this scandalous offender, and labor also to purge your Church, and your own hearts from all corruption--that you may be as a new, solid, and pure lump!

For you are more strongly bound to keep yourselves morally pure, and to guard your Church against infection, than the Jews were to abstain from all things mixed with leaven at the feast of the Passover; for though that feast is no more to be observed--yet that which was signified by the paschal Lamb is now come to pass: Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, and the ordinance of his supper is appointed as a sacred feast, in commemoration of him, and our deliverance by him--as the Passover was commemorative of the deliverance from Egypt, and the destroying angel.

And this is the stronger reason for the more purity of Christian people and congregations under the gospel, than there could be for ceremonial purity under the law. "Therefore," says he, " let us keep this evangelical feast, not with old leaven," not with those corrupt dispositions which we once indulged, and which, like leaven, soured our nature, and fermented through our frame; "neither with the leaven of malice, or any kind of wickedness;" but renouncing our old temper and practice, and with hearts universally sanctified, and full of love and good will to all mankind, let us piously celebrate this gospel feast with those dispositions which were signified by the unleavened bread, namely, sincerity and truth.

It was the practice of the Jews, when the Passover was approaching, to search every corner of their houses with lighted candles, that they might be sure there was no leaven to be found under their roofs. The apostle probably alludes to that practice, and exhorts Christians to a like care in searching and purging their hearts, and the churches to which they belong, that they may be pure and fit for partaking of so holy an ordinance.

My design is to show you the principal ends of the institution of the Lord's supper: and as I go along to delineate the character of those who are fit to attend upon it--for by knowing the former, we may easily know the latter.

The Lord's supper partakes of the general nature of those divine institutions which are called sacraments. It is intended to represent spiritual things--by material emblems or signs which affect our senses, and thereby enlarge our ideas and impress our hearts in the present state of flesh and blood. As we have not only rational minds--but also physical bodies endowed with senses, God has wisely adapted his institutions to the make of human nature, and called in the assistance of our eyes, and our ears, to help our conceptions of divine things, and to affect our minds with them. And this method is agreeable to the nature of mankind; God has been pleased to use it in every age, and under every dispensation of religion.

The tree of life was the sacrament of the first covenant: a sensible confirmation to Adam that he should obtain eternal life by his obedience. The rainbow was appointed as a confirmation of the covenant with

Noah--that the world should no more perish by a deluge: and we have not only the assurance of the divine promise but we may receive the confirmation through our eyes--by beholding that illustrious sign in the clouds. Circumcision and the Passover were noted sacraments of the covenant of grace, under the Jewish dispensation; and Baptism and the Lord's Supper are appointed in their place, and answer the like ends under the gospel.

In all these ordinances God condescends to our weakness, and, as I observed, makes our bodily senses helpful to the devotions of our minds. Indeed this method of representing and confirming things by sensible signs and significant actions, is so natural and expressive, that men have used it in all ages in their transactions with one another. It was remarkably in use among the ancients; but it is not quite laid aside in our age, which does not abound in such methods of representation. In our age and country it is usual to confirm contracts by annexing seals to a written document; to confirm an agreement by shaking hands; to signify love by a kiss, and obligingness by bowing; and we sometimes give some token as a memorial to a parting friend. I mention these familiar instances that I may, if possible, give some just ideas of a sacrament to the lowest capacity. It partakes of the general nature of these significant signs and actions, and it is intended, like them, to strike our senses; and through that medium to instruct or affect our minds. And such a sign, such a seal, such a significant action--is the Lord's Supper in particular.

Having made this remark upon its general nature, I now go on to show the particular ends of its institution:

1. This ordinance was intended as a memorial of the sufferings of Christ for his people.

That this is its immediate and principal design, we learn from the words of the blessed Jesus at its first institution. "This do in remembrance of me." That we are to remember him particularly and principally as suffering for our sins--is evident from his words in distributing the elements. "This is my body which is broken for you." Here a moving emphasis is laid upon his body's being broken: broken, crushed, and mangled with an endless variety of sufferings. So again. "This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you."

Hence it is evident this ordinance was appointed as a memorial of a suffering Savior; and it is under this notion that we are particularly to remember him. We are to "show forth the Lord's death," says the apostle; his death which was the consummation of his sufferings, until he comes again to visit our world in a very different and glorious manner.

"The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

The Lord's supper is to be looked upon as a token of love, or memorial left by a friend at parting among his friends--that whenever they see it--they may remember him.

Our Lord knew we would be very apt to forget Him; and, therefore, that the memory of His sufferings might never be lost--He instituted this ordinance. And by the humble elements of bread and wine--He represents Himself to our senses as broken under the burden of His sufferings, and shedding His blood.

Grain, out of which bread is made, which is first threshed, then ground in a mill, then baked in an oven--is a very proper emblem to signify the violences which our Lord's sacred body endured.

And wine pressed from the grape, and poured into the cup, is a striking representation of His blood, which was forced from Him by the crushing weight of His agonies! Therefore there was a peculiar propriety in appointing these elements to be the memorials of His sufferings.

This remembrance of a suffering Savior must be attended with suitable affections. To remember Him with a careless indifference, or with contempt--is the most ungrateful insult! Were He an insignificant person, in whom we have no concern--then we might treat Him thus. But thus to treat the beloved Son of God, and our only Savior, thus to requite all His love and sufferings for us--what can be more shocking! What can be more base ingratitude!

We should therefore remember Him in this ordinance:

with a penitent sense of our sins--which were the cause of His death;

with an ardent love and gratitude--for His dying love to us;

with a humble faith and confidence in the merit of His death--to procure for us eternal salvation;

and with a voluntary dedication of ourselves to Him and His service forever!

And hence you may learn the character of those who may participate in this feast:

only those who are true penitents, fully convinced of their sins, and deeply sensible of their malignity; especially as the causes of His death, and thoroughly determined to forsake them;

only those who are lovers of a crucified Jesus, and feel their hearts fired with gratitude to Him for all His love;

only those who are sensible that they have no personal righteousness, and therefore place all their dependence upon Christ alone;

only those who feel His love constraining them, and are determined to "live no more to themselves--but to Him who died for them, and rose again."

Self-examination is a necessary preparative to this ordinance. "Let a man examine himself," says the apostle, "and so let him eat of this bread, and drink of this cup." Therefore, my brethren, inquire whether this is your character; if it is not, you have no right to this sacred privilege.

It is a shocking incongruity to pretend to commemorate the death of Christ--without love to Him, or without penitential sorrow for those sins for which He died. Memorials of friendship and love--tokens--are only for friends; and when others use them, it is mere farce and hypocrisy! Therefore, until you have these dispositions in your heart--do not adventure to come to His sacred table.

2. The Lord's supper was appointed as a badge of our Christian profession, and of our being the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Baptism is appointed for our initiation into the Christian church--at our first assuming the Christian profession. And by partaking of this ordinance of the Lord's supper, we declare our constancy in that profession, and that we do not repent of our choice, nor desire to change our Master. We openly profess that we are not ashamed of the cross, or the religion of the despised Nazarene; but publicly avow our

relation to him before the world. This perhaps may be intended by that expression of Paul, "showing forth the Lord's death." We show, profess, and publish to all the world--the regard we have even to his ignominious death.

We may look upon this ordinance as an oath of allegiance to Jesus Christ. And hence probably it was first called a sacrament; which properly signifies an oath; and particularly that kind of oath which the Roman soldiers gave to their generals, in which they engaged to be faithful to their leaders, and to fight for their country, and never desert its cause.

To this practice probably Augustine, about fourteen hundred years ago, refers, as well known to his hearers, when he addresses them thus: "You know, my beloved, that the soldiers of this world, who receive but temporal rewards from temporal masters, do first bind themselves by military sacraments or oaths, and profess that they will be faithful to their commanders; how much more then ought the soldiers of the eternal King, who shall receive eternal rewards, to bind themselves with the heavenly sacraments or oaths, and publicly profess their fidelity to him!"

Now if we receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper in this view, we assume a badge or mark of distinction from the rest of the world, and openly profess ourselves to be his disciples. We take a solemn oath of allegiance to him, and swear that we will be his faithful servants and soldiers to the end of life!

From hence you may learn another qualification of an acceptable communicant, namely, a hearty willingness to renounce his lusts and pleasures, and every sin, and to become universally and eternally the devoted servant and disciple of Jesus Christ. Here again examine yourselves whether you have this qualification.

3. We may consider this ordinance of the Lord's supper as a seal of the covenant of grace, both upon God's part and upon ours.

Every sacramental institution seems to partake of the general nature of a seal; that is, it is a sensible sign for the confirmation of a covenant or contract. This Paul expressly asserts, with regard to circumcision, when he says, that "Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith." Romans 4:11. And Christ asserts the same thing concerning the ordinance now under consideration: This cup, says he, is the New Testament, or covenant, in my blood; that is--it is a ratifying sign or seal of the covenant of grace, which is founded in my blood.

That you may rightly understand this, you must observe that God has cast his dispensation towards our guilty world into the form of a covenant, or contract, in which God and man are the parties, and Christ is the Mediator between them. The tenor of the covenant on GOD'S part is to this purpose, "that he will graciously bestow for the sake of Christ, pardon of sin, eternal life, and all the blessings of his purchase--upon all such sinners of the race of man as comply with the terms on which these blessings are offered."

The tenor or terms upon OUR part are to this purpose, "That we receive and submit to the Lord Jesus as our only Savior and Lord; or, in other words, that we believe in him with all our hearts, and repent of our sins, and devote our selves to his service." This is the substance of that happy contract: and of this the Lord's supper is a seal as to both parties.

On God's part, this covenant can receive no intrinsic confirmation. He has plainly declared it in his Word; and no oaths or confirming signs can add any intrinsic certainty to his declaration. We say, "an honest man's word--is as good as his oath, or bond and seal;" and surely we may apply this in the highest sense to the declarations of eternal truth. But though this covenant cannot be made more certain in itself on God's part--yet the evidence of its certainty may be made more sensible and affecting to poor creatures like us, who are so slow of heart to believe. And hence God has been pleased, in condescension to our weakness, to confirm it with the most solemn oaths and sacramental signs.

This institution, in particular, is a standing evidence, obvious to our senses, in all the ages of the Christian church--that he is unchangeably willing to stand to the articles on his part; that he is ready to give his Son and all his blessings to those who believe, as he is to give bread and wine as signs and seals of them.

As to our part in receiving these elements--we signify our hearty consent to the covenant of grace, and, as it were, set our seal to it to confirm it. The language of that speaking action is to this purpose: "I cordially agree to the plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, as revealed in the gospel; and in token thereof, I hereunto affix my seal. As I take this bread and wine before many witnesses, so I openly and avowedly take and receive the Lord Jesus as my only Savior and Lord, and the food and life of my soul! I cheerfully receive the offer of salvation according to the terms proposed in the gospel; of which let this bread and wine given and received be a token, or pledge, and seal."

This, my brethren, is the meaning of this solemn action. And hence you may know whether you are qualified to join in it. If you have not heartily consented to the contract, it is the greatest absurdity and deception, to set your seal to it. What! will you, as it were, annex your hand and seal--to a bargain that you do not agree to! Can you dare thus to be trifling with a heart-searching, all-knowing God! But, if divine grace has powerfully engaged your hearts to consent to this agreement, come with humble boldness, and attest and seal it before men and angels! And remember, for your comfort, that on God's part--it always stands firm and unalterable. You have his Word--which is his handwriting, his oath, his seal--to confirm your faith; and what can you desire more--to give you strong consolation!

4. This ordinance of the Lord's supper was intended for the saints to hold communion together.

By the communion of saints, I mean that mutual love and charity, that reciprocal acknowledgment of each other, that brotherly fellowship and communion, which should be cultivated among them as children of the same father, in the same family, and as members of the same society--the church, or mystical body of Christ. This is a thing of so much importance, that it is an article of the common creed of the Christian church.

Our sitting down at the same table, partaking of the same elements, and commemorating the same Lord, are very expressive of this communion, and have a natural tendency to cultivate and nourish it. In such a posture we look like children of one family, fed at the same table upon the same spiritual provisions. It is a significant expression: that we are one in heart and affection; that we have one hope of our calling, one faith, one baptism, one Lord Jesus Christ, and one God and Father of all; and that we acknowledge one another as brethren and fellow-Christians.

Hence this ordinance has been frequently and justly called the communion. And Paul assures us it deserves the name, 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17, "Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks--a participation in the blood of Christ?" That is--is it not a token and pledge of our joint share and participation in the blessings purchased by his blood? "And is not the bread that we break--a participation in the body of

Christ?" That is--is it not a sign of our common right to the happy effect of the sufferings of his body? "Because," says he, "there is one loaf--we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf." That is, "As many grains make but one loaf of bread, and as many members make but one body--so we, being many, are, as it were--but one bread, and one sacred body politic, of which Christ is the head; and our partaking together of one bread in the Lord's Supper, is a sign and pledge of this union." (The love feasts, among the primitive Christians, were intended still farther to express this brotherly love and communion.)

This appears still clearer from the design of the apostle in these verses, which was to caution the Corinthians against partaking with heathens in those religious feasts, which they were accustomed to celebrate in the temples of their idols, after they had offered their sacrifices. This he represents as idolatrous. "Therefore, my dear friends" says he, "flee from idolatry!" 1 Corinthians 10:14. And then, to convince them that in communicating with idolaters in these feasts--that they really join with them in their idolatry, he argues from the nature of the Lord's Supper, which is also a feast upon sacrifice. "Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks--a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break--a participation in the body of Christ?" So by joining with idolaters in these religious feasts--we hold communion with them in their idolatry.

Hence you may learn another qualification for this ordinance, namely love and charity to all mankind, and especially to our fellow-communicants. To sit down at this feast of love with a heart possessed with angry and malicious passions--is certainly an aggravated wickedness. To this we may accommodate the words of Christ, though spoken before the institution of this ordinance. "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." Matthew 5:23, 24.

Hence also you may learn that none but such as make a credible profession of the Christian religion, have a right to this ordinance. If it is a sign of the communion of saints, and if we should love our fellow-communicants as saints--then it follows that we should be real saints or true Christians. Our being such in reality--is necessary to give us a right in the sight of God; and our appearing such, is necessary to give us a right in the sight of the visible church, which can only judge by an outward visible profession.

Therefore such ought not to be admitted, however strenuously they insist that they are Christians, whose gross ignorance of the foundational truths of the gospel; or whose immoral and impious practices--leave no ground for a rational charity to hope that they are true Christians. How can we cultivate the communion of saints--with such who do not so much as appear to be saints? To have been baptized, to call themselves Christians, and to attend upon the worship of the Christian church, and the like--is far from being sufficient to constitute a credible profession; for all this a man may do--and yet be farther from practical Christianity than a heathen.

But a man must profess and act habitually in some measure as a Christian, before he can justly be looked upon as a Christian! Alas! the number of professing Christians in our land are generally of a very different character! They may call themselves Christians, as you or I may call ourselves kings or princes; but the profession is ridiculous; and that is not Scriptural charity--which can communicate with them as fellow Christians.

5. In this ordinance God maintains communion with his people--and they with him.

This is a communion of a more divine and exalted kind, than the former: and it is often mentioned in Scripture as the privilege of the people of God. "Our fellowship" says John, "is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:3. The communion of the Holy Spirit is a part of the apostolic benediction, which we sometimes use at the close of our religious assemblies.

This communion consists partly in that fellowship which is carried on between God and his people. There is a spiritual fellowship carried on between him and them. He communicates his love and the influences of his Spirit to them; and they pour out their hearts, their desires, and prayers before him. He draws near to them, and revives their souls; and they draw near to him, and converse with him in prayer, and in other ordinances of his worship. Hence he is said to dwell in them, and to live in them. 2 Corinthians 6:16. "Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit," in which he resides. 1 Corinthians 6:19. Christ speaks of this mutual fellowship in the strongest terms; "If a man loves me--my Father will love him, and I will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him." John 14:23.

There is also a kind of fellowship between Christ and his people. They are children of the same Father, and he is not ashamed to call them brethren; they are joint heirs of the same inheritance. They have a fellowship in his sufferings, Phil. 3:10, and are sharers in the glory and bliss of his resurrection and exaltation.

The relation between them is often represented by that between husband and wife, between whom all things are common. Hence the apostle argues, that "if we are Christ's, then all things are ours." 1 Corinthians 3:21.

There is also a happy interchange of property between Christ and his people: happy for them, though it was terrible to him. He took their sin upon him--and they have his righteousness in exchange! He endured the death they had incurred--and they enjoy the life he obtained. He assumed the curse due to them--and they have the blessing transferred to them which was due to him.

Here again the marital relation may be a proper illustration. As the wife is entitled to the inheritance of her husband, and he is answerable for her debts and obligations; so Christ made himself answerable in behalf of his people, for all their debts to the law and justice of God; and they are entitled to all the blessings he has purchased. O what a gracious and advantageous exchange, is this for us!

Now the Lord's Supper is a very proper emblem of this communion, and a suitable means to cultivate it. It is the place where Christ and his people meet, and have their sweet fellowship. He, the great Master of the feast, feeds them at his own table, upon his own provisions, in his own house; and they eat and drink, as it were, in company with him; and thus it is a spiritual fellowship between them. There he favors them with his spiritual presence, and gives them access to him; and they draw near to him with humble boldness, and enjoy a full liberty of speech and conversation with him. There, under the elements of bread and wine, he makes over to them his body and blood, and all the blessings purchased by his sufferings; and they receive them with eager desire; they cast their guilt and unworthiness upon him, and give themselves to him, in return for his richer gifts to them! There they put in their humble claim as fellow-heirs with him, and he graciously acknowledges their title as good.

There is a solemn exchange made between them:

of their guilt--for His righteousness;

of their misery--for His happiness;

of their curse--for His blessing;

of their death--for His life.

Christ takes their evils upon himself--and they cast them off themselves upon him; and he makes over His blessings to them--and they humbly receive them by faith. And of all this, his appointing and their receiving this ordinance, is as it were, sitting down together at one table, like husband and wife, or parent and children--is a very proper emblem and representation.

And I doubt not, but some of you, upon such occasions, have enjoyed the pleasures of communion with him, which gives you a high esteem for this sacred feast, and clearer ideas of its design, than is in the power of any language to afford!

Here again you may learn one important preparative for the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; and that is, reconciliation to God, and a delight in communion with him. You cannot walk together, or maintain fellowship with him--until you are agreed, and take pleasure in his society. Therefore carefully inquire into this point.

Having thus shown you the principal ends of this institution, and the qualifications necessary in those that would partake of it, I shall subjoin this one general remark:

That it is evident from all that has been said, that people who live wicked and impious lives, whatever their profession is--have no right to this ordinance, and should not be admitted to it by the officers of the church, until they profess their repentance and reformation. When we exclude such, we are not taking too much upon us, nor pretending to judge of what we have nothing to do with; but we only exercise that power which is inherent in every society, and with which Christ has expressly invested his church!

Every society has a power to exclude those from its peculiar privileges, who violate the essential and fundamental laws of its constitution. And no law can be so essential to any constitution, as a life of holiness is to the character of a Christian, and the constitution of the Christian church. It does not matter what people profess with their lips; it is the life which is to be regarded as the decisive evidence! What would it signify for a man to insist that he was honest--if he persisted in theft and robbery! Or to take the oath of allegiance to his king--when his conduct was a course of rebellion against his sovereign! And equally insignificant and absurd, is a profession of Christianity without a correspondent practice!

If we consider the design and end of this ordinance, we cannot but see that such people cut themselves off from all right to it. Is it fit that a drunkard, a swearer, or any profane sinner should commemorate the death of the holy Jesus, while he has no love to him--but is determined to go on in sin! Should they wear the badge of Christ's disciples, whose lives proclaim them his enemies! Should they affix their seals to the covenant of grace, who have never consented to it--but are grossly violating it by their practice! Should they hold communion with Christ and his people, who have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness!

Hear the apostle upon this head: "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord--and the cup of devils! You cannot be partakers of the Lord's table--and of the table of devils!" 1 Corinthians 10:21. Such a thing is absurd and ridiculous! "For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in

common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you!" 2 Corinthians 6:14-17.

As to public offences, the apostle gives this direction to Timothy, which is binding upon all the ministers of Christ: "Those who sin," that is, that sin grossly, "rebuke before all, that others may fear!" 1 Timothy 5:20. To the same purpose he speaks to Titus, "Warn a heretic once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned!" Titus 3:10-11. Cast such heretics out of the church! This indeed is immediately intended of fundamental errors in doctrine--but it may undoubtedly be applied to wicked practices; for, as Tillotson justly observes, "The worst of heresies--is a bad life."

As to private offences against a particular person, in which the church, as such, is not concerned, private measures are to be taken to bring the offender to repentance, until they are found to be in vain, and then the church is to be apprised of it; and if he pays no regard to that authority, then he is to be excluded from the society. This is according to Christ's express direction, "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church--treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector!" Matthew 18:15-17. There is nothing more plain in scripture, than that scandalous members should be cast out of the church; and an excessive indulgence towards them--is most severely censured.

Paul orders Timothy about those who are "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God--having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them!" 2 Timothy 3:5. He lays the weight of his apostolic authority upon the Christian church in this case: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us!" 2 Thessalonians 3:6

The churches of Pergamos and Thyatira are severely threatened by Christ himself, for tolerating the corrupt sect of the Nicolaitans, and the followers of Balaam's and Jezebel's profane and loose practices, and not casting them out of their fellowship. Revelation 2:14, etc.

And the church of Ephesus is commended for her strict discipline, and that she did not tolerate those who were evil; and for having tested pretended apostles, and discovering their true characters-- rejected them as impostors!

But I need go no farther than the chapter where my text lies, for abundant evidence of the necessity of this holy discipline. Here Paul warmly rebukes the Corinthian church for allowing a scandalous member to continue in communion with them; and solemnly charges them to cast him out from the church into the wide world, the territories of Satan, who is called the god of this world. And this he strongly describes, in order to strike terror into the offender, as a delivering him over to Satan! He urges this wholesome severity, as a proper expedient to bring the offender himself to repentance; and especially to keep their church pure! "Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump!" And just so--the indulgence of one corrupt member may in time corrupt the whole church!

It was by the remarkable strictness of their discipline, that the New Testament church kept itself from corruption in the midst of heathen and idolaters. And it is the lack of this discipline, which has so

scandalously corrupted the generality of our modern churches, whose members are very often the reproach of that religion which they profess! Let not us imitate them--but pity and pray for them, lest we become a mere mass of corruption, like them!

The apostle forbids not only all religious fellowship--but all unnecessary familiarity with such scandalous professors; and intimates, that we should be more avoid them--than of such as make no pretensions to religion at all. "I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people--not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother--but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat!" 1 Corinthians 5:9-11

This world is so full of such profligate sinners, that you cannot avoid them--without leaving human society altogether. But we should cultivate no unnecessary familiarity with a wicked professor! Do not make a choice of him as your guest or companion at your common meals, much less in the sacred feast of the Lord's supper!

You see, my brethren, we are not at liberty in this case; we are tied down by the divine authority, to the faithful exercise of church discipline. And though nothing can be more disagreeable to us than to touch the sores of others--yet we cannot dispense with our duty in this respect. If we make light of the ordinances of Christ, it is at our peril. It is therefore the most unreasonable and absurd thing for people to expect the officers of the church to pastor them--and then to be offended that they faithfully do their duty in church discipline. All that is required of sinful church member--is a profession of deep repentance for their misconduct, and a promise of reformation for the future. And is this too much to do--to repair the injury they have done to the Christian religion, to satisfy the church to which they belong, and restore themselves into the charity of their brethren, whose hearts are so grieved by their conduct? Or are they indeed determined not to repent and reform--but to go on in their wicked courses! Then they have nothing to do with the peculiar privileges of the Christian church, and therefore should not claim them.

It is in vain here to object, "That none can forgive sins but God, and therefore they will not confess them to man." For, as I told you, every member of the Christian church ought to give his fellow-members some evidence that he is indeed one of their body, and worthy of their acceptance. But what evidence can they have of this, if when he falls into some scandalous sin inconsistent with his profession, he does not so much as profess his repentance! It is only God who can pardon the sin--as it is done against him. But the church has also been offended--and has a right to demand satisfaction.

Hence we are commanded to, "Confess our faults to one another." James 5:16. And he is a proud, impenitent creature indeed, unworthy of a place among Christians, who thinks it a mighty thing to make this small satisfaction. The incestuous Corinthian was brought to repentance by the wholesome severities used with him. And upon this, the apostle Paul, in his second epistle, advises them to forgive him, (which implies, that in some sense the offence was against the church, and, in that sense, they had power to forgive him,) "that they should comfort him, and confirm their love towards him--that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow." 2 Corinthians 2:7, 8. And shall we be more obstinate than an incestuous, excommunicated Corinthian?

As this subject naturally came in my way, and as it is necessary for us as church-members to have right ideas of gospel-discipline, I have taken this opportunity to enlarge on it; and I hope you will so remember

it, as to render all instructions on this head needless hereafter. I now proceed to what is more PRACTICAL.

Let me as a herald of Jesus Christ, proclaim to you the business of the next Lord's day. We are going to commemorate the most important event that ever happened upon our globe; an event accomplished some seventeen hundred years ago--but never to be forgotten; an event that extends its happy consequences to the remotest periods of eternity! I mean the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ for his people!

And who among you is prepared and willing to commemorate this grand event? Where are the broken-hearted penitents? Where the lovers of a crucified Savior? Where the holy and happy people who believe in him with all their hearts? Come, take the dear memorials of your precious Redeemer! Come, refresh your souls once more with the sweet remembrance of his love! Shall his dear name be forgotten among us? What! forgotten, after all he has done--after all he has suffered for us! Can you bear the thought!

We are going to profess openly before a scoffing world, that we are the servants and disciples of a crucified Christ! We are going to put on the badges of his servants, and wear his livery; to enlist as volunteers under his banner, and swear allegiance and fidelity to him! And where are those that are willing to join with us? Who is upon the Lord's side? Who? Come you who will have Christ for your Master--come enter your names in his list! Be fixed and determined for him.

How long will some of you halt between two opinions? It is a plain case, and requires no long time to deliberate. Come you who would stand among his people at his right hand at last--come now with prepared hearts and mingle among them at his table. We are going to enter into an everlasting covenant with our God, and to set our solemn seal to the contract. Who among you gives his consent? Who is willing to take the Lord Jesus for his only Savior and Lord, and to give himself up to him entirely and forever? Who will avow the Lord to be his God--that He may avow him to be one of his people?

How are your hearts, my brethren, disposed in this respect? Do they give a full consent? And are you willing from this time to renounce and abjure all your lusts and sinful pleasures? In short, do you consent to the covenant of grace? If so, come and confirm it with that solemn oath and seal. God and Christ are agreed to the proposal; and if you agree, the happy contract is made; it is established firmer than the pillars of heaven; and if you had them, you might venture ten thousand souls upon it.

We are going to maintain communion with the saints, and sit down with them at the same table of our common Lord. And who of you would join yourselves with that little flock--that despised but happy few? If you would mingle with them in heaven--then separate from the wicked world, and join them now; and as a token of it eat of the same bread, and drink of the same cup with them.

But we are going to maintain communion of a still more exalted kind: communion with the everlasting Father, with the Son of his love, and with the Holy Spirit. And where are those who pant and languish for this sacred and divine fellowship? Come to the table of the Lord Jesus, the place of communion, and you may humbly hope to meet him there. There you may pour out your hearts to him with all the freedom of intimacy and filial boldness, and there you may receive the tokens of his love.

My brethren, if upon careful self-examination, you find reason to hope that you have the qualifications of acceptable communicants, which I have described, I require you--in the name of that Jesus who expired upon the cross for you, a name which one would think should have some weight with you--in his

endearing, irresistible name, I require you to come to his table! This is not only your sacred privilege--but your sacred duty! And you cannot neglect it, without the basest ingratitude and wickedness. Shall Jesus, when he views the guests around his table, find your seat empty! Alas! shall he have reason to say, "What! has such a one turned his back upon me! I bought him with my blood--and have I deserved to be thus treated by him!"

O! my brethren, has it come to that pass with you--that you stand in need of persuasions to commemorate that Savior who laid down his life for you! Had Jesus been as shy of a cross--as you are of his table; and as backward to die--as you are to commemorate his death, alas! what would have become of you!

What are the obstructions which lie in your way? Mention them, and methinks I can remove them all in a few words, when the case is so plain. Do you urge, that you are afraid you are not prepared? But have you examined yourselves impartially by what I have said? Are you sure you have the qualifications mentioned? If so, your way is very clear! Or if you are not sure, does it appear probable to you? If so, you may humbly venture.

Or if you cannot go so far as a probability, have you some trembling hopes? Hopes which, though they often waver--yet you cannot entirely cast away, though you admit all the evidence you can get, and are desirous to know the very worst of yourselves. Why, if you have even thus much of encouragement, I would advise you to come, though with trembling! If you are impartial in self-examination, and yet cannot after all discover that you are destitute of those qualifications I have mentioned, it is extremely unlikely that you are deceived! People are never deceived in this case--but by their own carelessness and partiality; therefore, take courage. If you look out with a careful eye, there is little danger of your splitting on this rock!

Or are you afraid that you will not be able to perform your sacramental vows--but may apostatize from your God? But I need not tell you that your strength is entirely from God. And I appeal to yourselves, whether it is most likely that you will obtain strength from him--in the way of duty, or in the neglect of duty? My brethren, do your duty, and leave the consequence to him. Trust in him, and he will take care of you, and keep you from falling, or raise you up if you should fall. It is not his usual way to desert those who, sensible of their own weakness, depend upon him; nay, he has bound himself by promise that he will not do it; but you shall be "kept by his power through faith unto salvation." "For He Himself has said--I will never leave you or forsake you!" Hebrews 13:5. Therefore in his strength, humbly come to the gospel feast.

As for such of you as have NOT the qualifications described--and yet are communicants at the Lord's table--I have a FEW SERIOUS CONSIDERATIONS to offer to you:

1. Did you never observe that solemn warning of Paul, which, like a flaming sword, hovers round the table of the Lord to guard it from your profanation? "Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy way--will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord. So a man should examine himself; in this way he should eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself!" 1 Corinthians 11:27-29. Keep away, therefore, you unholy sinners, lest the weight of this tremendous curse falls upon you and crushes you to eternal ruin!

2. To what purpose do you communicate? This will not constitute you as Christians, nor save your souls. Not all the ordinances that ever God has instituted, can do this--without a saving interest in Christ, and universal holiness of heart and life. And will you incur such dreadful guilt, without answering any valuable

end by it?

3. How absurd is it for you to pretend friendship to Christ in this ordinance, when your hearts are not in love with him! This I have hinted at already. This ordinance is a seal; but what do you set your seal to, when you do not heartily and practically consent to the covenant of grace? How can you hold communion with the saints--when you are not a saint? How can you hold communion with God--when you neither know him nor love him? How dare you wear the badge and livery of his servants--when you are enemies in your minds by wicked works? Will you mingle among his people--when you belong to the camp of the wicked god of this world? Will you act the part of Judas over again, and compliment Christ with a traitorous kiss! What absurdity, what gross hypocrisy, what a daring insult is this!

Can Omniscience be imposed upon by such pretensions? Or will a jealous God let you escape unpunished? Do but read His just sentence of you: "But to the wicked, God says: What right have you to recite my laws or take my covenant on your lips? You hate my instruction and cast my words behind you. When you see a thief, you join with him; you throw in your lot with adulterers. You use your mouth for evil and harness your tongue to deceit. You speak continually against your brother and slander your own mother's son. These things you have done and I kept silent; you thought I was altogether like you. But I will rebuke you and accuse you to your face. Consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you to pieces, with none to rescue!" Psalm 50:16-22

O, Sirs, consider: it will be a poor plea at last to have it to say, "Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drank in your presence?" The supreme Judge will, notwithstanding, pronounce the dreadful sentence upon you, "Depart from me--all you workers of iniquity!"

4. Has not God appointed other means which are preparatory to this ordinance; and in the use of which you may hope to obtain proper qualifications? His Word, prayer, meditation, and such means--are for the common use of saints and sinners, and intended to beget as well as to confirm grace in the hearts of men. But the Lord's supper is the peculiar privilege of only such as are true Christians already; and is intended only to nourish and improve true piety, where it is already begun. Therefore your partaking of it without this grand preparative, is preposterous, and directly contrary to the order of divine appointment!

Sinners go first upon your bended knees before God; cry to him with all the earnestness of perishing creatures, for converting grace! Think upon your miserable condition, and never take off your thoughts from the melancholy contemplation, until your hearts are deeply affected. Read, and hear, and meditate upon his Word--until you know your danger and remedy. Take this method first, and when you have succeeded--then come to this ordinance; and God, angels, and holy men, will bid you welcome.

5. Consider how aggravated your punishment will be, if you continue in your present condition. To sink down into hell--from the table of the Lord! O! what a dreadful fall! Those who perished from Sodom and Gomorrah, though their punishment will be intolerable, will be but slightly punished in comparison to you. "But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment--than for you!" Matthew 11:24

A lost communicant! One who went to hell--with the bread and wine, the memorials of a dying Savior, as it were--in his mouth! O! methinks such a one must be the most shocking sight in the infernal regions! How will lost angels, and lost heathens, wonder and stare at you as a horrible phenomenon, a dreadful curiosity! How will they upbraid you, "How have you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! You have become one of us!"

To tell the truth without reserve, I cannot but tremble at the thought of seeing some of you on the LEFT hand of the Judge! What a shocking presence will you make there! Therefore do not make the profanation of the body and blood of Christ--the whole of your religion--but begin where you should, in earnest endeavors after a new heart and life, in the use of the means appointed for that end.

But there are some of you, perhaps, who may take encouragement from hence, and think you are eternally safe, because you have not been guilty of profaning this solemn institution. Yet you are conscious that you are not prepared, and therefore most contentedly stay away. There are, no doubt, sundry of you who have lived in this neglect all your lives! I have a few things to say to you--and I beg you to apply them to yourselves!

1. Consider what it is that you say--when you declare that you are unfit for this holy ordinance--and boast that they are not 'hypocrites'. They make a sort of merit of it--that they stay away from the Lord's table, because they know that they lack the marks of a true Christian. But this is really an admission--that they lack all love to God, and faith in Christ, and repentance for sin! This is an admission that they lack holiness of heart and life, and every good thing! This is an admission that they lack pardon for sin, and a title to heaven, and have no saving interest in the righteousness of Christ! This is an admission that they are slaves to sin and Satan, and heirs of hell--poor perishing creatures, liable every moment to be cut off, and sink under the weight of divine vengeance!

This is your case if you are unfit for this ordinance. Nothing but such things as I have mentioned above, can render you unfit. Do you think that you are presently in a safe place? Can you contentedly rest in it? Alas! is there any merit in your neglecting to remember Christ in this institution--which will render your case safe before God? Must you not be shocked at the thought?

2. Are you using all proper means to be saved, with the utmost diligence and earnestness? Or are you inactive and unconcerned about it? If so, it is plain that you are content to take pleasure in being disqualified to remember the Lord Jesus in his ordinance. And while you are careless about this, you are virtually careless what will become of you in eternity; careless whether heaven or hell will be the place of your everlasting residence! O! what will be the end of such a foolish course! How terrible is your guilt!

3. Is it nothing to you who you have lived so many years in the world, without affectionately commemorating that Savior of sinners, without devoting yourselves to God, consenting to his covenant, and joining yourselves with his people? O! is there no guilt in all this? No guilt in allowing so many opportunities of attending upon this ordinance to pass by, neglected by you? What can be a more aggravated wickedness!

4. This neglect--clearly proves that you have no regard for Jesus Christ. You do perhaps insist upon it--that you love him. But he himself has left a test of your love: If you love me--keep my commandments. Now this brings the matter to a sure outcome. There is no command in the whole Bible more plain, than that of remembering him in this ordinance. This you know in your consciences. And yet you have lived in the willful neglect of this known, easy, dying command of Jesus! How can you then be so bold--as to pretend that you love him? Your love is a mere sham--and will not stand the test!

5. Some of you have been baptized in the name of the blessed Trinity; and yet you give yourselves to that horrible trinity of another kind--to the world, to sin, and the devil. And are you indeed willing to have no more to do with the God who made you, and with Jesus the only Savior? Pause and think, before you agree to such a dreadful renunciation!

I would now particularly address the young people here present. "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve!" Joshua 24:15. What are you resolved upon? Will you be Christ's--or Satan's? You cannot avoid choosing one or the other for your master; for not positively choosing Christ--is virtually choosing the devil for your master, and hell for your eternal home! "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it!" Matthew 7:13-14

6. Do not think that by this neglect you keep yourselves from being under obligations to be holy, and that you are at liberty to live as you wish. Your obligations do not depend upon your consent. You were born under obligation to God. Is he not the most excellent of beings, your Creator, your Lawgiver, your Preserver, your Redeemer? And do these things infer no obligation upon you? Have you not also, in sickness, or under horror of conscience, made vows and resolutions? And are you free to sin still? The truth of the case is--do what you will, you are under the strongest obligations to God, and you cannot shake them off! And if you will not observe these obligations to your duty--you must submit forever to your indispensable obligation to punishment! And God will make you know that he has a right to punish you--if you will not acknowledge his right to your obedience.

7. What does it avail--that you can avoid the Lord's table, when you cannot possibly shun death--or avoid his dread tribunal? Here, try all your arts, and you will find it in vain. If you are not prepared for this ordinance of worship in the church on earth--much less are you prepared for those more exalted forms of worship in the church in heaven. What then will become of you?

In short, it is a dreadful sin--that the table of the Lord is contemptible to so many; that many people who call themselves Christians, live in the willful neglect of that ordinance which was appointed by him, whom they acknowledge as the Founder of their religion--to be a memorial of himself. Alas! the very memory of Christ is almost lost among us! "Should I not punish them for this? declares the LORD." Jeremiah 5:9.

Perhaps some of you will say, "You shut us up in a strange dilemma indeed. If we come unprepared--we sin! And if we stay away--we sin! And what then shall we do?"

My brethren, I thus shut you up, on purpose--that you may see what a wretched case you are in, and that there is no safety for you while you continue in it. You are shut up under a necessity of sinning in either way--and the best choice in such a condition can be only the less evil way--though even that is extremely aggravated. Whether you come or stay away--you grievously sin! It is all sin, peril, ruin, and misery all through! You should neither come unprepared, nor stay away unprepared; that is, you should not be unprepared at all. Your lack of preparation is in itself a dreadful wickedness! And whatever you do in this unprepared state, you are neither safe nor in the way of duty; it is altogether a state of sin and danger!

The only way of safety and duty--is to seek for preparation immediately, and with the utmost earnestness, and then to come to the Lord's supper.

Let me set all this congregation upon this work, before we part today, and make it the business of this week. You have spent all your life about things of less importance, and will you refuse time to this great work? Now set about this work! Now begin to look into the state of your neglected souls! Now recollect your sins! Now look in upon your depraved hearts! Now look back upon a miserable mis-spent life! Now look forward to death, eternity, and the divine tribunal just before you! Now look to Jesus in the agonies of crucifixion on Mount Calvary! Now look up to God in earnest prayer for his mercy!

Let these things follow you home to your houses; let them dwell upon your hearts night and day. Do not laugh, or talk, or trifle them away! For O! they will rebound upon you with overwhelming weight at last--if you now turn them away. O! that God may prepare a people for himself in this poor place! O! that he would visit this barren spot with the showers of divine grace! And may he prepare our hearts for the rich gospel feast before us! Amen.

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