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Sacramental Discourses

John Owen



Sacramental Discourses

Author(s): Owen, John (1616-1683)

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Description: John Owen believed that many Christians during his time failed to benefit from the sacrament of communion because they misunderstood the nature of the special union with Christ. Often, Christians have a tendency to become preoccupied with novelties while practicing the sacrament. It was Owen's aim to help reorient Christians towards the Bible as the standard of truth. Through communion, we as Christians are called to first represent Christ to ourselves and then to profess his greatness to others. Owen offers advice for Christians on how to prepare for communion highlighting the importance of confession and self-examination. He also considers the practical concerns of both the individual and the church institution with regards to the act of communion itself. The series of discourses is intended to be used by Christians of all denominations in meditation as they approach the Lord's Table.

Emmalon Davis
CCEL Staff Writer

Contents

Sacramental Discourses	1
Title page.	1
Prefatory note.	2
Epistle Dedicatory.	3
Preface.	4
Title.	5
Discourse I. 2 Corinthians v. 21.	6
Discourse II. 1 Corinthians x. 16.	8
Discourse III. 1 Corinthians x. 16.	14
Discourse IV. 1 Corinthians xi. 26.	22
Discourse V. 1 Corinthians xi. 28.	28
Discourse VI. 1 Corinthians xi. 28.	37
Discourse VII. 1 Corinthians xi. 24.	46
Discourse VIII. 1 Peter iii. 18.	49
Discourse IX. Matthew xxviii. 17.	53
Discourse X. Matthew xxviii. 20.	55
Discourse XI. Isaiah liii. 11.	59
Discourse XII. Philippians iii. 10.	62
Discourse XIII. 1 Corinthians xi. 23–26.	66
Discourse XIV. 1 Corinthians xi. 23–26.	72
Discourse XV. John xii. 32.	75
Discourse XVI. John xii. 32.	77
Discourse XVII. Leviticus xvi. 21.	80
Discourse XVIII. Galatians ii. 20.	83
Discourse XIX. Galatians ii. 20.	86
Discourse XX. Romans v. 5.	89

Discourse XXI. Ephesians iii. 19.	92
Discourse XXII. Matthew iii. 17.	95
Discourse XXIII. 1 Corinthians. xi. 26.	98
Discourse XXIV. 2 Corinthians iv. 10.	101
Discourse XXV. John vi. 53.	103
Three Discourses Suitable to the Lord's Supper	106
Title page.	106
Prefatory note.	107
Discourse I.	108
Discourse II.	110
Discourse III.	112
Indexes	114
Index of Scripture References	115
Index of Scripture Commentary	117
Greek Words and Phrases	118
Latin Words and Phrases	119
Index of Pages of the Print Edition	120



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Posthumous Sermons.
Part IV.
Sermons Published MDCCLX.



Prefatory note.

The dedication and preface to these Sacramental Discourses sufficiently explain in what circumstances they were given to the world. The original publication of them was superintended by the Rev. Richard Winter, B.D., an excellent and useful minister in London, the co-pastor and successor of the Rev. Thomas Bradbury, in the Independent Church, New Court, Carey Street. An edition of them appeared in 1844, with a brief recommendatory preface by William Lindsay Alexander, D.D., of Edinburgh. We avail ourselves of an extract from it, as a just estimate of their character. Among works designed to promote the right observance of the Lord's Supper, these Discourses, he affirms, "by the venerated and learned John Owen, have long occupied a prominent place in the esteem of all competent judges. Though issued originally under the most unfavourable circumstances, — having been not only a posthumous publication, but derived from notes taken from the author's spoken addresses, which were never, in any shape, subjected to his subsequent revision, — they contain so much valuable instruction, profitable exhortation, and pious reflection, in a small compass, that even had they appeared under the sanction of a less illustrious name, it would not have been surprising that they should have gained an extensive and permanent reputation." He commends this work of Owen to all "not already acquainted with its excellencies, as, upon the whole, one of the most useful and instructive companions to the Lord's table with which the literature of our country can supply them." — Ed.



To Mrs Cooke of Stoke Newington.

Madam, — Four years ago the world was favoured, through your means, with a volume of Dr Owen's sermons which never before appeared in print; and it is at your instance that the following Sacramental Discourses of that same venerable divine are now made public. Hereby, madam, you at once express your high value and just esteem for the memory and works of that incomparable author, with your generous concern and prevailing desire of being serviceable to the cause of Christ; — a cause much more dear to you than all the worldly possessions with which the providence of God has blessed you.

With the greatest sincerity it may be said, your constant affection to the habitation of God's house, — your steady adherence to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, — your kind regards to the faithful ministers of the gospel, — your extensive benevolence to the indigent and the distressed, — your affability to all you converse with, — and, in a word, your readiness to every good work, are so spread abroad, that, as the apostle says to the Thessalonians, "There is no need to speak any thing."

That the Lord would prolong your valuable life, daily refresh your soul with the dew of his grace, and enable you, when the hour of death approaches, to rejoice in the full prospect of eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, is the prayer,

Madam,

Of your affectionate and obedient servant,

Richard Winter.

Tooke's Court, Cursitor Street,
March 4, 1760.



Preface.

The preceding dedication is sufficient to acquaint the public that these Sacramental Discourses are the genuine productions of that great man of God, Dr John Owen, who was for some time, in the last age, vice-chancellor of Oxford. They enter the world through the same channel as his Thirteen Sermons on various occasions, published four years since, — namely, they were at first taken in short-hand from the Doctor's mouth, and, by the late Sir John Hartopp, baronet, Mrs Cooke's pious grandfather, were transcribed into long-hand.

Mr Matthew Henry has this note in his annotations on [2 Kings ii.](#), — “There are remains of great and good men, which, like Elijah's mantle, ought to be gathered up, and preserved by the survivors, — their sayings, their writings, their examples; that as their works follow them in the reward of them, they may stay behind in the benefit of them.” Not that our faith is to stand in the wisdom of men; — the Bible alone is the standard of truth; and there we are bid to go by the footsteps of the flock, and to keep the paths of the righteous. There is a strange itch in the minds of men after novelties; and it is too common a case, that they who are for striking out something new in divinity, are ready to pour contempt on the valuable writings of those who are gone before them; and even the most learned, peaceable, and pious men, shall not escape their unrighteous censures. This is notorious in the conduct of those who embrace the new scheme.

If we inquire of the former age, we shall find there flourished in it some of the greatest and best of men; for whose printed works many acknowledge they have abundant cause to bless God to eternity. Among these, the writings of Dr Owen shine with a peculiar lustre, in the judgment of judicious Christians; and I am persuaded they who peruse them with the spirit of love and of a sound mind, will be as far from asserting that, in his manner of maintaining the doctrine of faith, his right arm appeared to be weakened, as from saying that his right eye was darkened, and unable to discern the object of it.

As to the following Discourses, which the Doctor calls “Familiar Exercises,” they are now printed in hopes they will be made useful, through the divine blessing, to assist the meditations of Christians of all denominations in their approaches to the Lord's table, seeing they are so well adapted to answer that sacred purpose.



Posthumous Sermons.



Discourse I.¹

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” — 2 Cor. v. 21.

I shall not enter into the opening of this Scripture, but only propose some few things that may be a suitable subject for your present meditation.

There are three things concerning *God the Father*, three things *concerning the Son*, and three things *concerning ourselves*, all in these words that I have mentioned, and all suitable for us to be acting faith upon.

I. I would remember, if the Lord help me, the *sovereignty* of God the Father, his *justice*, and his *grace*: — His sovereignty, “He made him,” — God the Father made him; his justice, “He made him to be sin,” — a sacrifice and an offering for sin; and his grace, “That we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ:” —

1. The *sovereignty* of God. I could mention that this sovereignty of God extends itself to all persons chosen, and show for whom Christ should be made sin; for he was not made sin for all, but for them who became “the righteousness of God in him:” also, the sovereignty of God over things, dispensing with the law so far, that He suffered for sin “who knew no sin;” and we, who had sinned, were let go free; the sovereignty of God in appointing the Son to this work, “He made him;” for none else could, — he was the servant of the Father. So that the whole foundation of this great transaction lies in the sovereignty of God over persons and things, in reference unto Christ. Let us, then, remember to bow down to the sovereignty of God in this ordinance of the Lord’s supper.

2. There is the *justice* of God. “He made him to be sin,” — imputed sin unto him, reckoned unto him all the sins of the elect, caused all our sins to meet upon him, made him a sin-offering, a sacrifice for sin, laid all the punishment of our sins upon him. To this end he sent him forth to be a propitiation for sin, to declare his righteousness. The Lord help us to remember that his righteousness is in a special manner exalted by the death of Christ. He would not save us any other way but by making him sin.

3. There is *the grace* of God, [which] manifests itself in the aim and design of God in all this matter. What did God aim at? It was “that we might become the righteousness of God in him,” — that we might be made righteous, and freed from sin.

II. There are three things that lie clear in the words, that we may call to remembrance, concerning the Son. There is his *innocency*, his *purity*; he “knew no sin.” There is his *sufferings*; he was “made to be sin.” And there is *his merit*; it was “that we might become the righteousness of God in him.” Here is another object for faith to meditate upon:—

1 Delivered October 10, 1669.

1. There are many things in Scripture that direct us to thoughts of the spotless *purity*, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, when we think of his sufferings. A “Lamb of God, without spot.” He “did no sin, nor had any guile in his mouth.” He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” Faith should call this to mind in the sufferings of Christ, that he “knew no sin.” That expression sets sin at the greatest distance from Jesus Christ.

2. The *sufferings* of Christ. “He was made sin;” — a comprehensive word, that sets out his whole sufferings. Look, whatever the justice of God, the law of God, whatever the threatenings of God did require to be inflicted as a punishment for sin, Christ underwent it all. They are dreadful apprehensions that we ourselves have, or can take in, concerning the issue and effect of sin, from the wrath of God, when under convictions, and not relieved by the promises of the gospel; but we see not the thousandth part of the evil of sin, that follows inseparably from the righteousness and holiness of God. The effects of God’s justice for sin will no more enter into our hearts fully to apprehend, than the effects of his grace and glory will; yet, whatever it was, Christ underwent it all.

3. Then there is the *merit* of Christ; which is another object of faith that we should call over in the celebration of this ordinance. Why was “he made sin”? It was “that we might become the righteousness of God in him.” It is answerable to that other expression in [Gal. iii. 13, 14](#), He hath borne the curse, — “was made a curse for us.” To what end? That “the blessing of faithful Abraham might come upon us;” or, that we might be completely made righteous. ‘The design of our assembling together, is to remember how we come to be made righteous. It is, by Christ’s being made sin.

III. We may see three things concerning ourselves:—

1. Our own *sin* and *guilt*: he was made sin “for us.” If Christ was made sin for us, then we were sinners.

2. We may remember our *deliverance*, — how we were delivered from sin, and all the evils of it. It was not by a word of command or power, or by the interposition of saints or angels, or by our own endeavours; but by the sufferings of the Son of God. And, —

3. God would have us remember and call to mind the *state whereinto we are brought*, — which is a state of righteousness; that we may bless him for that which in this world will issue in our righteousness, and in the world to come, eternal glory.

These things we may call over for our faith to meditate upon. Our minds are apt to be distracted; the ordinance is to fix them: and if we act faith in an especial manner in this ordinance, God will be glorified.



Discourse II.²

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” — 1 Cor. x. 16.

There is, in the ordinance of the Lord’s supper, an especial and peculiar communion with Christ, in his body and blood, to be obtained. One reason why we so little value the ordinance, and profit so little by it, may be, because we understand so little of the nature of that special communion with Christ which we have therein.

We have this special communion upon the account of the special object that faith is exercised upon in this ordinance, and the special acts that it puts forth in reference to that or those objects: for the acts follow the special nature of their objects, Now, —

1. The special *object of faith*, as acted in this ordinance, is not the *object of faith*, as *faith*; that is, the most general object of it, which is the divine veracity: “He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true,” John iii. 33. The divine veracity, or the truth of God, *that* is the formal object of faith, as *faith*; and makes our faith to be divine faith. But now this is not the special object of faith in this ordinance, but something that doth suppose that.

2. The special object of faith, *as justifying*, is not the special object of faith in this ordinance. The special object of faith, as justifying, is the promise, and Christ in the promise, in general, as “the Saviour of sinners:” so when the apostle called men “to repent and believe,” he tells them, “The promise is unto you,” Acts ii. 39. And I suppose I need not insist upon the proof of this, that the promise, and Christ in the promise as Saviour and Redeemer, is the object of faith, as it is justifying. But this also is supposed in the actings of faith in this ordinance; which is peculiar, and gives us peculiar communion with Christ. Therefore, —

3. The special and peculiar object of faith, the *immediate* object of it in this ordinance, in its largest extent is, —

(1.) The *human nature of Christ*, as the subject wherein mediation and redemption was wrought. Christ is considered to come as a sacrifice; that is laid down as the foundation of it, Ps. xl. 6; Heb. x. 5, “A body hast thou prepared me;” which is synecdochically taken for the whole human nature. Faith, when it would lead itself unto the sacrifice of Christ, which is here represented, doth in an especial manner consider the human nature of Christ; that God prepared him a body for that end. This we are to have peculiar regard unto when we come to the administration or participation of this ordinance. For that end we now celebrate it. Nay, —

2 Delivered November 26, 1669.

(2.) Faith goes farther, and doth not consider merely the human nature of Christ, but considers it as *distinguished into its integral parts*, — *into body and blood*; both which have a price, value, and virtue given unto them by their union with his human soul: for both the body of Christ and the blood of Christ, upon which the work of our redemption is put in Scripture, have their value and worth from their relation unto his soul; as soul and body, making the human nature, had its value and worth from its relation unto the Son of God: otherwise, he saith of his body, “Handle it, it is but flesh and bones.” But where the body of Christ is mentioned, and the blood of Christ is mentioned, there is a distribution of the human nature into its integral parts, each part, retaining its relation to his soul; and from thence is its value and excellency. This is the second peculiar in the object of faith in this ordinance.

(3.) There is more than this: they are not only considered as *distinguished*, but as *separate* also; — the blood separate from the body, the body left without the blood. This truth our apostle, in [this chapter and the next](#), doth most signally insist upon; namely, the distinct parts of this ordinance, — one to represent the body, and the other to represent the blood, — that faith may consider them as separate.

The Papists, we know, do sacrilegiously take away the cup from the people; they will give them the bread, but they will not give them the cup: and as it always falls out that one error must be covered with another, or else it will keep no man dry under it, they have invented the doctrine of *concomitance*, — that there is a concomitance; that is, whole Christ is in every kind, — in the bread, and in the wine, — the one doth accompany the other: which is directly to overthrow the ordinance upon another account, — as it is to represent Christ’s body and blood as separated one from the other. Our Lord Jesus blessed the bread and the cup, and said, “This is my body;” [“This is my blood;”] — which cannot be spoken distinctly, unless supposed to be separate.

Here, then, is a threefold limitation of the act of faith, even in this ordinance, in a peculiar manner restraining it to a special communion with God in Christ:— that it hath a special regard to the human nature of Christ; to his human nature as consisting of body and blood; and as it respects them as separated, body and blood. Yea, —

(4.) It respects them as *separate in that manner*. You all along know that I do not intend these objects of faith as the ultimate object, — for it is *the person of Christ* that faith rests in, — but those immediate objects that faith is exercised about, to bring it to rest in God. It is exercised about the manner of this separation; that is, the blood of Christ comes to be distinct by being shed, and the body of Christ comes to be separate by being bruised and broken. All the instituted sacrifices of old did signify this, — a violent separation of body and blood: the blood was let out with the hand of violence, and so separated; and then sprinkled upon the altar, and then towards the holy place; and then the body was burned distinct by itself. So, the apostle tells us, it is “the cup which we bless, and the bread which we break;” the cup



is poured out, as well as the bread broken, to remind faith of the violent separation of the body and blood of Christ. From this last consideration, of faith acting itself upon the separation of the body and blood of Christ by way of violence, it is led to a peculiar acting of itself upon all the causes of it, — whence it was that this body and this blood of Christ were represented thus separate: and by inquiring into the causes of it, it finds a moving cause, a procuring cause, an efficient cause, and a final cause; which it ought to exercise itself peculiarly upon always in this ordinance.

[1.] A *moving* cause; and that is, the eternal love of God in giving Christ in this manner, to have his body bruised, and his blood shed. The apostle, going to express the love of God towards us, tells you it was in this, that “he spared not his own Son,” [Rom. viii. 32](#). One would have thought that the love of God might have wrought in sending his Son into the world; but it also wrought in not sparing of him. Thus faith is called in this ordinance to exercise itself upon that love which gives out Christ not to be spared.

[2.] It reflects upon the *procuring* cause; — whence it is, or what it is, that hath procured it, that there should be this representation of the separated body and blood of Christ; and this is even our own sin. “He was delivered for our offences,” — given for our transgressions, — died to make reconciliation and atonement for our sins: they were the procuring cause of it, upon such considerations of union and covenant which I shall not now insist upon. It leads faith, I say, upon a special respect to sin, as the procuring cause of the death of Christ. A natural conscience, on the breach of the law, leads the soul to the consideration of sin, as that which exposes itself alone to the wrath of God and eternal damnation, but in this ordinance we consider sin as that which exposed Christ to death: which is a peculiar consideration of the nature of sin.

[3.] There is the *efficient* cause; — whence it was that the body and blood of Christ were thus separated; and that is threefold:— principal, instrumental, and adjuvant.

What is the *principal* efficient cause of the sufferings of Christ? Why, the justice and righteousness of God. “God hath set him forth to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness,” [Rom. iii. 25](#). Whence it is said, “He spared him not.” He caused all our sins to meet upon him: “The chastisement of our peace was upon him.”

Again, there is the *instrumental* cause; and that is the law of God. Whence did that separation, which is here represented unto us, ensue and flow? It came from the sentence of the law, whereby he was hanged upon the tree.

Moreover, the *adjuvant* cause was those outward instruments, the wrath and malice of men: “For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,” [Acts iv. 27](#).

Faith considers the cause whence it was that Christ was thus given up, the eternal love of God; the procuring cause was our own sins: and if once faith takes a view of sin as that

which hath nailed Christ to the cross, it will have a blessed effect on the soul. And it considers the efficient cause; which is the justice and righteousness of God: the law of God was the instrument in the hand of righteousness, which was holpen on by those outward instruments who had a hand in his suffering, but none in his sacrifice.

[4.] Faith considers in this matter the *end of this separation* of the body and blood of Christ which is thus represented; and that is, ultimately and absolutely, the glory of God. He “set him forth to declare his righteousness,” [Rom. iii. 25](#), [Eph. i. 6](#). God aimed at the glorifying of himself. I could easily manifest unto you how all the glorious properties of his nature are advanced, exalted, and will be so to eternity, in this suffering of Christ. The subordinate ends are two; I mean the subordinate ends of this very peculiar act of separation of the body and blood:— *1st*. It was to *confirm the covenant*. Every covenant of old was to be ratified and confirmed by sacrifice; and in confirming the covenant by sacrifice, they divided the sacrifice into two parts, and passed between them before they were offered; and then took it upon themselves that they would stand to the covenant which was so confirmed. Jesus Christ being to confirm the covenant, [Heb. ix. 16](#), the body and blood of Christ, this sacrifice, was to be parted, that this covenant might be confirmed. And, — *2dly*. A special end of it was, for the confirming and *strengthening of our faith*. God gives out unto us the object of our faith in parcels. We are not able to take this great mysterious fruit of God’s love in gross, in the lump; and therefore he gives it out, I say, in parcels. We shall have the body broken to be considered; and the blood shed is likewise to be considered. This is the peculiar communion which we have with Christ in this ordinance; because there are peculiar objects for faith to act itself upon in this ordinance above others.

The very nature of the ordinance itself gives us a peculiar communion; and there are four things that attend the nature of this ordinance that are peculiar:— It is commemorative, professional, eucharistical, and federal:—

1. The ordinance is *commemorative*: “Do this in remembrance of me.” And there is no greater joy to the heart of sinners, and a man knows not how to give greater glory to God, than to call the atonement of sin unto remembrance. It is observed in the offering for jealousy, [Numb. v. 15](#), if a man was jealous, and caused an offering to be brought to God, God allowed neither oil nor frankincense; and the reason is, because it was to bring sin to remembrance. But how sweet is that offering that brings to our remembrance the atonement made for all our sins! That is pleasing and acceptable unto God, and sweet unto the souls of sinners.

2. It has a peculiar *profession* attending it. Saith the apostle, “Doing this, ‘ye show forth the Lord’s death till he come;’ you make a profession and manifestation of it.” And, give me leave to say it, they that look towards Christ, and do not put themselves in a way of partaking of this ordinance, they refuse the principal part of that profession which God calls them unto in this world. The truth is, we have been apt to content ourselves with a profession of moral obedience; but it is a profession of Christ’s institution by which alone we glorify him



in this world. “I will have my death shown forth,” saith Christ, “and not only remembered.” The use of this ordinance is to show forth the death of Christ. As Christ requires of us to show forth his death, so, surely, he hath deserved it by his death.

3. It is peculiarly *eucharistical*. There is a peculiar thanksgiving that ought to attend this ordinance. It is called “The cup of blessing,” or “The cup of thanksgiving;” — the word εὐλογία is used promiscuously for “blessing” and “thanksgiving.” It is called “The cup of blessing,” because of the institution, and prayer for the blessing of God upon it; and it is called “The cup of thanksgiving,” because we do in a peculiar manner give thanks to God for Christ, and for his love in him.

4. It is a *federal* ordinance, wherein God confirms the covenant unto us, and wherein he calls us to make a recognition of the covenant unto God. The covenant is once made; but we know that we stand in need that it should be often transacted in our souls, — that God should often testify his covenant unto us, and that we should often actually renew our covenant engagements unto him. God never fails nor breaks his promises; so that he hath no need to renew them, but testify them anew: we break and fail in ours; so that we have need actually to renew them. And that is it which we are called unto in this ordinance; which is the ordinance of the great seal of the covenant in the blood of Christ.

Upon all these accounts have we special communion with Christ in this ordinance. There is none of them but I might easily enlarge upon, but I name these heads: and my design is, to help my own faith and yours from roving in the administration of this ordinance, or from a general acting of itself, — to fix it to that which is its particular duty; that we may find no weariness nor heaviness in the administration. Here in these things is there enough to entertain us for ever, and to make them new and fresh to us. But while we come with uncertain thoughts, and know not what to direct our faith to act particularly upon, we lose the benefit of the ordinance.

For the use, it is, —

1. To *bless* God for his institution of his church; which is the seat of the administration of this ordinance, wherein we have such peculiar and intimate communion with Christ. There is not one instance of those which I have named, but, if God would help us to act faith upon Christ in a peculiar manner through it, would give new strength and life to our souls. Now, in the church we have all this treasure. We lose it, I confess, by our unbelief and disesteem of it; but it will be found to be an inestimable treasure to those that use it, and improve it in a due manner.

2. Doth God give us this favour and privilege, that we should be invited to this special communion with Christ in this ordinance? *Let us prepare our hearts for it in the authority of its institution*; let us lay our souls and consciences in subjection to the authority of Christ, who hath commanded these things, and who did it in a signal manner the same night wherein he was betrayed: so that there is a special command of Christ lies upon us; and if we will



yield obedience to any of the commands of Christ, then let us yield obedience to this. Prepare your souls for special communion with him, then, by subjugating them thoroughly to the authority of Christ in this ordinance.

3. It will be good for us all to be in *a gradual exercising of our faith* unto these special things, wherein we have communion with Christ. You have heard sundry particulars: here is an object of your faith, that is given to be represented unto you in this ordinance, — that God hath prepared Christ a body, that he might be a sacrifice for you; and that this body was afterward distinguished into his body, strictly so taken, and his blood separated from it; and this in a design of love from God, as procuring the pardon of our sins, as tending to the glory of God, and the establishing of the covenant. Train up a young faith in the way it should go, and it will not depart from it when old. And new things will be found herein every day to strengthen your faith, and you will find much sweetness in the ordinance itself.



Discourse III.³

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” — 1 Cor. x. 16.

I have been treating somewhat about the special communion which believers have with Christ in the ordinance of the Lord’s supper. There remains yet something farther to be spoken unto, for our direction in this great work and duty; and this is taken from *the immediate ends* of this ordinance. I spake, as I remember, the last day to the speciality of our communion, from the consideration of the immediate ends of the death of Christ: now I shall speak to it in reference unto the immediate ends of this ordinance; and they are two, — one whereof respects our faith and our love, and the other respects our profession: which two make up the whole of what is required of us; for, as the apostle speaks, Rom. x. 10, “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Both these ends — that which respects our faith and love, and that which respects our profession — are mentioned by our apostle in the next chapter. Verse 24, there is mention of that end of this ordinance which respects our faith. Now, that is recognition. Recognition is a calling over or a commemoration of the death of Christ. “This do,” says he, “in remembrance of me.” That which respects our profession is a representation and declaration of the Lord’s death. Verse 26, “As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show” — ye declare, ye manifest — “the Lord’s death till he come.” These are the two immediate great ends of this ordinance:— a recognition of the death of Christ, which respects our faith and love; and a representation of it, which respects our profession. Both are required of us.

I. There is that which respects our *faith*. The great work of faith is to make things that are absent, present to a soul, in regard to their sweetness, power, and efficacy; whence it is said to be “the evidence of things not seen:” and it looks backward unto the causes of things, and it looks forward unto the effects of things, — to what hath wrought out grace, and to what grace is wrought out; and makes them, in their efficacy, comfort, and power, to meet and centre in the believing soul.

Now, there are three things in reference unto the death of Christ that faith in this ordinance doth recognise, call over, and commemorate. The first is, the faith of Christ in and for his work; the second is, the obedience of Christ; and the third is, the work itself:—

1. Faith calls over the *faith of Christ*. Christ had a double faith in reference to his death:— one with respect unto himself, and his own interest in God; and the other in respect to the cause whose management he had undertaken, and the success of it. He had faith for both these.

3 Delivered December 10, 1669.

(1.) The Lord Christ had faith in reference to *his own person* and to his own interest in God. The apostle, declaring ([Heb. ii. 14](#)) that because “the children were partakers of flesh and blood, Christ also did partake of the same,” that so he might die to deliver us from death, brings that text of Scripture, [verse 13](#), in confirmation of it, which is taken out of [Ps. xviii. 2](#), “And again,” saith he, “I will put my trust in him.” How doth this confirm what the apostle produces it for? Why, from hence, that in that great and difficult work that Christ did undertake, to deliver and redeem the children, he was all along carried through it by faith and trust in God. “He trusted in God,” saith he; and that made him undertake it. And he gives a great instance of his faith when he was departing out of the world. There are three things that stick very close to a departing soul:— the giving up of itself; the state wherein it shall be when it is given up; and the final issue of that estate. Our Lord Jesus Christ expressed his faith as to all three of them. As to his departure, [Luke xxiii. 46](#), “He cried with a loud voice, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.” What was his faith as to what would become of him afterwards? That also he expresses, [Ps. xvi. 10](#), “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption,” — “My soul shall not be left under the state of the dead, whereunto it is going; nor my body see corruption.” What was his faith as to the future issue of things? That he expresses, [verse 11](#), “Thou wilt show me the path of life” (which is his faith for his rising again): “in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore;” — where he was to be exalted. And these words, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,” were the first breaking forth of the faith of Christ towards a conquest. He looked through all the clouds of darkness round about him towards the rising sun, — through all storms, to the harbour, — when he cried those words with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And, by the way, it is the highest act of faith upon a stable bottom and foundation, such as will not fail, to give up a departing soul into the hands of God; which Jesus Christ here did for our example. Some die upon presumptions, — some in the dark; but faith can go no higher than, upon a sure and stable ground, to give up a departing soul into the hands of God: and that for these reasons, to show the faith of Christ in this matter:—

[1.] Because the soul is then entering into a *new state*, whereof there are these two properties that will try it to the utmost:— that it is *invisible*; and that it is *unchangeable*. I say, there are two properties that make this a great act of faith:—

1st. The state is *invisible*. The soul is going into a condition of things that “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard;” — that nothing can take any prospect into but faith alone. However men may talk of the invisible state of things which our souls are departing into, it is all but talk and conjecture, besides what we have by faith. So that to give up a soul cheerfully and comfortably into that state, is a pure act of faith.



2dly. It is *unchangeable*. It is a state wherein there is no alteration, and though all alterations should prove for the worse, yet it is in the nature of man to hope good from them; but here is no more alteration left: the soul enters into an unchangeable state. And, —

[2.] The second reason is, — because *the total sum of a man's life is now cast up*, and he sees what it will come to. While men are trading in the world, though they meet with some straits and difficulties, yet they have that going on which will bring in something, this way or that way; — but when it comes to this, that they can go no farther, then see how things stand with a departing soul; the whole sum is cast up, there is no more venture to be made, no more advantage to be gained, — he must stand as he is, And when a man takes a view of what he is to come to, he needs faith to obtain a comfortable passage out of it. And, —

[3.] Even *death itself brings a terror with it, that nothing can conquer but faith*; I mean, conquer dully. He is not crowned, that doth not overcome by faith. It is only to be done through the death of Christ. “He delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” There is no deliverance that is true and real, from a bondage-frame of spirit [with reference] to death, but by faith in Christ.

I touch on this by the way, to manifest the glorious success the faith of Christ had; who, in his dying moments, cried out, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” And this is that we are to call over in the remembering of his death. It is a very great argument the apostle uses to confirm our faith, when, speaking of the patriarchs of old, he says, “These all died in faith.” But that “all” is nothing to this argument, that Jesus Christ, our head and representative, who went before us, “He died in faith.” And this is the principal inlet into life, immortality, and glory, — the consideration of the death of Christ, dying in that faith that he gave up his soul into the hands of God, and was persuaded “God would not leave his soul in hell, nor suffer his Holy One to see corruption;” but that he would show him the “path of life,” and bring him to his “right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore.”

(2.) Christ had a faith for *the cause wherein he was engaged*. He was engaged in a glorious cause, a great undertaking; — to deliver all the elect of God from death, hell, Satan, and sin; to answer the law, to undergo the curse, and to bring his many children unto glory. And dreadful oppositions lay against him in this his undertaking. See what faith he had for his cause, [Isa. 1. 7–9](#), “The Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me?” — “Who is mine adversary?” or (as in the Hebrew), “Who is the master of my cause? I have a cause to plead, who is the master of it?” “I am engaged in a great cause,” saith he, “and I am greatly opposed; they seek to make me ashamed, to confound me, to condemn me.” But here is faith for his cause: “The Lord God will justify me,” saith he. ‘It was with Christ as it would have been with us under the covenant of works: man ought to have believed he should be justified of God, though

not by Jesus Christ; so here, he had faith that he should be justified. “God will justify me; I shall not be condemned in this cause that I have undertaken.”

It is matter of great comfort and support, to consider that when the Lord Jesus Christ had in his eye all the sins of all the elect upon the one hand, and the whole curse of the law and the wrath of God on the other, yet he cried, “I shall not be confounded;” — “I shall go through it, I shall see an end of this business, and make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness; and God will justify me in it.” We are in an especial manner to call to remembrance the faith that Christ had for his cause; and we ought to have the same faith for it now, for this great conquest of overcoming the devil, sin, death, hell, and the saving of our souls. He hath given us an example for it.

There is one objection lies against all this, and that is this: “But did not Christ despond in his great agony in the garden, when he cried three times, ‘Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me?’ and in that dreadful outcry upon the cross, which he took from the [22d Psalm](#), a prophecy of him, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ Doth not Christ seem to repent here, and to despond?”

I answer, In this difficult inquiry two things are to be stated:— first, in reference *to his person*, That it was impossible Christ should have the indissolubility of his personal union utterly hid from him. He knew the union of his human nature unto the Son of God could not be utterly dissolved, — that could not be utterly hid from him; so that there could not be despair, properly so called, in Christ. And, secondly, this is certain also, That *the contract* he had with the Father, and the promises he had given him of being successful, could never utterly be hid from him. So that his faith, either as to his person or cause, could not possibly be utterly ruined. But there was a severe and terrible conflict in the human nature, arising from these four things:—

First. From the view which he was exalted to take of *the nature of the curse that was then upon him*. For the curse was upon him, [Gal. iii. 13](#), “He was made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” Give me leave to say, Jesus Christ saw more into the nature of the curse of God for sin than all the damned in hell are able to see; which caused a dreadful conflict in his human soul upon that prospect.

Secondly. It arose from hence, that *the comforting influences of the union with the divine nature were restrained*. Jesus Christ was in himself “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;” but yet, all the while, there were the influences of light and glory from the divine nature to the human, by virtue of their union; — and now they are restrained, and instead of that, was horrible darkness, and trembling, and the curse, and sin, and Satan, round about him; all presenting themselves unto him: which gave occasion to that part of his prayer, [Ps. xxii. 12–21](#), “Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion’s mouth,” etc. There was the sword in the curse of the law, and the dog and the lion, or Satan, as it were, gaping upon him, as if ready to devour him; for it was the

hour and power of darkness, dread and terror. Besides, there were cruel men, which he compares to “the bulls of Bashan,” which rent him. This caused that terrible conflict.

Thirdly. It was from *the penal desertion of God*. That he was under a penal desertion from God is plain: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” And when I say so, I know little of what I say; — I mean, what it is to be under such penal desertion. For the great punishment of hell, is an everlasting penal desertion from God.

Fourthly. It was from the unspeakable *extremity of the things that he suffered*; — not merely as to the things themselves which outwardly fell upon his body, but as unto that “sword of God which was awakened against him,” and which had pierced him to the very soul. The advantage which he had in his sufferings by his divine union, was that which supported and bore him up under that weight, which would have sunk any mere creature to nothing. His heart was enlarged to receive in those pains, that dread and terror, that otherwise he could not have received. And notwithstanding all this, as I showed before, Christ kept up his faith in reference to his person, and kept up his faith in reference to his cause; and a great example he hath given unto us, that though the dog and the lion should encompass us, though we should have desertion from God and pressures more than nature is able to bear, yet there is a way of keeping up faith, trust, and confidence through all, and not to let go our hold of God.

Now, this is the first thing we are to call over in remembrance of Christ, in reference to his death; that faith he had, both for his person and his cause, in his death. For if you remember any of the martyrs that died, you will stick upon these two things, more than upon the flames that consumed them: they expressed great faith of their interest in Christ, and in reference to the cause they died for. They are things you will remember. And this you are to be remembering of him who was the head of the martyrs, — our Lord Jesus Christ’s faith.

2. We are to call over *his obedience in his death*. The apostle doth propose it unto us, [Phil. ii. 5, 6](#), etc., “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” We are to call over the mind of Christ in suffering. And the following things the Scripture doth peculiarly direct us to consider in the obedience of Christ unto death:— The principle of it, which was love; readiness to and for it; submission under it; his patience during it. They are things the Scripture minds us of concerning the obedience of Christ in his death:—

(1.) Consider *his love*, which is one of the principal things to be regarded in this obedience of Christ; — the love wherewith it was principled. [Gal. ii. 20](#), “He loved me,” saith the apostle, “and gave himself for me.” [1 John iii. 16](#), “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.” It was his love did it. [Rev. i. 5](#), “Who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” This gives life to the whole sufferings of Christ, and to our faith



too. It was a high act of obedience to God, that he laid down his life; but that obedience was principled with love to us.

And now I pray God to enable me to consider this with my own soul, what that love would stick at, that did not stick at this kind of death we have been speaking of. If Jesus Christ had reserved the greatest thing he was to do for us unto the last, we had not known but his love might have stuck when it came to that, — I mean, when it came to the curse of the law, — though he had done other things. But having done this, he that would not withdraw, nor take off from that, because he loved us, what will he stick at for the future? Our hearts are apt to be full of unkind and unthankful thoughts towards him; as though, upon every dark and black temptation and trial, he would desert us, whose love was such as he would not do it when himself was to be deserted and made a curse. Call over, then, the love of Christ in this obedience. “Yes; but love prevails sometimes,” you will say, “with many, to do things that they have no great mind to: we come very difficultly to do some things, when yet, out of love, we will not deny them.” But it was not so with Christ; his love was such that he had, —

(2.) An eternal *readiness unto his work*. There are two texts of Scripture inform us of it: [Prov. viii. 30, 31](#), where the Holy Ghost describes the prospect that the Wisdom of God — that is, the Son of God — took of the world and the children of men, in reference to the time he was to come among them. “I was,” saith he, “daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.” He considered what work he had to do for the sons of men, and delighted in it. The 40th Psalm expounds this, [verses 6–8](#), “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,” etc. “Sacrifice and burnt-offering will not take away sin,” saith he; “then, lo, I come.” But doth he come willingly? Yes; “I delight,” saith he, “to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.” What part of the will of God was it? The apostle tells you, [Heb. x. 10](#), “Offering the body of Jesus Christ once for all; by the which will we are sanctified.” He came not only willingly, but with delight. The baptism he was to be baptized with, he was straitened till it was accomplished. The love he had unto the souls of men, that great design and project he had for the glory of God, gave him delight in his undertaking, notwithstanding all the difficulties he was to meet with.

(3.) We are to remember *his submission to the great work* he was called unto. This he expresses, [Isa. l. 5, 6](#), “The Lord God,” saith he, “hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.” The Lord God called him to it, and he was not rebellious, but submitted unto it.

There is one objection arises against this submission; and that is the prayer of Christ in the garden: “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”



I answer, That was an expression of the horror which was upon the human nature, which we mentioned before. But there were two things that Christ immediately closed upon, which gave evidence to this submission, that he did not draw back, nor rebel, nor hide himself, nor turn away his face from shame and spitting; — one was this, “Father, thy will be done,” saith he; and the other was this, that he refused that aid to deliver him which he might have had: “Know ye not that I could pray the Father, and he would give me more than twelve legions of angels?” He then suffered under the Roman power, and their power was reduced to twelve legions. Saith he, “I could have more than these;” which argues his full submission unto the will of God.

(4.) We are to call over *his patience under his sufferings, in his obedience*, Isa. liii. 7, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth;” — the highest expressions of an absolute, complete, and perfect patience. Though he was afflicted, and though he had all manner of provocations, “though he was reviled, he reviled not again.” The apostle tells us, Heb. xii. 2, “He endured the cross” (that is, he patiently endured it, as the word signifies), “and despised the shame, that he might sit down at the right hand of God.”

You see, then, the end of this ordinance of the Lord’s supper, is to stir us up to call over the obedience of Christ, both as to his love in it, as to his readiness for it, submission to the will of God in it, and patience under it.

3. Faith is to call over *the work itself*; and that was the *death of Christ*. I shall not now be able to manifest under what consideration in this ordinance faith calls over the death of Christ; but these are the heads I shall speak unto:— It calls it over as a sacrifice, in that it was bloody; it calls it over as shameful, in that it was under the curse; it calls it over as bitter and dreadful, in that it was penal. It was a bloody, shameful, and penal death: as bloody, a sacrifice; as cursed, shameful; and as it was penal, it was bitter. In the work of faith’s calling over these things, there is a peculiar work of love also. Saith our Saviour, “This do in remembrance of me.” These are the words we would use unto a friend, when we give him a token or pledge, “Remember me.” What is the meaning of it? “Remember my love to you, my kindness for you; remember my person.” There is a remembrance of love towards Christ to be acted in this ordinance, as well as a remembrance of faith: and as the next object of faith is the benefits of Christ, and thereby to his person; so the next object of love is the person of Christ, and thereby to his benefits; — I mean, as represented in this ordinance. “Remember me,” saith he; that is, “with a heart full of love towards me.” And there are three things wherein this remembrance of Christ by love, in the celebration of this ordinance, doth consist:— delight in him, thankfulness unto him, and the keeping of his word. He that remembers Christ with love, hath these three affections in his heart:—

(1.) He *delights in him*. The thoughts of Christ are sweet unto him, as of an absent friend; but only in spiritual things we have this great advantage, we can make an absent Christ present to us. This we cannot in natural things. We can converse with friends only by imagination; but by faith we make Christ present with us, and delight in him.

(2.) There is *thanksgiving towards him*. That love which is fixed upon the person of Christ will break forth in great thankfulness; which is one peculiar act of this ordinance: “The cup which we bless,” or give thanks for.

(3.) It *will greatly incline the heart to keep his word*. “If ye are my disciples, ‘if ye love me, keep my commandments.’ ” Every act of love fixed upon the person of Christ, gives a new spring of obedience to all the ordinances of Christ: and the truth is, there is no keeping up our hearts unto obedience to ordinances, but by renewed acts of obedience upon the person of Christ; — this will make the soul cry, “When shall I be in an actual observation of Christ’s ordinance, who hath thus loved me, and washed me with his own blood, — that hath done such great things for me?”

This is the end of the death of Christ which concerns our faith and love, — the end of *commemoration*, or calling to remembrance.

II. There is an end of *profession* also; which is, to “show the Lord’s death till he come.” But this must be spoken to at some other time. If we come to the practice of these things, we shall find them great things to call over, — namely, the whole frame of the heart of Christ in his death, and his death itself, and our own concern therein, and the great example he hath set unto us. Some of them, I hope, may abide upon our hearts and spirits for our use.

Discourse IV.⁴

“As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.” — 1 Cor. xi. 26.

One end, you see, of this great ordinance, is to show the Lord’s death — to declare it, to represent it, to show it forth, hold it forth; the word is thus variously rendered. And in the especial ends of this ordinance it is that we have special communion with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, there are two ways whereby we show forth the Lord’s death; the one is the way of *representation* to ourselves; and the other is a way of *profession* unto others:—

I. The way of *representation to ourselves*. The work of representing Christ aright to the soul is a great work. God and men are agreed in it; and therefore God, when he represents Christ, his design is to represent him to the *faith* of men. Men that have not faith, have a great desire to have Christ represented to their *fancy* and *imagination*; and, therefore, when the way of representing Christ to the faith of men was lost among them, the greatest part of their religion was taken up in representing Christ to their fancy. They would make pictures and images of his cross, resurrection, ascension, and every thing he did.

There are three ways whereby God represents Christ to the faith of believers:— the one is, by the word of the gospel itself as *written*; the second is by the *ministry* of the gospel and preaching of the word; and the third, in particular, is by this *sacrament*, wherein we represent the Lord’s death to the faith of our own souls:—

1. God doth it by the *word* itself. Hence are those descriptions that are given of Christ in Scripture to represent him desirable to the souls of men. The great design of the book of Canticles consists, for the most part, in this, — in a mystical, allegorical description of the graces and excellencies of the person of Christ, to render him desirable to the souls of believers; as in the [5th chapter, from the 9th verse to the end](#), there is nothing but that one subject. And it was a great promise made to them of old, [Isa. xxxiii. 17](#), “Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty.” The promises of the Old Testament are much spent in representing the person of Christ as beautiful, desirable, and lovely to the faith of believers. And you will see, in [2 Cor. iii. 18](#), what is the end of the gospel: “We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” The gospel is the glass here intended; and looking into the glass, there is an image appears in it: not our own; but the representation the gospel makes of Jesus Christ is the image that appears in the glass. The work and design of the gospel is, to make a representation of Christ unto us, as Christ makes a representation of the Father; and therefore he is called his image, — “The image of the invisible God.” Why so? Because all

4 Delivered December 24, 1669.

the glorious properties of the invisible God are represented to us in Christ; and we looking upon the image of Christ in this glass, — that is, the representation made of him in the gospel, — it is the effectual means whereby the Spirit of God transforms us into his image.

This is the first way whereby God doth this great work of representing Christ unto the faith of men; which men having lost, have made it their whole religion to represent Christ unto their fancy.

2. The second way is, by *the ministry of the word*. The great work of the ministry of the word is to represent Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul tells us, [Gal. iii. 1](#), “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?” He is “*depictus crucifixus*,” — crucified before their eyes. How was this? Not before their bodily eyes; but the apostle had in his preaching made such a lively representation unto their faith of the death of Christ, that he was as one painted before them. One said well, on this text, “Of old the apostles did not preach Christ by painting, but they painted him by preaching;” they did in so lively a manner represent him.

Abraham’s servant (in the [24th chapter of Genesis](#)), that was sent to take a wife for his son Isaac, is by all granted to be, if not a type, yet a resemblance of the ministers of the gospel, that go forth to prepare a bride for Christ. And what does he do? Truly he is a great example. When he came to the opportunity, though he had many things to divert him, yet he would not be diverted. There was set meat before him to eat; but he said, “I will not eat, till I have told my errand.” Nothing should divert the ministers of the gospel, — no, not their necessary meat, — when they have an opportunity of dealing with souls on behalf of Christ. What course does Abraham’s servant take? He saith, “I am Abraham’s servant; and the Lord hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and camels, and asses.” What is all this to Isaac? — he was to take a wife for Isaac, not for Abraham. He goes on: “And Sarah my master’s wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath.” The way to procure this wife for Isaac was, to let them know that this great man, Abraham, had given all he had to Isaac; and it is the work of ministers of the gospel to let the people know that God the Father hath given all things into the hands of his Son. They are to represent Christ as Abraham’s servant does here his master Isaac, — as one who inherited all the goods of Abraham; so Christ is the appointed heir of all things, of the kingdom of heaven, — the whole household of God. They are to represent him thus to the souls of men, to make him desirable to them. This is the great work of ministers, who are ambassadors of God; they are sent from God to take a wife for Christ, or to make ready a bride for him, from among the children of men.



3. The special way whereby we represent Christ unto our souls through faith, is in the *administration of this ordinance*; which I will speak to upon the great end of showing forth the death of the Lord.

Now, the former representations were general, this is particular; and I cannot at this time go over particulars. I bless the Lord, my soul hath many times admired the wisdom and goodness of God in the institution of this one ordinance; that he took bread and wine for that end and purpose, merely arbitrary, of his own choice, and might have taken any thing else, — what he had pleased; that he should fix on the cream of the creation: which is an endless storehouse, if pursued, of representing the mysteries of Christ. When the folly of men goes about to invent ceremonies that they would have significant; when they have found them out, they cannot well tell what they signify. But, though I do acknowledge that all the significancy of this ordinance depends upon the institution, yet there is great wisdom in the fitting of it; the thing was fitted and suited to be made use of to that end and purpose.

One end of the ordinance itself is, to represent the death of Christ unto us; and it represents Christ with reference to these five things:— 1. It represents him with reference to God's *setting him forth*. 2. In reference to his own *passion*. 3. In reference to his *exhibition in the promise*. 4. To our *participation* of him by believing. And, 5. To his *incorporation* with us in union.

1. The great end of God in reference to Christ, as to his death, was, *his setting of him forth*, Rom. iii. 25, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation." And in the very setting forth of the elements in this ordinance there is a representation of God's setting forth his Son, — of giving him out for this work, of giving him up unto it, to be a propitiation.

2. There is a plain representation of his *passion*, of his suffering and death, and the manner of it. This, with all the concerns of it, I treated of the last Lord's day, under the head of Recognition, or calling over the death of Christ, "This do in remembrance of me;" and so I shall not again insist upon it.

3. There is a representation of Christ in it as to the *exhibition* and tender of him in the promise. Many promises are expressed in invitations, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come;" — "Take, eat:" there is a promise in it. And in the tender that is made even of the sacramental elements, there is the exhibition of Christ in the promise represented to the soul. I told you before, God hath carefully provided to represent Christ unto our faith, and not to our fancy; and, therefore, there is no outward similitude and figure. We can say concerning this ordinance, with all its representations, as God said concerning his appearing to Moses upon mount Horeb, "Thou sawest no similitude." God hath taken care there shall be no natural figure, that all representations made may stand upon institution. *Now, there is this tender with an invitation*. The very elements of the ordinance are a great representation of the proposal of Christ to a believing soul. God holds out Christ as willing to be received, with an invitation. So we show forth the Lord's death.



4. There is in this ordinance a representation of Christ as to our *reception* of him; for hereon depends the whole of the matter. God might make a feast of fat things, and propose it to men; but if they do not come to eat, they will not be nourished by it. If you make a tender of payment to a man, if he doth not receive it, the thing remains at a distance, as before. Christ being tendered to a soul, if that soul doth not receive him, he hath no benefit by it. All these steps you may go:— there may be God’s exhibition of Christ, and setting of him forth; there may be his own oblation and suffering, laying the foundation of all that is to come; there may be an exhibition of him in the promise, tender, and invitation: and yet, if not received, we have no profit by all these things. What a great representation of this receiving is there in the administration of this ordinance, when every one takes the representation of it to himself, or doth receive it!

5. It gives us a representation of our *incorporation* in Christ; the allusion whereto, from the nature of the elements’ incorporation with us, and being the strength of our lives, might easily be pursued. This is the first way of showing forth the Lord’s death.

II. I shall now speak a few words to the *profession* of it among ourselves, and to others.

Let me take one or two observations, to make way for it:—

1. That *visible profession is a matter of more importance than most men make of it*; as the apostle saith, [Rom. x. 10](#), “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Look how indispensably necessary believing is unto righteousness, to justification; — no less indispensably necessary is confession or profession unto salvation. There is no man that doth believe with his heart unto righteousness, but he will with his mouth (which is there taken, by a synecdoche, for the whole of our profession) make confession unto salvation. This is that which brings glory to God. The apostle tells us, [2 Cor. ix. 13](#), that men, “by the experiment of this ministration, glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ.” Glory doth not arise out of obedience so much as by your profession of it; — by the giving them experiment both of your faith and the reality of it, and that by this fruit of your profession.

Now profession consists in these two things:— (1.) *In an abstinence from all things, with reference to God and his worship, which Christ has not appointed.* (2.) *In the observation and performance of all things that Christ has appointed.*

Men are apt to think that *abstinence* from the pollutions that are in the world through lust, the keeping themselves from the sins and defilements of the world, and inclining to that party that is not of the world, is profession. These things are good; but our profession consists in the observation of Christ’s commands, what he requires of us. “Go, teach them.” What to do? “Whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, unto the end of the world.” There is an expression, [John xiv. 24](#), wherein our Saviour puts a trial of our love to him upon the keeping of his sayings: “He that loveth me not keepeth not my



sayings.” To keep the sayings of Christ, is to observe the commands of Christ; which is the perfect trial of our love to him.

2. There is in this ordinance a *special profession* of Christ. There is a profession of him against the shame of the world; a profession of him against the curse of the law; and a profession of him against the power of the devil. All our profession doth much centre, or is mightily acted, in this ordinance.

(1.) The death of our Lord Jesus Christ was in the world a *shameful death*, and that with which Christians were constantly reproached, and which hardly went down with the world. It is a known story, that when the Jesuits preached the gospel, as they call it, in China, they never let them know of the death of Christ, till the Congregation “De Propagandâ Fide” commanded it; for the world is mightily scandalized at the shameful death of the cross.

Now, in this ordinance, we profess the death of Christ, wherein he was crucified as a malefactor, against all the contempt of the world. It was a great part of the confession of the Christians of old, and there is something in it still: here we come solemnly before God and all the world, and profess that we expect all our life and salvation from the death of this crucified Saviour.

(2.) In our profession we *show forth the death of the Lord*, in the celebration of this ordinance, in opposition “to the curse of the law;” — that whereas the curse of the law doth lay claim to us because we are sinners, here we profess that God hath transferred the curse of the law to another, who underwent it. So they did with the sacrifices of old: when they had confessed all the sins and iniquities of the people over the head of the goat, then they sent him away into destruction. So it is in this ordinance: here we confess all our sins and iniquities over the head of this great sacrifice, and profess to the law, and all its accusations, that there our sins are charged. “Who shall lay any thing to our charge? and who shall condemn? It is Christ that died.” We confront the claim of the law, shake off its authority, as to its curse, and profess to it that its charge is satisfied.

(3.) We make a profession *against the power of Satan*; for the great trial of the power and interest of the devil in, unto, and over the souls of men, was in the cross of Jesus Christ. He put his kingdom to a trial, staked his all upon it, and mustered up all the strength he had got, — all the aids that the guilt of sin and the rage of the world could furnish him with. “Now,” saith Christ, “is your hour, and the power of darkness;” — “He comes to try what he can do.” And what was the issue of the death of Christ? Why, saith the apostle, “He spoiled principalities and powers, and triumphed over them in his cross:” so that, in our celebration of the death of Christ, we do profess against Satan; that his power is broken, that he is conquered, — tied to the chariot wheels of Christ, who has disarmed him.

This is the profession we make, when we show forth the Lord’s death, against the shame of the world, against the curse of the law, and the power of hell. This is the second general end of this ordinance; and another means it is whereby we have especial communion with



Christ in it: which was the thing I aimed at from the words I had chosen. And now I have gone through all I intend upon this subject.

A word or two of use, and I have done:—

1. It is a very *great honour and privilege*, to be called of God unto this great work of showing forth the death of Christ. I think it is as great and glorious a work as any of the children of men can be engaged in, in this world. I have showed you formerly, how all the acts of the glorious properties of God's nature centre themselves in this infinite, wise, holy product of them, the death of Christ; and [how] that God should call us to represent and show forth this death. The Lord forgive us where we have not longed to perform this work as we ought; for we have suffered carnal fears and affections, and any thing else, to keep us off from employing ourselves in this great and glorious work. The grace and mercy of God, in this matter, is ever to be acknowledged, in that he has called us to this great and glorious work.

2. Then, surely, it is our duty *to answer the mind of God* in this work, and not to attend to it in a cold, careless, and transient manner. But, methinks, we might rejoice in our hearts when we have thoughts of it, and say within ourselves, "Come, we will go and show forth the Lord's death." The world, the law, and Satan, are conquered by it: blessed be God, that has given us an opportunity to profess this! O that our hearts may long after the season for it! and say, "When shall the time come?"

3. We may do well to remember what was spoken before concerning the great duty of representing God to our souls, that we may know how to attend to it. I would speak unto the meanest of the flock, to guide our hearts and thoughts, which are too ready to wander, and are so unprofitable, for want of spiritual fixation. We would fain trust to our affections rather than to our faith; and would rather have them moved, than faith graciously to act itself. And when we fail therein, we are apt to think we fail in our end of the ordinance, because our affections were not moved. Set faith genuinely at work, and we have the end of the ordinance. Let it represent Christ to our souls, as exhibited of God, and given out unto us; as suffering, as tendered to us, and as received and incorporated with us.



Discourse V.⁵

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” — 1 Cor. xi. 28.

I have been treating of that special communion which believers have with Christ, in the administration of the ordinance of the supper of the Lord; and thought I should have treated no more of that subject, having gone through all the particulars of it which were practical, such as might be reduced to present practice. But I remember I said nothing concerning *preparation for it*, which yet is a needful duty; and therefore I shall a little speak to that also, — not what may *doctrinally be* delivered upon it, but those things, or some of them at least, in which every soul will find a *practical concern* that intends to be a partaker of that ordinance to benefit and advantage, — and I have taken these words of the apostle for my groundwork: “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”

There were many disorders fallen in this church at Corinth, and that various ways, — in schisms and divisions, in neglect of discipline, in false opinions, and particularly in a great abuse of the administration of this great ordinance of the supper of the Lord. And though I do not, I dare not, I ought not, to bless God for their sin, yet I bless God for his providence. Had it not been for their disorders, we had all of us been much in darkness as to all church way. The correction of their disorders contains the principal rule for church communion and the administration of this sacrament that we have in the whole Scripture; which might have been hid from us, but that God suffered them to fall into them on purpose that, through their fall, in them and by them he might instruct his church in all ages to the end of the world.

The apostle is here rectifying abuses about the administration of the Lord’s supper, which were many; and he applies particular directions to all their particular miscarriages, not now to be insisted on; and he gathers up all directions into this one general rule that I have here read, “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat,” etc. Now, this self-examination extends itself unto the whole due preparation of the souls of men for the actual participation of this ordinance. And I shall endeavour, by plain instances out of the Scripture (which is my way in these familiar exercises), to manifest that there is a preparation necessary for the celebration or observance of all solemn ordinances; and I shall show you what that preparation is, and wherein it doth consist; and then I shall deduce from thence what is that particular preparation which is incumbent upon us, in reference unto this special ordinance, that is superadded unto the general preparation that is required unto all ordinances.

I. I shall manifest that there is a *preparation necessary for the celebration of solemn worship*. We have an early instance of it in [Gen. xxxv. 1–5](#). In the [1st verse](#), “God said unto

5 Delivered January 7, 1669–70.

Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and make there an altar unto God.” It was a solemn ordinance Jacob was called unto, — to build an altar unto God, and to offer sacrifice. What course did he take? You may see, [verses 2, 3](#), “Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God.” “I will not engage,” saith he, “in this great duty without a preparation for it; and,” saith he, “the preparation shall be suitable.” Peculiar, special preparation (to observe that by the way) for any ordinance, consists in the removal of that from us which stands in peculiar opposition to that ordinance, whatever it be. “I am to build an altar unto God; put away the strange gods:” and accordingly he did so.

When God came to treat with the people in that great ordinance of giving the law, which was the foundation of all following ordinances, [Exod. xix. 10, 11](#), “The Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will come down upon mount Sinai.” I will not insist on these typical preparations, but only say, it sufficiently proves the general thesis, that there ought to be such a preparation for any meeting with God, in any of his ordinances. Saith he, “Sanctify yourselves,” etc., “and on the third day I will come.” God is a great God, with whom we have to do. It is not good to have carnal boldness in our accesses and approaches to him; and therefore he teaches us that there is a preparation due. And what weight God lays upon this, you may see, [2 Chron. xxx. 18–20](#). A multitude of people came to the sacrifice of the passover; but, saith he, “They had not cleansed themselves,” — there was not due preparation: but “Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.” Perhaps the people might have thought it enough that they had their personal qualification, — that they were believers, — that they had prepared their hearts to seek the Lord God of their fathers, — a thing most persons trust unto in this matter. No; saith the king, in praying for them, “They did prepare their hearts for the Lord God of their fathers; but they were not prepared according to the purification of the sanctuary.” There is an *instituted preparation* as well as a *personal disposition*; which, if not observed, God will smite them. God had smote the people, — given them some token of his displeasure: they come with great willingness and desire to be partakers of this holy ordinance; yet because they were not prepared according to the purification of the sanctuary, God smites them.

It was an ordinance of God that Paul had to perform, and we would have thought it a thing that he might easily have done without any great forethought; but it had that weight

upon his spirit, [Rom. xv. 30, 31](#), that, with all earnestness, he begs the prayers of others, that he might be carried through the performance of it: “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints.” He had a service to do at Jerusalem. He was gathering the contributions of the saints (an ordinance of God), to carry them up to the poor of Jerusalem; and it was upon his heart that this his service might find acceptance with them; therefore he begs with all his soul, “I beseech you, brethren,” etc.: so great weight did he lay upon the performance of an ordinance that one would think might be easily passed over without any great regard.

The caution we have, [Eccles. v. 1](#), is to the same purpose: “Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.” I shall not stand upon the particular exposition of any of these expressions; but it is a plain caution of diligent consideration of ourselves in all things we have to do in the house of God. A bold venturing upon an ordinance is but “the sacrifice of fools.” “Keep thy foot,” — look to thy affections; “be more ready to hear,” saith he, — that is, to attend unto the command, what God requires from thee, and the way and manner of it, — “than merely to run upon a sacrifice, or the performance of the duty itself.”

I will name one place more, [Ps. xxvi. 6](#), “I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.”

I have a little confirmed this general proposition, that all take for granted; and I fear we content ourselves for the most part with the state and condition of those mentioned, who prepared their hearts to meet the Lord God of their fathers, not considering how they may be prepared “according to the purification of the sanctuary.” You will ask, “What is that preparation?”

This question brings me to, —

II. The second general head I propounded to speak unto: I answer, that the general preparation that respects all ordinances hath reference *unto God, to ourselves, to the ordinance itself*:—

1. It *hath respect unto God*. This is the first thing to be considered; for this he lays down as the great law of his ordinances, “I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me,” [Lev. x. 3](#). God is, in the first place, to be considered in all our drawings nigh unto him; as that is the general name of all ordinances, — a drawing nigh, an access unto God. “I will be sanctified,” etc. Now God is to be considered three ways, that he may be sanctified in any ordinance, — as the author, as the object, as the end of it. I shall speak only to those things that lie practically before us, and are indispensably required of us in waiting upon God in any and every ordinance:—

(1.) Our preparation, in reference unto God, consists in due consideration of *God as the author of any ordinance wherein we draw nigh unto him*. For this is the foundation of all ordinances, [Rom. xiv. 11](#), “As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” A practical sense of the authority of God in every ordinance, is that which is required in the very first place for our preparation. I know full well how that the mind of man is [apt] to be influenced by general convictions and particular customs. Particular usages, built upon general convictions, carry most people through their duties; but that is no preparation of heart. There is to be an immediate sense of the authority and command of God.

(2.) We are to consider God in Christ as *the immediate object of that worship which in every ordinance we do perform*. You will ask, “What special apprehensions concerning God are particularly necessary to this duty of preparation for communion with God in an ordinance?” I answer, Two are particularly necessary, that should be practically upon our thoughts in every ordinance, — the presence of God, and the holiness of God. As God is the object of our worship, these two properties of God are principally to be considered in all our preparations:—

[1.] The *presence* of God. When Elijah ([1 Kings xviii. 27](#)) derided the worshippers of Baal, the chief part of his derision was, “He is in a journey;” — “You have a god that is absent,” saith Elijah. And the end of all idolatry in the world, is to feign the presence of an absent Deity. All images and idols are set up for no other end but to feign the presence of what really is absent. Our God is present, and in all his ordinances. I beg of God I may have a double sense of his presence, —

1st. A *special sense* of his omnipresence. God requires that we should put in all ordinances a speciality of faith upon his general attributes. [Gen. xxviii. 16](#), Jacob, when God appeared unto him, though but in a dream, awaked out of sleep, and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.” I would say so concerning every ordinance whereunto I go; — the Lord is in that place. I speak now only concerning his real presence; for if idolaters adorn all their places of worship with pictures, images, and idols, that they might feign the presence of a god, I ought to act faith particularly upon the real presence of the immense and omnipresent God. He bids us consider it in the business of his worship, [Jer. xxiii. 23](#), “Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?” — “Consider my glorious presence is everywhere.” As we ought always, wherever we are, and whatever we do, to carry a sense with us of the presence of God, to say, “God is here,” that we may not be surprised in our journeys, or in any thing that may befall us, — suppose a broken leg or a broken arm, then we may say, “God is in this place, and I knew it not;” — so, particularly, where we have to do in his ordinances, let there be an antecedent remembrance that God is in that place.

2dly. We are to remember *the gracious presence of God*. There was a twofold presence of God of old; — the one, temporary, by an extraordinary appearance; the other, standing,

by a continued institution. Wherever God made an extraordinary appearance, there he required of his people to look upon him to have a special presence. It was but temporary when God appeared to Moses in the bush. "Draw not nigh hither," saith God; "put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground," because of God's special appearance: but the next day, as far as I know, sheep fed upon that holy ground. It was no longer holy than God's appearance made it so. So he said to Joshua, when he was by Jericho, "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy," [Josh. v. 15](#). It was a temporary appearance of God; there was his special presence. It was so on the institution of the tabernacle and temple; God instituted them, and gave his special presence to them by virtue of his institution. Our Saviour tells us all this is departed under the gospel, [John iv. 21](#), "You shall no longer worship God," saith he, "neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem; but he that worshippeth God must worship him in spirit and in truth." Is there no special presence of God remains, then? Yea, there is a special presence of God in all his ordinances and institutions. "In all places where I record my name" (as the name of God is upon all his institutions), "I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee," saith God in [Exod. xx. 24](#). Let us exercise our thoughts, then, to this especial promised presence of God in every ordinance and institution; it belongs greatly to our preparation for an ordinance. It was no hard thing for them, you may think, of old, where God had put his presence in a place, to go thither, and expect the presence of God. Things that are absent are hard; things that are present are not so. But it is no harder matter for us to go and expect God's presence in his instituted ordinances now than for them to go to the temple; considering [that] God, as the object of our worship, is no less present with us.

[2.] The second property which is principally to be considered in God in his ordinances, as he is the object of them, is *his holiness*. This is the general rule that God gives in all ordinances, "Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." And Joshua, [Josh. xxiv. 19](#) tells the people what they were principally to consider in serving the Lord. "We will serve the Lord," say the people. Saith Joshua, "Ye cannot serve the Lord; for he is an holy God:" intimating that they were to have due apprehensions of his holiness; and without it there is no approaching unto him in his service. The apostle gives a great and plain rule to this purpose, [Heb. xii. 28, 29](#), "Let us have grace," saith he, "whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." What doth he propose, now, as the principal reason why he requires this preparation? "For," saith he, "our God is a consuming fire." What property of God is expressed by this word, "consuming fire?" It is the holiness of God, the purity of God's nature, that can bear no corrupt nor defiled thing. It is set forth by that metaphorical expression, "a consuming fire." "As fire is the most pure and unmixed element, and so powerful of itself as that it will consume and destroy every thing that is not perfectly of its own nature, so is God," saith he, " 'a consuming fire;' and in all your serving of him, and approaches

unto him, labour to obtain a frame of spirit that becomes them who have to do with that God who is so pure and holy.”

I do but choose out these things, which, in the way of ordinances, I *would* say are (I *may* say, [I] desire should be) most upon my heart and spirit: I might easily enlarge it to other considerations; but let these two considerations dwell upon our minds, as our preparation for our access unto God, thoughts of his glorious and gracious presence, and of his holiness [Ps. xciii. 5](#), “Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever.” That is the second thing with respect to God as the object of all the ordinances of our worship.

(3.) Our preparation respects God as he is *the end of ordinances*; and that to these three purposes, if I could insist upon them:— he is the end of them, as we aim in them to “give glory unto him;” he is the end of them, as we aim in them “to be accepted with him;” he is the end of them, as we aim in them “to be blessed by him.” These are the three things that are our end in all ordinances that we celebrate.

[1.] The first is, *the general end* of all that we do in this world; we are to do all to the glory of God: it is the immediate end of all our worship. “If I am a father,” saith he, “where is mine honour?” — “where is my glory?” [Mal. i. 6](#). “Do you come to worship? you are to give me honour, as to a father; glory, as to a master, as to a lord.” We come to own him as our Father, acknowledge our dependence upon him as a Father, our submission to him as our Lord and Master; and thus give glory to him. He hath never taken one step to the preparing of his heart according to the preparation of the sanctuary, in the celebration of ordinances, who hath not designed in them to give glory unto God.

[2.] Another end is, *to be accepted with him*; according to that great promise which you have, [Ezek. xliii. 27](#), “You shall make your burnt-offerings upon the altar; and I will accept you, saith the Lord God.” It is a promise of gospel times; for it is in the description of the new glorious temple. We come to God to have our persons and offerings accepted, by Jesus Christ. And, —

[3.] *To be blessed according to his promise*, — that “God will bless us out of Zion.” What the particular blessings are we look for in particular ordinances, in due time, God assisting, I shall acquaint you with, when we come to the special and particular preparation for that ordinance we aim at; but this is necessary to all, and so to that.

2. This preparation *respects ourselves*. There are three things which I desire my heart may be prepared by, in reference to the ordinances of God:—

(1.) The first is indispensably necessary, laid down in that great rule, [Ps. lxvi. 18](#), “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me;” — that I bring a heart to ordinances without regard to any particular iniquity. We have the dreadful instance of Judas, who came to that great ordinance of the passover with regard to iniquity in his heart, — which particular iniquity was covetousness, — and went away with the devil in his whole mind and soul.



Ezek. xiv. 4 is another place to this purpose, “Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the Lord will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols.” There is no more effectual course in the world to make poor souls incorrigible, than to come to ordinances, and to be able to digest under them a regard to iniquity in our hearts. If we have idols, God will answer us according to our idols. What is the answering of men according to their idols? Why, plainly, it is this, allotting them peace while they have their idols: “You shall have peace with regard to iniquity; you come for peace, take peace; — which is the saddest condition any soul can be left under: you shall have peace and your idols together.” Whenever we prepare ourselves, if this part of our preparation be wanting, — if we do not all of us cast out the idols of our hearts, and cease regarding of iniquity, — all is lost.

(2.) The second head of preparation on our own part is *self-abasement*, out of a deep sense of the infinite distance that is between God and us, whom we go to meet. “I have taken upon myself to speak to the great possessor of heaven and earth, who am but dust and ashes.” Nothing brings God and man so near together as a due sense of our infinite distance. Isa. lvii. 15, “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.”

(3.) A *heart filled with love to ordinances* is a great preparation for an ordinance. How doth David, in the 84th Psalm, pant and long and breathe after the ordinances of God! To love prayer, to love the word, is a great preparation for both. To love the presence of Christ in the supper, is a great preparation for it, — to keep an habitual frame of love in the heart for ordinances.

I would not load your memories with particulars. I mention plain practical things unto those for whose spiritual welfare I am more particularly concerned; that we may retain them for our use, and know them for ourselves: and they are such as I know, more or less (though, perhaps, not so distinctly), all our hearts work after: and in these things our souls do live.

3. Our preparation in reference *unto any ordinance itself*; which consists in two things:—

(1.) A satisfactory *persuasion of the institution of the ordinance itself*, that it is that which God hath appointed. If God should meet us, and say, “Who hath required these things at your hand?” and Christ should come and tell us, “Every plant that my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be plucked up;” or, “In vain do ye worship me; teaching for doctrines the commandments of men;” — how would such words fill the hearts of poor creatures with confusion, if engaged in such ways that God hath not required! We must be careful, then, that, for the substance of the duty, it be appointed of God.

(2.) That it be performed in a *due manner*. One failure herein, what a disturbance did it bring upon poor David! It is observed by many, that, search the whole course of David’s life, that which he was most eminent in, which God did so bless him for and own him in,

was his love to the ordinances of God. And I cannot but think with what a full heart David went to bring home the ark; with what longings after God; with what rejoicings in him; with what promises to himself, what glorious things there would be after he had the ark of God to be with him; — and yet, when he went to do this, you know what a breach God made upon him, — dashed all his hopes and all the good frame in him. God made a breach upon Uzzah; and it is said the thing God did displeased David, — it quite unframed him, and threw a damp on his joy and delight for the present. But he afterward gathers it up, [1 Chron. xv. 12, 13](#), “He spake to the Levites: Sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.” We sought him, saith he, but “not after the due order.” And what that due order was he shows in the [next verses](#), where he declares that the Levites carried the ark upon their own shoulders, with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded, according to the word of the Lord; whereas, before, they carried it in a cart, which was not for that service. It is a great thing to have the administration of an ordinance in the due order. God lays great weight upon it, and we ought to take care that the order be observed.

This is what we have to offer to you concerning the two general propositions:— that there is a preparation required of us for the observance of all solemn ordinances; and that this preparation consists in a due regard to God, to ourselves, and to the ordinance, whatever it be; — to God, as the author, as the object, and as the end of ordinances; to ourselves, to remove that which would hinder, — not to regard iniquity, — to be self-abased in our hearts with respect to the infinite distance that there is between God and us, and with a love unto ordinances; with respect unto the ordinance itself, that it be of God’s appointment for the matter and manner. These things may help us to a due consideration whether we have failed in any of them or not.

I have mentioned nothing but what is plain and evident from the Scripture, and what is practicable; nothing but what is really required of us; such things as we ought not to esteem a burden, but an advantage: and wherein soever we have been wanting, we should do well to labour to have our hearts affected with it; for it hath been one cause why so many of us have laboured in the fire under ordinances, and have had no profit nor benefit by them. As I said before, conviction is the foundation. Custom is the building of most in their observation of ordinances. Some grow weary of them; some wear them on their necks as a burden; some seek relief from them, and do not find it; — and is it any wonder if this great duty be wanting, having neither considered God nor ourselves in what we go about? And, above all things, take heed of that deceit I mentioned (which is certainly very apt to impose itself upon us), that *where there is a disposition in the person there needs no preparation for the duty*. There was a preparation in those whom God broke out upon because they were not prepared ac-



according to the preparation of the sanctuary; that is, in that way and manner of preparation,
— they had not gone through those cleansings which were instituted under the law.

Discourse VI.⁶

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” — 1 Cor. xi. 28.

554

I have been treating, in sundry of these familiar exercises, about communion with Jesus Christ in that great ordinance of the Lord’s supper, intending principally, if not solely, the instruction of those who have, it may be, been least exercised in such duties. I have spoke something of preparation for it; and on the last opportunity of this kind, I did insist upon these two things:— that there is a preparation required unto the due observance of every solemn ordinance; and I did manifest what in general was required to that preparation. I have nothing to do at present but to consider the application of those general rules to the special ordinance of the supper of the Lord; for the special preparation for an ordinance consists in the special respect which we have to that ordinance in our general preparation: and I shall speak to it plainly, so as that the weakest who are concerned may see their interest in it, and have some guidance to their practice.

And there are two things which may be considered to this purpose:— the *time* wherein this duty is to be performed; and the *duty* of preparation itself.

I. The *time* of the performance of the duty; for that, indeed, regards as well what hath been said concerning preparation in general as what shall now be farther added concerning preparation in particular, with respect to this ordinance.

Time hath a double respect unto the worship of God, as a part of it (so it is when it is separated by the appointment of God himself), and as a necessary adjunct of those actions whereby the worship of God is performed; for there is nothing can be done but it must be done in time, — the inseparable adjunct of all actions.

And therefore, having proved that a preparation is necessary, I shall prove that there is a time necessary; for there can be no duty performed but it must be performed, as I said, in some time.

For the right stating of that, therefore, I shall give you these rules:—

1. That there is a time *antecedent* to the celebration of this ordinance to be set apart for preparation unto it. The very nature of the duty, which we call *preparation*, doth inevitably include this, that the time for it must be antecedent to the great duty of observing the ordinance itself. So, [Matt. xxvii. 62](#), the evening before the passover is called “The preparation of the passover,” — time set apart for the preparation of it.

555

2. The second rule is this, — *That there is no particular, set time*, neither as to the day or season of the day, as to the beginning or ending of it, that is *determined for this duty* in the Scripture; but the duty itself being commanded, the time is left unto our own prudence,

6 Delivered January 21, 1669–70.

to be regulated according to what duty doth require: so that you are not to expect that I should precisely determine this or that time, this or that day, this or that hour, so long or so short; for God hath left these things to our liberty, to be regulated by our own duty and necessity.

3. There are three things that will greatly guide a man in the determination of the time which is thus left unto his own judgment, according to the apprehension of his duty:—

(1.) That *he choose a time wherein the preparation of it may probably influence his mind and spirit in and unto the ordinance itself.* Persons may choose a time for preparation when there may be such an interposition of worldly thoughts and business between the preparation and the ordinance, that their minds may be no way influenced by it in the performance and observation of the duty. The time ought to be so fixed, that the duty may leave a savour upon the soul unto the time of the celebration of the ordinance itself. Whether it be the preceding day, or whether it be the same day, the work is lost unless a man endeavours to keep up a sense of those impressions which he received in that work.

(2.) *Providential occurrences and intimations are great rules for the choosing of time and season for duties.* Paul comes to Athens, [Acts xvii.](#), and in all probability he intended not to preach immediately upon his journey; — he intended to take some time for his refreshment. But observing the wickedness of the place, [verse 16](#), “that they were wholly given to idolatry,” and observing their altar to “the unknown God,” [verse 23](#), he laid hold of that hint of providence, that intimation given him by God’s providence from these things, and immediately fell upon his work; which God blessed with great success. There be a thousand ways, if I may so say, wherein an observing Christian may find God hinting and intimating duties unto him. The sins of other men, their graces, mercies, dangers, may be all unto us intimations of a season for duty. Were none of us ever sent to God by the outrageous wickedness of others? by the very observation of it? And it is a sign of a good spirit, to turn providential intimations into duties. The psalmist speaks to that purpose, [Ps. xxxii. 8, 9](#), “I will guide thee with mine eye,” saith he. The next words are, “Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.” God loves a pliable spirit, that upon every look of his eye will be guided to a duty. But those who are like horses and mules, that must be held with a strong rein, that will not be turned till God puts great strength to it, are possessed with such a frame of spirit as God approves not. You are left at liberty to choose a time; but observe any intimation of providence that may direct to that time.

(3.) Be sure to *improve surprisals with gracious dispositions*; I mean, in the approach of solemn ordinances. Sometimes the soul is surprised with a gracious disposition, as in [Cant. vi. 12](#), “Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” “I knew it not,” saith the church, “I was not aware of it; but I found my soul in a special willing manner drawn forth to communion with Christ.” Is God pleased at any time to give us such gracious

surprisals, with a holy disposition to be dealing with him? — it will be the best season; let it not be omitted.

These things will a little direct us in the determination of the time for preparation; which is left unto our own liberty.

4. Take care that *the time designed and allotted does neither too much intrench upon the occasions of the outward man, nor upon the weakness of the inward man*. If it doth, they will be too hard for us. I confess, in this general observation which professors are fallen into, and that custom which is in the observation of duties, there is little need to give this rule. But we are not to accommodate our rule unto our corruptions, but unto our duties: and so there is a double rule in Scripture fortifies this rule. The one is that great rule of our Saviour, that “God will have mercy, and not sacrifice.” Where these duties of observing sacrifices do sensibly intrench upon duties of mercy, God doth not require it; which hath a great regard even unto our outward occasions. And the other rule is this, — that bodily exercise profits little. When we assign so long a time as wearies out our spirits, and observe the time because of the time, it is bodily exercise, when the vigour of our spirits is gone; which is a sacrifice God delights not in. As Jacob told Esau, if the cattle were driven beyond their pace they would die; so we find by experience, that though with strong resolutions we may engage unto duties in such a manner as may intrench upon these outward occasions or those weaknesses, they will return, and be too hard for us, and instead of getting ground, they will drive us off from ours: so that there is prudence to be required therein.

5. Let not *the time allotted be so short as to be unmeet for the going through with the duty effectually*. Men may be ready to turn their private prayers into a few ejaculations, and going in or out of a room may serve them for preparation for the most solemn ordinance. This hath lost us the power, the glory, the beauty of our profession. Never was profession held up to more glory and beauty, than when persons were most exact in their preparation for the duties of their profession; nothing will serve their turn, but their souls having real and suitable converse with God as unto the duty that lies before them.

6. *The time of preparation is to be extended and made more solemn upon extraordinary occasions*. The intervention of extraordinary occasions must add a solemnity to the time of preparation, if we intend to walk with God in a due manner. These extraordinary occasions may be referred to three heads:— particular sins; particular mercies; particular duties:—

(1.) Is there *an interveniency upon the conscience of any special sin*, that either the soul hath been really overtaken with, or that God is pleased to set home afresh upon the spirit? — there is then an addition to be made unto the time of our preparation, to bring things to that issue between God and our souls that we may attend upon the ordinance, to hearken what God the Lord will now speak; and then he will speak peace. This is the first, principal, extraordinary interveniency that must make an addition to the time of preparation for this ordinance.

(2.) The *interveniencies of mercies*. The ordinance hath the nature of a thank-offering, and is the great medium or means of our returning praise unto God that we can make use of in this world. And then are we truly thankful for a temporal mercy, when it engages our hearts to thank God for Christ, by whom all mercies are blessed to us. Hath God cast in any special mercy? — add unto the special preparation, that the heart may be fit to bless God for him who is the fountain and cause of all mercies.

(3.) Special *duties require the like*. For it being the solemn time of our renewing covenant with God, we stand in need of a renewal of strength from God, if we intend to perform special duties; and in our renewing covenant with God, we receive that especial strength for these special duties.

These rules I have offered you concerning the time of this great duty of preparation which I am speaking unto; and I shall add one more, without which you will easily grant that all the rest will fall to the ground, and with which God will teach you all the rest; and that is, *be sure you set apart some time*. I am greatly afraid of customariness in this matter. Persons complain that, in waiting upon God in that ordinance, they do not receive that entertainment at the hand of God, that refreshment, which they looked for. They have more reason to wonder that they were not cast out, as those who came without a “wedding garment.” That is not only required of us, that we come with our wedding garment, which every believer hath, but that we come decked with this garment. A man may have a garment that may fit very ill, very unhandsomely about him. The bride decks herself with her garments for the bridegroom. We are to do so for the meeting with Christ in this ordinance, — to stir up all the graces God hath bestowed upon us, that we may be decked for Christ. There lies the unprofitableness under that ordinance, — that though God has given us the wedding garment, we are not cast out, yet we take not care to deck ourselves, that God and Christ may give us refreshing entertainment when we come into his presence. Our failing herein evidently and apparently witnesses to the faces of most professors that this is the ground of their unprofitableness under that ordinance. So much for the time.

II. I shall now speak a little to *the duty itself of preparation for that ordinance*; remembering what I spake before of preparation in general unto all solemn ordinances, which must still be supposed.

Now, the duty may be reduced to these four heads: — meditation; examination; supplication; expectation. And, if I mistake not, they are all given us in one verse; and though not directly applied to this ordinance, yet to this, among other ways, of our intimate communion with Christ, [Zech. xii. 10](#), “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.” There is, — 1. Meditation: “They shall look upon him;” this is no otherwise to be performed but by the

meditation of faith. Our looking upon Christ is by believing meditation. Looking argues the fixing of the sight; and meditation is the fixing of faith in its actings. Looking is a fixing of the eye; faith is the eye of the soul: and to look, is to fix faith in meditation. And there is, — 2. Examination; which produceth the mourning here mentioned. For though it is said, “They shall mourn for him,” it was not to mourn for his sufferings, for so he said, “Weep not for me,” — but to mourn upon the account of those things wherein they were concerned in his sufferings. It brings to repentance, which is the principal design of this examination. 3. There is supplication; for there, shall be poured out a spirit of grace and supplication. And, 4. There is expectation; which is included also in that of looking unto Christ.

1. The first part of this duty of preparation consists in *meditation*; and meditation is a duty that, by reason of the vanity of our own minds, and the variety of objects which they are apt to fix upon, even believers themselves do find as great a difficulty therein as any.

I shall only mention those special objects which our thoughts are to be fixed upon in this preparatory duty; and you may reduce them to the following heads:—

(1.) The principal object of meditation, in our preparation for this ordinance, is *the horrible guilt and provocation that is in sin*. There is a representation of the guilt of sin made in the cross of Christ. There was a great representation of it in the punishment of angels; a great representation of it is made in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; and both these are proposed unto us in a special manner, [2 Pet. ii. 4–6](#), to set forth the heinous nature of the guilt of sin: but they come very short, — nay, give me leave to say, that hell itself comes short, — of representing the guilt of sin, in comparison of the cross of Christ. And the Holy Ghost would have us mind it, where he saith, “He hath made him sin for us,” [2 Cor. v. 21](#). “See what comes of sin,” saith he, “what demerit, what provocation there is in it.” To see the Son of God praying, crying, trembling, bleeding, dying; God hiding his face from him; the earth trembling under him; darkness round about him; — how can the soul but cry out, “O Lord, is this the effect of sin? is all this in sin?” Here, then, take a view of sin. Others look on it in its pleasures and the advantages of it, and cry, “Is it not a little one?” as Lot of Zoar; but look on it in the cross of Christ, and there it appears in another hue. “All this is from my sin,” saith the contrite soul.

(2.) The *purity*, the *holiness*, and the *severity* of God, that would not pass by sin, when it was charged upon his Son. “He set him forth,” [Rom. iii. 25](#), “to declare his righteousness.” As there was a representation of the guilt of sin, so there was an everlasting representation of the holiness and righteousness of God in the cross of Jesus Christ. “He spared him not.” And may [not] the soul say, “Is God thus holy in his nature, thus severe in the execution of his wrath, so to punish and so to revenge sin, when his Son undertook to answer for it? How dreadful is this God! How glorious! What a consuming fire!” It is that which will make sinners in Zion cry, “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” [Isa. xxxiii. 14](#). Consider the holiness and the severity of God in



the cross of Christ, and it will make the soul look about him, how to appear in the presence of that God.

(3.) Would you have another object of your meditation in this matter? — let it be *the infinite wisdom and the infinite love of God, that found out this way of glorifying his holiness and justice*, and dealing with sin according to its demerit. “God so loved the world,” [John iii. 16](#), “that he gave his only begotten Son.” And, “Herein is love,” — love indeed! [1 John iv. 10](#), “that God sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” And the apostle, [Eph. iii. 10](#), lays it upon “the manifold wisdom of God.” Bring forth your faith; be your faith never so weak, never so little a reality, do but realize it, and do not let common thoughts and notions take up and possess your spirits. Here is a glorious object for it to work upon, — to consider the infinite wisdom and love that found out this way. It was out of love unsearchable. And now, what may not my poor, sinful soul expect from this love? what difficulties can I be entangled in, but this wisdom can disentangle me? and what distempers can I be under, but this love may heal and recover? “There is hope, then,” saith the soul, in preparation for these things.

(4.) Let the *infinite love of Jesus Christ himself* be also at such a season had in remembrance. [Gal. ii. 20](#), “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.” [Rev. i. 5](#), “Who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” [Phil. ii. 6–8](#), “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” [2 Cor. viii. 9](#), This was “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” The all-conquering and all-endearing love of Christ is a blessed preparative meditation for this great ordinance.

(5.) There is the *end*, what all this came to. This guilt of sin, this holiness of God, this wisdom of grace, this love of Christ; what did all this come to? Why, the apostle tells us, [Col. i. 20](#), “He hath made peace through the blood of his cross.” The end of it all was to make peace between God and us: and this undertaking issued in his blood; that was able to do it, and nothing else, — yea, that hath done it. It is a very hard thing for a soul to believe that there is peace made with God for him and for his sin; but really trace it through these steps, and it will give a great deal of strength to faith. Derive it from the lowest, the deepest pit of the guilt of sin, carry it into the presence of the severity of God, and so bring it to the love of Christ; and the issue which the Scriptures testify of all these things was, — to make peace and reconciliation.

Some may say, that they would willingly meditate upon these things, but they cannot remember them, they cannot retain them, and it would be long work to go through and think of them all, and such as they have not strength and season for.

I answer, — First. My intention is *not to burden your memory* or your practice, but to help your faith. I do not prescribe these things, as all of them necessary to be gone through



in every duty of preparation; but you all know they are such as may be used, every one of them, singly in the duty; though they that would go through them all again and again would be no losers by it, but will find something that will be food and refreshment for their souls. But, —

Secondly. Let your *peculiar meditation* be regulated by your *peculiar present condition*. Suppose, for instance, the soul is pressed with a sense of the guilt of any sin, or of many sins, let the preparative meditation be fixed upon the grace of God, and upon the love of Jesus Christ, that are suited to give relief unto the soul in such a condition. Is the soul burdened with senselessness of sin? doth it not find itself so sensible of sin as it would be, but rather, that it can entertain slight thoughts of sin? — let meditation be principally directed unto the great guilt of sin, as represented in the death and cross of Christ, and to the severity of God as there represented. Other things may lay hold upon our carnal affections, but if this lay not hold upon faith, nothing will.

I have one rule more in these meditations:— Doth any thing fall in that doth peculiarly affect your spirits, as to that regard which you have to God? — set it down. Most Christians are poor in experience, — they have no stock; they have not laid up any thing for a dear year or a hard time, — though they may have had many tokens for good, yet they have forgot them. When your hearts are raised by intercourse between God and yourselves in the performance of this duty, be at pains *to set this down* for your own use; if any thing do immediately affect your spirits, you will be no loser by it: it is as easy a way to grow rich in spiritual experiences as any I know. This is the first part of this duty of preparation; which, with the rules given, may be constantly so observed as to be no way burdensome nor wearisome to you, but very much to your advantage. The other duties I shall but name, and so have done.

2. There is *examination*. Examination is the word of my text, and that duty which most have commonly spoke unto, that have treated any thing about preparation for this ordinance. It respects principally two things, — namely, repentance and faith.

(1.) Our examination *as to repentance*, as far as it concerns preparation unto this duty, may be referred to three heads:—

[1.] To call ourselves to account *whether indeed we have habitually that mourning frame* of spirit upon us which is required in them who converse with God in the cross of Jesus Christ. “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn.” There is an habitual mourning frame of spirit required in us; and we may do well to search ourselves about it, whether it is maintained and kept up or no, — whether worldly security and carnal joys do not devour it; for spiritual joys will not do it. Spiritual joys will take off nothing from spiritual mourning; but worldly security and carnal joy and pleasures will devour that frame of spirit.

[2.] Our examination as to repentance respects *actual sins*, especially as for those who have the privilege and advantage of frequent and ordinary participation of this ordinance.

It respects the surprisals that have befallen us (as there is no man that doeth good, and sinneth not) since we received the last pledge of the love of God in the administration of that ordinance. Friends, let us not be afraid of calling ourselves to a strict account. We have to do with Him “that is greater than we, and knoweth all things.” Let us not be afraid to look into *the book of conscience and conversation*, to look over our surprisals, our neglects, our sinful failings and miscarriages. These things belong to this preparation, — to look over them, and mourn over them also. I would not be thought to myself or you to prescribe hard burden in this duty of preparation. It is nothing but what God expects from us, and what we must do if we intend any communion with him in this ordinance. I may add, —

[3.] Whether *we have kept alive our last received pledges of the love of God*. It may be, at an ordinance we have received some special intimations of the good-will of God. It is our duty to keep them alive in our spirits; and let us never be afraid we shall have no room for more. The keeping of them makes way for what farther is to come. Have we lost such sensible impressions? — there is then matter for repentance and humiliation.

(2.) Examination *also concerns faith*; and that in general and in particular. In general:— Is not my heart hypocritical? or do I really do what in this ordinance I profess? which is, placing all my faith and hope in Jesus Christ, for life, mercy, salvation, and for peace with God. And in particular:— Do I stir up and act faith to meet Christ in this ordinance? I shall not enlarge upon these things, that are commonly spoken unto.

3. The third part of our preparation is *supplication*; that is, adding prayer to this meditation and examination. Add prayer, which may inlay and digest all the rest in the soul. Pray over what we have thought on, what we have conceived, what we have apprehended, what we desire, and what we fear; gather all up into supplications to God.

4. There belongs unto this duty *expectation* also; that is, to expect that God will answer his promise, and meet us according to the desire of our hearts. We should look to meet God, because he hath promised to meet us there; and we go upon his promise of grace, expecting he will answer his word, and meet us: not going at all adventures, as not knowing whether we shall find him or not. God may, indeed, then surprise us; as he did Jacob, when he appeared unto him, and made him say, “God is in this place, and I knew it not,” — but we go where we know God is. He hath placed his name upon his ordinances, and there he is. Go to them with expectation, and rise from the rest of the duties with this expectation.

This is the substance of what might be of use to some in reference unto this duty of preparation for this great and solemn ordinance, which God hath graciously given unto any of you the privilege to be made partakers of.

Have we failed in these things, or in things of a like nature? — let us admire the infinite patience of God, that hath borne with us all this while, — that he hath not cast us out of his house, — that he hath not deprived us of these enjoyments; which he might justly have done, when we have so undervalued them as far as lay in us, and despised them, — when we have

had so little care to make entertainment for the receiving of the great God and our Lord Jesus Christ, who comes to visit us in this ordinance. We may be ready to complain of what outward concerns in and about the worship of God some have been deprived of; we have infinite more reason to admire that there is any thing left unto us, — any name, any place, any nail, any remembrance in the house of God, considering the regardlessness which hath been upon our spirits in our communion with him. “Go away, and sin no more, lest a worse thing befall us.” If there be in any that have not risen up in a due manner in this duty, any conviction of the necessity and usefulness of it, God forbid we should be found sinning against this conviction.

Discourse VII.⁷

“He said, ... Take, eat.” — 1 Cor. xi. 24.

I shall show briefly what it is to obtain a sacramental part of Jesus Christ in this ordinance of the Lord’s supper.

It is a great mystery, and great wisdom and exercise of faith lie in it, how to obtain a participation of Christ. When the world had lost an understanding of this mystery, for want of spiritual sight, they contrived a means to make it up, that should be *easy* on the part of them that did partake, and very *prodigious* on the part of them that administered. The priest, with a few words, turned the bread into the body of Christ; and the people have no more to do but to put it into their mouths, and so Christ is partaken of. It was the loss of the mystery of faith in the real participation of Christ that put them on that invention.

Neither is there in this ordinance a *naked figure*, — a naked representation: there is something in the figure, something in the representation; but there is not all in it. When the bread is broken, it is a figure, a representation that the body of Christ was broken for us; and the pouring out of the wine is a figure and representation of the pouring of the blood of Christ, or the pouring forth of his soul unto death. And there are useful meditations that may arise from thence; but in this ordinance there is a real exhibition of Christ unto every believing soul.

I shall a little inquire into it, to lead your faith into a due exercise in it, under the administration of this ordinance:—

First. *The exhibition and tender of Christ in this ordinance is distinct from the tender of Christ in the promise of the gospel.* As in many other things, so it is in this:— in the promise of the gospel, the person of the Father is principally looked upon as proposing and tendering Christ unto us; in this ordinance Christ tenders himself. “This is my body,” saith he; “this do in remembrance of me.” He makes an immediate tender of himself unto a believing soul; and calls our faith unto a respect to his grace, to his love, — to his readiness to unite and spiritually to incorporate with us. Again, —

Secondly. It is a tender of Christ and an exhibition of Christ under an especial consideration; — not in general, but under this consideration, as he is, as it were, “newly” (so the word is) “sacrificed;”⁸ as he is a new and fresh sacrifice in the great work of reconciling,

⁷ Delivered July 7, 1673.

⁸ The reference is to [Heb. x. 20](#), πρόσφατον, new (πρὸς, φάω), *newly killed*. “The blood of other sacrifices was always to be used *immediately* upon its effusion; for if it were cold or congealed, it was of no use to be offered, or to be sprinkled, [Lev. xvii. 11](#). But the blood of Christ is always hot and warm ... Hence the way of approach which we have to God thereby is said to be ζῶσα καὶ πρόσφατος, — always *living*, and yet always as *newly slain*.” — See Owen on the Holy Spirit, book iv. chap. v. — Ed.

making peace with God, making an end of sin, doing all that was to be done between God and sinners, that they might be at peace.

Christ makes a double representation of himself, as the great Mediator, upon his death and the oblation and sacrifice which he accomplished thereby.

He presents himself unto God in heaven, there to do whatever remains to be done with God on our behalf, by his intercession. The intercession of Christ is nothing but the presentation of himself unto God, upon his oblation and sacrifice.

He presents himself unto God, to do with him what remains to be done on our part, — to procure mercy and grace for us.

He presents himself unto us in this ordinance, to do with us what remains to be done on the part of God; and this answers to his intercession above, which is the counterpart of his present mediation, to do with us what remains on the part of God, — to give out peace and mercy in the seal of the covenant unto our souls.

There is this special exhibition of Jesus Christ; and it is given directly for this special exercise of faith, that we may know how to receive him in this ordinance.

1. *We receive him as one that hath actually accomplished the great work* (so he tenders himself) of making peace with God for us, — for the blotting out of sins, and for the bringing in everlasting righteousness. He doth not tender himself as one that *can* do these things (it is a relief when we have an apprehension that Christ *can* do all this for us); nor doth he tender himself as one that *will* do these things upon any such or such conditions as shall be prescribed unto us: but he tenders himself unto our faith as one that hath done these things; and as such are we to receive him, if we intend to glorify him in this ordinance as one that hath actually done this, actually made peace for us, — actually blotted out our sins, and purchased eternal redemption for us.

Brethren, can we receive Christ thus? are we willing to receive him thus? If so, we may go away and be no more sorrowful. If we come short herein, we come short of that faith which is required of us in this ordinance. Pray let us endeavour to consider how Jesus Christ doth hereby make a tender of himself unto us, — as one that hath actually taken away all our sins, and all our iniquities, that none of them shall ever be laid unto our charge; and to receive him as such, is to give glory unto him.

2. *He tenders himself as one that hath done this work by his death*; for it is the remembrance of his death in a peculiar manner that we celebrate. What there is of love, what there is of efficacy, of power and comfort in that, what there is of security, I may have occasion another time to speak unto you. At present this is all I would offer:— that for the doing of these great things, for the doing the greatest, the hardest things that our faith is exercised about, — which are, the pardon of our sins, and the acceptation of our persons with God, — for the accomplishment hereof he died an accursed death; and that death had no power over him, but the bands of it were loosed, — he rose from under it, and was acquitted. Let



us act faith on Jesus Christ as one that brings with him mercy and pardon, as that which was procured by his death; against which lies no exception. I could show you that nothing was too hard for it, that nothing was left to be done by it which we are to receive.

3. To be made partakers of him in this sacramental tender, by submitting unto his authority in his institutions, by assenting unto the truth of his word in the promise that he will be present with us and give himself unto us, and by approving of that glorious way of making peace for us which he hath trodden and gone in, in his sufferings and [death] in our stead; — to get a view of Christ as tendering himself unto every one of our souls in this ordinance of his own institution, as him who hath perfectly made an end of all differences between God and us, and who brings along with him all the mercy and grace that is in the heart of God and in his covenant; — to have such a view of him, and so to receive him by faith that it shall be life unto our souls, is the way to give glory unto God, and to have peace and rest in our own bosoms.

4. And lastly, in one word, faith is so to receive him as to enable us to sit down at God's table as those that are the Lord's friends, — as those that are invited to feast upon the sacrifice. The sacrifice is offered; Christ is the sacrifice, — God's passover; God makes a feast upon it, and invites his friends to sit down at his table, there being now no difference between him and us. Let us pray that he would help us to exercise faith to this purpose.



Discourse VIII.⁹

“Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”

— 1 Pet. iii. 18.

You know I usually speak a few words to prepare us for this ordinance. You know it is an ordinance of calling to remembrance: “This do in remembrance of me.” There was, under the Old Testament, but one sacrifice to call any thing to remembrance; and God puts a mark upon that sacrifice, as that which was not, as it were, well-pleasing unto him, but only what necessity did require, and that was “the sacrifice of jealousy,” Numb. v. 15. Saith God, “There shall be no oil in it” (a token of peace); “there shall be no frankincense” (that should yield a sweet savour), “for it is an offering to bring iniquity to remembrance.” This great ordinance of the Lord’s supper is not to call iniquity to remembrance; but it is to call to remembrance the putting an end to iniquity: God will make an end of sin, and this ordinance is our solemn remembrance of it.

Now, there are sundry things that we are to call to remembrance. I have done my endeavour to help you to call the love of Christ to remembrance. The Lord, I trust, hath guided my thoughts now to direct you to call the sufferings of Christ unto remembrance. I know it may be a suitable meditation to take up your minds and mine in and under this ordinance. It is our duty, in this holy ordinance, solemnly to call to remembrance the sufferings of Christ.

It is said of the preaching of the gospel, that Jesus Christ is therein “evidently set forth crucified before our eyes,” Gal. iii. 1. And if Christ be evidently crucified before our eyes in the preaching of the gospel, Christ is much more evidently crucified before our eyes in the administration of this ordinance, which is instituted for that very end.

And certainly, when Christ is crucified before our eyes, we ought deeply to consider his sufferings. It would be a great sign of a hard and senseless heart in us, if we were not willing, in some measure, to consider his sufferings upon such an occasion. We are, therefore, solemnly to remember them.

Well, shall I a little mind myself and you how we may and how we ought to call to remembrance the sufferings of Christ?

Let us remember that *we* ourselves were obnoxious unto these sufferings. The curse lay doubly upon *us*. The original curse, “In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,” lay upon us all. The consequent curse, “Cursed be every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them,” that also lay upon us all: we were under both the original and the consequent curse. We know what is in the curse, even all

9 Delivered November 2, 1673.

the anger and wrath that a displeased holy God can and will inflict upon sinful creatures to all eternity. In this state and condition, then, all lay upon us, and all must lie upon us: unless we come to have an interest in the sufferings of Christ, there is no relief for us. I will not insist upon calling to your mind that heaven and earth, and all God's creation combining together, could not have procured relief for one of our souls. Christ, the Son of God, offered himself, and said, "Lo, I come." Indeed, it was a good saying of David, it was nobly said, when he saw the angel of the Lord destroying the people with a pestilence; "Lord," saith he, "it is I and my father's house that have sinned; but as for these sheep," these poor people, "what have they done?" It was otherwise with Christ; he came in the place of sinners, and said, "Let not these poor sheep die." If God would, by faith, give your souls and mine a view of the voluntary substitution of Jesus Christ in his person in our room and on our behalf, it would comfort and refresh us. When the curse of God was ready to break forth upon us, God accepted of this tender, of this offer of Christ, "Lo, I come to do thy will," to be a sacrifice. And what did he do? Why this God did. Saith he, "Then if he will come, if he will do it, let him plainly know how the case stands: the curse is upon them, wrath is upon them, — punishment must be undergone; my holiness, faithfulness, righteousness, and truth, are all engaged." Yet saith Christ, "Lo, I come." Well, what doth God do? He tells you, [Isa. liii. 6](#), "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath made the iniquity of us all to meet on him." God so far relaxed his own law that the sentence shall not fall upon their persons, but upon their substitute, one that hath put himself in their place and stead. "Be it so; all their iniquities be upon thee." "All the iniquities of this congregation," saith God, "be upon my Son Jesus Christ."

Well, what then did he *suffer*? He suffered that which answered the justice of God; he suffered that which answered the law of God; he suffered that which fully repaired the glory of God. Brethren, let us encourage ourselves in the Lord. If there be any demands to be made of you or me, it must be upon the account of the righteousness and justice of God, or upon the account of the law of God, or upon the account of the loss that God suffered in his glory by us. If the Lord Jesus hath come in and answered all these, we have a good plea to make in the presence of the holy God:—

1. He *suffered all that the justice of God did require*. Hence it is said that "God set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the forgiveness of sins," [Rom. iii. 25](#). And you may observe, that the apostle uses the very same words in respect of Christ's sufferings that he uses in respect of the sufferings of the damned angels, [Rom. viii. 32](#), "God spared him not." And when he would speak of the righteousness of God in inflicting punishment upon the sinning angels, he doth it by that very word, "God spared them not." So that whatever the righteousness of God did require against sinners, Christ therein was not spared at all. What God required against your sins and mine, and all his elect, God spared him nothing, but he paid the utmost farthing.



2. The *sufferings of Christ did answer the law of God*. That makes the next demand of us. The law is that which requires our poor guilty souls to punishment, in the name of the justice of God. Why, saith the apostle, “He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,” Gal. iii. 13. By undergoing and suffering the curse of the law, he redeemed us from it.

3. He *suffered every thing that was required to repair and make up the glory of God*. Better you and I, and all the world, should perish, than God should be endamaged in his glory. It is a truth, and I hope God will bring all our hearts to say, “Christ hath suffered to make up that.” The obedience that was in the sufferings of Christ brought more glory to God than the disobedience of Adam, who was the original of the apostasy of the whole creation from God, brought dishonour unto him. That which seemed to reflect great dishonour upon God was, that all his creatures should, as one man, fall off by apostasy from him. God will have his honour repaired; and it is done by the obedience of Christ much more. There cometh, I say, more glory to God by the obedience of Christ and his sufferings, than there did dishonour by the disobedience of Adam; — and so there comes more glory by Christ’s sufferings and obedience upon the cross than by the sufferings of the damned for ever. God loses no glory by setting believers free from suffering, because of the sufferings of the Son of God. This was a fruit of eternal wisdom.

Now, having thus touched a little upon the sufferings of Christ what shall we do in a way of duty?

(1.) Let us *by faith consider* truly and really this great *substitution of Jesus Christ (the just suffering for the unjust)* in our stead, in our room, — undergoing what we should have undergone. The Lord help us to admire the infinite holiness, righteousness, and truth, that is in it. We are not able to comprehend these things in it; but if God enables us to exercise faith upon it, we shall admire it. Whence is it that the Son of God should be substituted in our place? Pray remember that we are now representing this infinite effect of divine wisdom in substituting Jesus Christ in our room, to undergo the wrath and curse of God for us.

(2.) Let us learn from the cross of Christ *what indeed is in our sins*; that when Christ, the Son of God, in whom he was always well pleased, that did the whole will of God, was in his bosom from all eternity, came and substituted himself in our room, “God spared him not.” Let not any sinner under heaven, that is estranged from Christ, ever think to be spared. If God would have spared any he would have spared *his only Son*. But if he will be a mediator of the covenant, God will not spare him, *though his own Son*. We may acquaint you hereafter what it cost Christ to stand in the room of sinners. The Lord from thence give our hearts some sense of that great provocation that is in sin, that we may mourn before him, when we look upon *him* whom our sins have pierced.

(3.) Will God help us to *take a view of the issue of all this*; — of the substitution of Jesus Christ, placing him in our stead, putting his soul in the place of our souls, his person in the



place of our persons; — of the commutation of punishment, in which the righteousness, holiness, and wisdom of God laid that on him which was due unto us? What is the issue of all this? It is to *bring us unto God*, — to peace with God, and acquitment from all our sins; and to make us acceptable with the righteous, holy, and faithful God; to give us boldness before him; — this is the issue. Let us consider this issue of the sufferings of Christ, and be thankful.

Discourse IX.¹⁰

“They worshipped him; but some doubted.” — Matt. xxviii. 17.

It is the table of the Lord that we are invited to draw nigh unto. Our Lord hath a large heart and bountiful hand, — hath made plentiful provision for our souls at this table; and he saith unto us, by his Spirit in his word, “Eat, O my friends, yea, drink abundantly.” It is that feast that God hath provided for *sinners*. And there are *three sorts of sinners* that I would speak a word unto, to stir them up unto a due exercise of faith in this ordinance, according as their condition doth require. There are such as are *not sensible* of their sins so as they ought to be, — they know they are not; they are not able to get their hearts affected with their sins as they desire. There are some that are *so burdened* and overpressed with the sense of their sins, that they are scarce able to hold up under the weight of them, — under the doubts and fears wherewith they are distressed. And there are sinners who are in *enjoyment of a sense of the pardon of sin*, and do desire to have hearts to improve it in thankfulness and fruitfulness.

Something of these several frames may be in us all; yet it may be one is predominant, one is chief, — one in one, another in another: and therefore I will speak a few words distinctly to them all:—

1. There are sinners who are believers, *who cannot get their hearts and spirits affected with sin so as they ought*, and so as they desire. There is not a sadder complaint of the church, as I know, in the whole book of God, than that, *Isa. lxiii. 17*, “Why hast thou hardened our heart from thy fear?” Poor creatures may come unto that perplexity, through an apprehension of the want of a due sense of the guilt of sin, as to be ready thus to cry out, “Why is it thus with me? why am I so senseless under the guilt of all the sins that I have contracted?” I have a word of direction unto such persons. Are there such among, us? It is a direction unto faith to be acting in this ordinance. It is that which we have, *Zech. xii. 10*, “They shall look unto him whom they have pierced, and mourn.” Why, brethren, Christ is represented unto us in this ordinance as he was pierced, — as his precious blood was poured out for us. Let us act faith, if God help us, in two things:—

(1.) Upon *the dolorous sufferings of Christ*, which are represented here unto us. Let us take a view of the Son of God under the curse of God.

(2.) Remember that all these sufferings were *for us*: “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced,” and then “mourn.” The acting of faith upon the sufferings of Christ, as one that suffered *for us*, is the great means, in this ordinance, to bring our hearts to mourn for sin indeed. Therefore, pray let us beg of God, whoever of us are in any measure under this frame, that our insensibleness of the guilt and burden of sin may be our great burden.

¹⁰ Delivered February 22, 1673–4.

Let us try the power of faith in this ordinance, by getting our hearts affected with the sufferings of Christ in our behalf. Let us bind it to our hearts and consciences; and may the Lord give a blessing!

2. There are others who, it may be, *are pressed under the weight of their sins*, walk mournfully, walk disconsolately. I know there are some so, — in the condition expressed by the psalmist, [Ps. xl. 12](#), “Innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me.” Some may be in that condition that their hearts are ready to fail them, through the multitude of their iniquities taking hold upon them. What would you direct such unto in this ordinance? Truly, that which is given, [John iii. 14, 15](#), “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” The Lord Jesus Christ was lifted up, as *Moses* lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; and here he is lifted up, as bearing all our sins in his own body upon the tree. Here is a representation made unto poor sinners whose hearts are most burdened, — here is Jesus Christ lifted up with all our sins upon the tree. Let such a soul labour to have a view of Christ as bearing all our iniquities, that believing on him we should not perish, but have life everlasting. God hath appointed him to be crucified evidently before our eyes, that every poor soul that is stung with sin, ready to die by sin, should look up unto him, and be healed. And virtue will go forth, if we look upon him; for “by his stripes we are healed.”

3. There may be *some that live in full satisfaction of the pardon of their sins*, and are solicitous how their hearts may be drawn forth unto thankfulness and fruitfulness. Remember that place, [Rev. i. 5, 6](#), “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.” Remember this, that whatever your state and condition be, you have here a proper object for faith to exercise itself upon; only be not wanting unto your own comfort and advantage.



Discourse X.¹¹

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” — [Matt. xxviii.](#)

20.

By “the end of the world” we are to understand the consummation of all things; when all church work is done, and all church duties are over; when the time comes that we shall pray no more, hear no more, no more administer ordinances. “But till then;” saith Christ, “take this for your life and for your comfort, — Do what I command you, and you shall have my presence with you.”

There are three things whereby Christ makes good this promise, and is with his church to the end of the world:—

First. By *his Spirit*. “Where,” saith he, “two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,” [Matt. xviii. 20](#); — by his quickening, guiding, directing Spirit, as a Spirit of grace and supplication, as a Spirit of light and holiness, and as a Spirit of comfort.

Secondly. Christ is present with us *by his word*. Saith the apostle, [Col. iii. 16](#), “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,” or plentifully. And how then? “Then,” saith he, [Eph. iii. 17](#), “Christ dwelleth in your hearts by faith.” The word dwelleth in us plentifully, if mixed with faith; and Christ dwelleth in us, — he is present with us by his word.

Thirdly. Christ is present with us *in an especial manner in this ordinance*. One of the greatest engines that ever the devil made use of to overthrow the faith of the church was, by forging *such a presence of Christ* as is not truly in this ordinance, to drive us off from looking after that great presence which is *true*. I look upon it as one of the greatest engines that ever hell set on work. It is not a *corporeal* presence; there are innumerable arguments against *that*. Every thing that is in sense, reason, and the faith of a man, overthrows that corporeal presence. But I will remind you of one or two texts wherewith it is inconsistent. The first is that in [John xvi. 7](#), “Nevertheless,” saith our Saviour, “it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.” The corporeal presence of Christ, and the evangelical presence of the Holy Ghost as the Comforter, in the New Testament, are inconsistent. “I must go away, or the Comforter will not come.” But he so went away as to his presence as to come again with his bodily presence as often as the priests call! No; saith Peter, [Acts iii. 21](#), “The heaven must receive him.” For how long? “Till the time of the restitution of all things.” — “I go away as to my bodily presence, or the Comforter will not come.” And when he is gone away, the heaven must receive him until the time of the restitution of all things. We must not, therefore, look after *such* a presence.

¹¹ Delivered May 17, 1674.

I will give you a word or two what is the presence of Christ with us in this ordinance, what is our duty, and how we may meet with Christ when he is thus present with us; which is the work I have in hand. Christ is present in this ordinance in an especial manner three ways:— I. By *representation*; II. By *exhibition*; III. By *obsignation* or sealing.

I. He is present here by *representation*. So in a low, shadowy way God was present in the tabernacle, in the temple, in the ark and mercy-seat; they had a representation of his glory. But Christ here hath given us a more eminent and clear representation of himself. I will name but two things:—

1. A *representation of himself, as he is the food of our souls.*
2. A *representation of himself, as he suffered for our sins.*

These are two great ways whereby Christ is represented as the food of our souls in the *matter* of the ordinance; and Christ as suffering for our sins, is represented in the *manner* of the ordinance; both by his own appointment. The apostle saith, [Gal. iii. 1](#), “Jesus Christ was evidently crucified before their eyes.” “Evidently crucified” doth not intend particularly this ordinance, but the preaching of the gospel, which gave a delineation, a picture, and image of the crucifixion of Christ unto the faith of believers. But of all things that belong unto the gospel, he is most evidently crucified before our eyes in this ordinance; and it is agreed on all hands that Christ is represented unto the soul in this ordinance. How shall we do this? shall we do it by crucifixes, pictures, and images? No; they are all cursed of that God who said, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.” But *that way* by which God himself, and Christ himself, hath appointed to represent these things unto us, — *that* he blesses and makes effectual. This way, as I have often showed, is the way that was chosen by the wisdom and goodness of Jesus Christ; the name of God is upon it; it is blessed unto us, and will be effectual, if we are not wanting to ourselves.

II. Christ is present with us by way of *exhibition*; that is, he doth really tender and exhibit himself unto the souls of believers in this ordinance; which the world hath lost, and knows not what to make of it. They [the symbols] exhibit that which they do not contain. This bread doth *not contain* the body of Christ, or the flesh of Christ; the cup doth *not contain* the blood of Christ: but they *exhibit* them; both do as really exhibit them to believers as they partake of the outward signs. Certainly we believe that our Lord Jesus Christ doth not invite us unto this table for the *bread that perishes*, for outward food: it is to feed *our souls*. What do we think, then? doth he invite us unto an empty, painted feast? do we deal so with our friends? Here is something really exhibited by Jesus Christ unto us to receive, besides the outward pledges of bread and wine. We must not think the Lord Jesus Christ deludes our souls with empty shows and appearances. That which is exhibited is himself; it is “his flesh as meat indeed, and his blood as drink indeed;” it is himself as broken and crucified that he exhibits unto us. And it is the fault and sin of every one of us, if we do not receive him *this*



day, when an exhibition and tender is made unto us, as here, by way of food. To what end do we receive it? Truly, we receive it for these two ends:— for *incorporation*; for *nourishment*:—

1. We receive our food that it may *incorporate* and turn into blood and spirits, — that it may become one with us; and when we have so done, —

2. Our end and design is, that we may be *nourished*, nature strengthened, comforted, and supported, and we enabled for the duties of life.

Christ doth exhibit himself unto our souls, if we are not wanting unto ourselves, for these two things:— *incorporation and nourishment*; to be received into union, and to give strength unto our souls.

III. Christ is present in this ordinance by way of *obsignation*: he comes here to seal the covenant; and therefore the cup is called “The new testament in the blood of Christ.” How in the blood of Christ? It is the new covenant that was sealed, ratified, confirmed, and made so stable, as you have heard, by the blood of Jesus Christ. For, from the foundation of the world, no covenant was ever intended to be established, but it was confirmed *by blood*; and this covenant is confirmed by *the blood of Christ*; and he comes and seals the covenant with his own blood in the administration of this ordinance.

Well, if Jesus Christ be thus present by way of *representation, exhibition, and obsignation*, what is required of us, that we may meet him, and be present with him? For it is not our mere coming hither that is a meeting with Christ; it is a work of faith: and there are three *acts of faith* whereby we may be present with Christ, who is thus present with us:—

1. The first is by *recognition*, answering his *representation*. As Christ in this ordinance doth represent his death unto us, so we are to remember it and call it over. Pray consider how things were done formerly in reference unto it. The paschal lamb was an ordinance for *remembrance*: “It is a night to be had in remembrance;” and this they should do for a remembrance. And it was to be eaten with bitter herbs. There was once a year a feast, wherein all the sins, iniquities, and transgressions of the children of Israel were called to remembrance; and it was to be done by greatly afflicting of their souls. If we intend to call to remembrance the death of Christ, we may do well to do it with some *bitter herbs*; there should be some *remembrance of sin* with it, some *brokenness of heart* for sin, with respect to him who was pierced and broken for us. Our work is to call over and show forth the death of Christ. Pray, brethren, let us a little consider whether our hearts be suitably affected with respect to our sins, which were upon Jesus Christ when he died for us, or no; lest we draw nigh unto him with the outward bodily presence, when our hearts are far from him.

2. If Christ be present with us by way of *exhibition*, we ought to be present by way of *admission*. It will not advantage you or me that Christ tenders himself unto us, unless we *receive him*. This is the great work; herein lies the main work upon all the members of the church. When we are to dispense the word, the first work lies upon *ministers*; and when the

work is sufficiently discharged, they will be a good savour unto God in them that believe, and in them that perish: but in this ordinance, the main work lies upon *yourselves*. If in the name of Christ we make a tender of him unto you, and he be not actually received, there is but half the work done; so that you are in a peculiar manner to stir up yourselves, as having a more especial interest in this duty, than in any other duty of the church whatsoever; and you may take a better measure of yourselves by your acting in this duty, than of us by our acting in the ministry. Let Christ be received into your hearts by faith and love, upon this particular tender that he assuredly makes in this ordinance of himself unto you; for, as I said, he hath not invited you unto an empty, painted feast or table.

3. Know what you come to meet him for; which is, *to seal the covenant*, — solemnly to take upon yourselves again the *performance of your part of the covenant*. I hope I speak in a deep sense of the thing itself, and that which I have much thought of. This is that which ruins the world, — the hearing that God hath made a covenant of grace and mercy; it is preached to them, and declared unto them, and they think to be saved by this covenant, though they themselves do not perform what the covenant requires on their part. What great and glorious words do we speak in the covenant, — that God gives himself over unto us, to be our God! Brethren, there is *our giving ourselves unto God* (to answer this) universally and absolutely. If we give ourselves unto the world, and to our lusts, and to self, we are not to expect any benefit by God's covenant of grace. If it be not made up by *our sealing* of the covenant of grace, or by a universal resignation of ourselves, in all that we are and do, unto him, we do not meet Jesus Christ; we disappoint him when he comes to seal the covenant. "Where is this people," saith Christ, "that would enter into covenant with me?" Let it be in our hearts to see him seal the covenant of grace as represented in this ordinance; and to take upon ourselves the performance of what is required of us, by a universal giving up ourselves unto God.

Discourse XI.¹²

I shall now produce some few places of Scripture, one especially, that may administer occasion unto you for the exercise of faith, the great duty required of us at this time. You may do well to think of these words of the prophet concerning Jesus Christ, concerning his sufferings and death, which we are here gathered together in his name to remember. They are, —

“He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.” — [Isa. liii. 11.](#)

There are two things that the Holy Ghost minds us of in these words:— First. That Jesus Christ was in *a great travail of soul* to bring forth the redemption and salvation of the church. Secondly. He minds us that Jesus Christ *was satisfied*, and much rejoiced in the consideration of the effects and fruits of the travail of his soul. I shall speak a word to both, and a word to show you how both these things are called over in this ordinance, — both the travail of the soul of Christ and his satisfaction in the fruit of that travail.

First. Christ was in *a great travail of soul to bring forth the redemption and salvation of the church*. It was a great work that Christ had to do. It is usually said, “We are not saved as the world was made, — *by a word*,” but there was *travail* in it: it is the word whereby the bringing forth of children into the world is expressed, — the travail of a woman. And there are three things in that travail:— an *agony of mind*, *outcrying for help*, and *sense of pain*: all these things were in the travail of the soul of Christ. I will name the Scriptures, to call them to your remembrance:—

1. He was “in an agony,” [Luke xxii. 44.](#) An agony is an inexpressible conflict of mind about things dreadful and terrible. So it was with Christ. No heart can conceive, much less can tongue express, the conflict that was in the soul of Jesus Christ with the wrath of God, the curse of the law, the pains of hell and death, that stood before him in this work of our redemption. There was an agony.

2. There was *an outcrying for help*, [Heb. v. 7.](#) “Who in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him.” Such is the outcry of a person in travail, crying out unto them that are able to save them. So it was with Jesus Christ when he was in the travail of his soul about our salvation. He made these strong cries unto God, — to him that was able to save him.

3. There was *pain in it, which is the last thing in travail*; so that he complained that “the pains of hell had taken hold upon him.” Whatever pain there was in the curse of the law, in the wrath of God, — whatever the justice of God did ever design to inflict upon sinners, was then upon the soul of Jesus Christ; so that he was in travail. That is the first thing I would

¹² Delivered August 9, 1674.

mind you of, — that in the bringing forth the work of our redemption and salvation, the Lord Jesus was in travail.

Secondly. It was a *satisfaction*, a rejoicing unto the Lord Jesus Christ, to consider the fruits and effects of this travail of his soul, which God had promised he should see. He was satisfied in the prospect he had of the fruit of the travail of his soul. So the apostle tells us, [Heb. xii. 2](#), that, “for the joy that was set before him,” — which was the joy of bringing us unto God, of being the captain of salvation unto them that should obey him, — he “endured the cross, despising the shame.” He went through all with a prospect he had of the fruit of his travail. There would joy come out of it; the joy that was set before him, as he speaks, [Ps. xvi. 6](#), where God presents unto him what he shall have by this travail, what he shall get by it. Saith he, “The lines are fallen unto me in a pleasant place; yea, I have a goodly heritage.” It is the satisfaction that Jesus Christ (who is there spoken of *only* in that psalm) takes in the fruit of the travail of his soul; he is contented with it. He doth not do as Hiram; who when Solomon gave him the twenty cities in the land of Galilee, calls them, “Cabul;” they were dirty, and they displeased him, [1 Kings ix. 11](#), etc. No; but, “The lines are fallen unto me in a pleasant place;” he *rejoiced* in his travail. It is expressed, in my apprehension, to the height in [Jer. xxxi. 25, 26](#), “I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.” What follows? “Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.” They are the words of Jesus Christ; and he speaks concerning his death, wherein he was as asleep in the grave. Now, consider what was the effect and fruit of it? It was sweet unto Jesus Christ, after all the travail of his soul, that he had “satiated the weary soul,” and “replenished every sorrowful soul.”

In one word, both these things — the travail of the soul of Christ, and the satisfaction he took in the fruit of his travail — are represented unto us in this ordinance.

There is the travail of the soul of Christ to us, in the manner of the participation of this ordinance, — in the breaking of the bread, and in the pouring out of the wine, representing unto us the breaking of the body of Christ, the shedding of his blood, and the separation of the one from the other; which was the cause of his death. Now, though these were outward things in Christ (because the travail of his soul cannot be represented by any outward things, wherein the great work of our redemption lay), we are in this ordinance to be led through these outward things to the travail of the soul of Christ: we are not to rest in the mere outward act or acts of the breaking of the body of Christ, and pouring out of his blood, the separation of the one from the other, and of his death thereby; but through all them we are to inquire what is *under them*. There was Christ’s making his soul an offering for sin; there was Christ’s being made a curse under them, — Christ’s travail of soul, in an agony to bring forth the redemption and salvation of the church.

Brethren, let us be able by faith, not only to look through these outward signs to that which makes the representation itself unto us, — the body and blood of Christ; but even

with them and through them to the travail of the soul of Christ, — the work that he was doing between God and himself for the redemption of the church.

And here is also a representation made unto us of that *satisfaction* the soul of Christ received in the fruit of his travail, having appointed it in a particular manner to be done in remembrance of him. No man will appoint a remembrance of that which he doth not delight in. When Job had no more delight in his life, he desired that the time of his birth might never be remembered. When God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, whereby he exalted his glory, he appointed a *passover*, and said, “It is a day greatly to be remembered.” Because the people had a great deliverance, and God received great glory and great satisfaction; therefore it was greatly to be remembered. We are to celebrate this ordinance in remembrance of Christ; and therefore there is a representation of that satisfaction which Jesus Christ did receive in the travail of his soul: so that he never repented him of one groan, of one sigh, of one tear, of one prayer, of one wrestling with the wrath of God. It is matter of rejoicing, and to be remembered; and do you rejoice in the remembrance of it.

Again; it is apparent from hence, because this ordinance is in an especial manner *an ordinance of thanksgiving*: — the bread that is blessed, or which we give thanks for; the cup which is blessed; — Christ gave thanks. Now, if hereby we give thanks, it is to call to remembrance, not merely the travail of Christ’s soul, but the success of that travail; [that] hereby all differences were made up between God and us; hereby grace and glory were purchased for us, and he became the captain of salvation unto us.

To shut up all; here is, by Christ’s institution, bread and wine provided for us; but it is bread broken, and wine poured out. There are two things in it:— there is the *weak part*, that is Christ’s; there is the *nourishing part*, that is given unto us. The Lord Christ hath chosen by this ordinance to represent himself by these things that are the staff of our lives; they comprise the whole nourishment and sustenance of our bodies. He hath so chosen to represent them by breaking and pouring out, that they shall signify his sufferings. Here are both. As the bread is broken, and as the wine is poured out, there is the representation of the travail of the soul of Christ to us; as bread is received, and the cup, which is the means of the nourishment of man’s life, here is the fruit of Christ’s death exhibited unto us, and his sufferings. The Lord help us to look into the satisfaction that Christ received from this, that we may be partakers of the one and the other!

Discourse XII.¹³

We are met here to remember, to celebrate, and set forth the death of Christ, — to profess and plead our interest therein. And there are two things that we should principally consider in reference to ourselves, and our duty, and the death of Christ. The first is, the *benefits* of it, and our *participation* of them; and the second, is, *our conformity* unto it. Both are mentioned together by the apostle in

[Phil. iii. 10](#), — “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.”

I shall speak a word or two (upon this occasion of remembering the death of Christ) unto the latter clause, — of our “being made conformable unto his death,” — wherein a very great part of our due preparation unto this ordinance doth consist; and for the furtherance whereof we do in an especial manner wait upon God in this part of his worship. Therefore I shall in a few words mind you wherein we ought to be conformable unto the death of Christ, and how we are advantaged therein by this ordinance.

We are to be conformable unto the death of Christ in the *internal, moral cause* of it, and in the *external means* of it.

The *cause* of the death of Christ was sin; the *means* of the death of Christ was *suffering*. Our being conformable unto the death of Christ must respect sin and suffering.

The procuring cause of the death of Christ was *sin*. He died for sin; he died for our sin; our iniquities were upon him, and were the cause of all the punishment that befell him.

Wherein can we be conformable unto the death of Christ with respect unto sin? We cannot die for sin. Our hope and faith is, in and through him, that we shall never die for sin. No mortal man can be made like unto Christ in suffering for sin. Those that undergo what he underwent, because they were unlike him, must go to hell and be made more unlike him to eternity. Therefore the apostle tells us that our conformity unto the death of Christ with respect unto sin lies in this, — that as he died *for* sin, so we should die *unto* sin, — that that sin which he died for should die in us. He tells us so, [Rom. vi. 5](#), “We are planted together in the likeness of his death;” — “We are made conformable unto the death of Christ, planted into him, so as to have a likeness to him in his death.” Wherein? “Knowing that our old man is crucified with him,” saith he, [verse 6](#). It is the crucifixion of the old man, the crucifying of the body of sin, the mortifying of sin, that makes us conformable unto the death of Christ; as to the internal moral cause of it, that procures it. See another apostle tells us, [1 Pet. iv. 1, 2](#), “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer



13 Delivered February 21, 1674–5.

should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.” Here is our conformity to Christ, as he suffered in the flesh, — that we should no longer live to our lusts, nor unto the will of man, but unto the will of God. And, brethren, let me tell you, he who approacheth unto this remembrance of the death of Christ, that hath not laboured, that doth not labour, for conformity to his death in the universal mortification of all sin, runs a hazard to his soul, and puts an affront upon Jesus Christ. O let none of us come in a way of thankfulness to remember the death of Jesus Christ, and bring along with us the murderer whereby he was slain! To harbour with us, and bring along with us to the death of Christ, unmortified lusts and corruptions, such as we do not continually and sincerely endeavour to kill and mortify, is to come and upbraid Christ with his murderer, instead of obtaining any spiritual advantage. What can such poor souls expect?

To be conformable unto the death of Christ as to *the outward* means, is to be conformable unto him *in suffering*. We here remember Christ’s suffering. And I am persuaded, and hope I have considered it, that he who is unready to be conformable unto Christ in suffering, was never upright and sincere in endeavouring to be conformable unto Christ in the killing of sin; for we are called as much to the one as to the other. Christ hath suffered for us, “leaving us an example,” that we should also suffer when we are called thereunto. And our unwillingness to suffer like unto Christ arises from some unmortified corruption in our hearts, which we have not endeavoured to subdue, that we may be like unto Christ in the mortification and death of sin.

There are four things required, that we may be conformable unto the death of Christ in suffering; for we may suffer, and yet not be like unto Christ in it, nor by it:—

1. The first is, that we *suffer for Christ*, [1 Pet. iv. 15, 16](#), “Let none suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer,” etc.; “yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed.” To suffer *as a Christian* is to suffer *for Christ*, — for the name of Christ., for the truths of Christ, for the ways of Christ, for the worship of Christ.

2. It is required that we suffer *in the strength of Christ*; — that we do not suffer in the strength of our own will, our own reason, our own resolutions; but that we suffer, I say, in the strength of Christ. When we suffer aright, “it is given unto us in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but to suffer for him.” As all other graces are to be derived from Christ, as our head and root, stock and foundation; so, in particular, that grace which enables us to suffer for Christ must be from him. And we do well to consider whether it be so or no; for if it be not, all our sufferings are lost, and not acceptable to him. It is a sacrifice without *salt*, yea, without *a heart*, that will not be accepted.

3. It is required that we suffer *in imitation of Christ*, as making him *our example*. We are not to take up the cross but with design to follow Christ. “Take up the cross,” is but half the command; “Take up the cross, and follow me,” is the whole command: and we are to suffer willingly and cheerfully, or we are the most unlike Jesus Christ in our sufferings of

any persons in the world. Christ was willing and cheerful: “Lo, I come to do thy will. I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished,” saith he. And, —

4. *We are to suffer to the glory of Christ.*

These are things wherein we ought to endeavour conformity to the death of Christ, that we now remember. I pray, let none of us trust to the outward ordinance, the performance of the outward duty. If these things be not in us, we do not remember the Lord’s death in right manner.

How may we attain the strength and ability from this ordinance, to be made conformable to his death? that we may not come and remember the death of Christ, and go away and be more unlike him than formerly?

There is power to this end communicated to us, *doctrinally, morally, and spiritually.*

There is no such sermon to teach, *mortification of sin*, as the commemoration of the death of Christ. It is the greatest outward instruction unto this duty that God hath left unto his church; and, I am persuaded, which he doth most bless to them who are sincere. Do we see Christ evidently crucified before our eyes, his body broken, his blood shed for sin? and is it not of powerful instruction to us to go on to mortify sin? He that hath not learned this, never learned any thing aright from this ordinance, nor did he ever receive any benefit from it. There is a constraining power in this instruction, to put us upon the mortification of sin; God grant we may see the fruit of it! It hath *a teaching efficacy*; it teaches, as it is peculiarly blessed of God to this end and purpose. And I hope many a soul can say that they have received that encouragement and that strength by it, as that they have been enabled to more steadiness and constancy in fighting against sin, and have received more success afterward.

There is a *moral* way whereby it communicates strength to us; because it is our duty now to engage ourselves unto this very work. Meeting at the death of Christ, it is our duty to engage ourselves unto God; and that gives strength. And I would beg of you all, brethren, that not one of us would pass through or go over this ordinance, this representation of the death of Christ, without a fresh obligation to God to abide more constant and vigorous in the mortification of sin: we all need it.

And lastly; *a spiritually beholding of Christ by faith is the means to change us into the image and likeness of Christ.* Beholding the death of Christ by faith, as represented to us in this ordinance, is the means to change us into his image and likeness, and make us conformable unto his death, in the death of sin in us.

(1.) Take this instruction from the ordinance:— as you believe in Christ, as you love him, as you desire to remember him, *sin ought to be mortified*, that we may be conformed unto him in his death.

(2.) That we do every one of us bring our souls under *an engagement so to do*; which is required of us in the very nature of the duty.

(3.) That we labour by faith *so* to behold a dying Christ, that strength *may thence issue forth* for the death of sin in our souls. _____

Discourse XIII.¹⁴

I have generally, *on this occasion*, fixed on something particular that may draw forth and guide present meditation; but I shall at present enter on what may be farther carried on, and speak a little to you about *the nature and use of the ordinance itself*, in which, it may be, some of us (for there are of all degrees and sizes of knowledge in the church) may not be so well instructed. God has taught us, that the using of an ordinance will not be of advantage to us, unless we understand the institution, and the nature and the ends of it. It was so under the Old Testament, when their worship was more carnal; yet God would have them to know the nature and the reason of that great ordinance of *the passover*, as you may see in [Exod. xii. 24–27](#), “And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the Lord will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s passover,” etc. Carry along with you the *institution*; it is *the ordinance of God*, “You shall keep this service.” Then you must have *the meaning* of it, which is this, “It is the Lord’s passover.” And *the occasion* of the institution was this, “The Lord passed over our houses when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered us out of Egypt.” There is a great mystery in that word, “It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s passover.” Their deliverance was *by the blood of a sacrifice*; it was a sacrifice which made them look to the great sacrifice, “Christ our passover, who was sacrificed for us.” And there is a mystical instruction: “It is the Lord’s passover,” says he. It was a pledge and sign of the Lord’s passing over and sparing the Israelites, for it was not *itself* the Lord’s passover. Christ says, “*This is my body*,” that is, a pledge and token of it. Under the Old Testament, God would not have his people to observe this great service and ordinance, but they should know *the reason* of it, and the *end* and *rise* of it, that it might be a service of faith.

All these things are clearly comprised, in reference unto this ordinance of the Lord’s supper, in those words of the apostle:—

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and, when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.” — [1 Cor. xi. 23–26](#).

14 Delivered April 18, 1675.

You have both the institution and the nature, the use and ends of this ordinance in these words; and I shall speak so briefly to them, and under such short heads, as those who are young and less experienced may do well to retain:—

First. There is the *institution* of it: “I received,” said he, “of the Lord;” and he received it on this account, that the *Lord appointed it*: and if you would come in faith unto this ordinance, you are to consider two things in this institution:—

1. The *authority of Christ*. It was *the Lord*, — the Lord, the head and king of the church. Our Lord, our lawgiver, our ruler, he has appointed this service; and if you would have your performance of it an act of obedience, acceptable to God, you must get your conscience influenced with the authority of Christ, that we can give this reason in the presence of God why we come together to perform this service, “It is because Jesus Christ, *our Lord*, has *appointed* it; he hath required it of us.” And what is done in obedience to his command, that is a part of our reasonable service; and therein we are accepted with God.

2. In the institution of it there is also *his love*; which is manifested in the *time* of its appointment: “The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed.” One would think that our Lord Jesus Christ, who knew all the troubles, the distresses, the anguish, the sufferings, the derelictions of God, which were coming upon him, and into which he was just now entering, would have had something else to think of besides this provision for his church. But his heart was filled with love to his people; and that love which carried him to all that darkness and difficulty that he was to go through, — that love at the same time did move him to institute this ordinance, for the benefit and advantage of his church. And this I shall only say, that that heart which is made spiritually sensible of the love of Jesus Christ in the institution of this ordinance, and in what this ordinance doth represent, is truly prepared for communion with Christ in this ordinance. O let us all labour for this in particular, if possible, that through the power of the Spirit of God, we may have some impressions of the love of Christ on our hearts! Brethren, if we have not brought it with us, if we do not yet find it in us, I pray let us be careful to endeavour that we do not go away without it. Thus you have what is to be observed in the institution itself, — the *authority* and the *love* of Christ.

Secondly. I shall speak to the *use* and *ends of this ordinance*; and they are three:— 1. *Recognition*; 2. *Exhibition*; 3. *Profession*.

1. *Recognition*; that is, the solemn calling over and remembrance of what is intended in this ordinance.

There is an *habitual* remembrance of Christ; what all believers ought continually to carry about them. And here lies the difference between those that are spiritual and those that are carnal:— They all agree that Christians ought to have a continual remembrance of Christ; but what way shall we obtain it? Why, set up images and pictures of him in every corner of the house and chapel; that is to bring Christ to remembrance. That way carnal



men take for this purpose. But the way believers have to bring Christ to remembrance, is by the Spirit of Christ working through the word. We have no image of Christ but *the word*; and the Spirit represents Christ to us thereby, wherein he is evidently crucified before our eyes. But this recognition I speak of is a solemn remembrance *in the way of an ordinance*, wherein, unto the internal actings of our minds, there is added the external representation of the signs that God has appointed, “This do in remembrance of me.” It is twice mentioned, in [verses 24, 25](#).

585

Concerning this remembrance, we may consider two things:— (1.) What is the *object* of this remembrance or recognition; and, (2.) What is *the act* of it; — what we are to remember, and what is that act of remembrance that is acceptable to God in this ordinance.

(1.) What is the *object* of this remembrance. The object of this remembrance principally is Christ; but it is not Christ *absolutely* considered, it is Christ *in those circumstances* wherein he then was. “Do it in remembrance of me,” saith he; “as I am sent of God, designed to be a sacrifice for the sins of the elect, and as I am now going to die for that end and purpose, so do it in remembrance of me.” Wherefore, there are these four things that we are to remember of Christ as proposed in those circumstances wherein he will be remembered; and I will be careful not to mention any thing but what the meanest of us may bring into present exercise at the ordinance:—

[1.] Remember the *grace and love of God, even the Father, in sending Christ, in setting him forth, and proposing him to us*. This is everywhere mentioned in Scripture. We are minded of this in Scripture, whenever we are called to thoughts of the death of Christ:— [John iii. 16](#), “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son;” [Rom. iii. 25](#), “God set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood;” [Rom. v. 8](#), “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Remember, I pray you, the unspeakable grace and love of God in sending, giving, and setting forth Jesus Christ to be the propitiation.

Now, how does this ordinance guide us in calling this love and grace of God to remembrance? Why, in this, in that it is in the way of a furnished table provided for us. So God has expressed his love in this matter, [Isa. xxv. 6](#), “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 preparation of the table here is to mind us to call to remembrance the love and grace of God, in sending and exhibiting his Son Jesus Christ to be a ransom and propitiation for us. That is the first thing.

[2.] Remember, in particular, the *love of Jesus Christ, as God-man, in giving himself for us*. This love is frequently proposed to us with what he did for us; and it is represented peculiarly in this ordinance. “Who loved me, and gave himself for me,” says the apostle. Faith will never be able to live upon the last expression, — “Gave himself for me,” unless it can

586

rise up to the first, “Who loved me;” [Rev. i. 5, 6](#), “Who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,” etc.

I think we are all satisfied in this, that in calling Christ to remembrance, we should in an especial manner call *the love* of Christ to remembrance. And that soul in whom God shall work a sense of the love of Christ in any measure (for it is past comprehension, and our minds and souls are apt to lose themselves in it, when we attempt to fix our thoughts upon it), — that he who is God-man should do thus for us, [will find that] it is too great for any thing but faith; which can rest in that which it can no way comprehend, if it go to try the depth, and breadth, and length of it, to fathom its dimensions, and consider it with reason: for it is past all understanding; but faith can *rest* in what it cannot *comprehend*. So should we remember the love of Christ, of him who is God-man, who gave himself for us, and will be remembered in this ordinance.

[3.] We shall not manage our spirits aright as to this first part of the duty (the end of the ordinance in *recognition*), unless we call over and remember what was *the ground upon which the profit and benefit of the sufferings of Christ doth redound to us*.

Let us remember that this is no other but that *eternal covenant* and compact that was between the Father and the Son, that Christ should undertake for sinners, and that what he did in that undertaking should be done on their behalf, should be reckoned to them and accounted as theirs. So our Saviour speaks, [Ps. xl. 6, 7](#), “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,” etc.

Christ does that in our behalf which sacrifice and burnt-offerings could not perform. We have this covenant declared at large, [Isa. liii. 10, 11](#), “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed,” etc. Pray, brethren, be wise and understanding in this matter, and not children in calling over and remembering Christ in this ordinance. Remember the counsel of peace that was between them both; when it was agreed on the part of Christ to undertake and answer for what we had done; and upon the part of God the Father, that upon his so doing, righteousness, life, and salvation, should be given to sinners.

[4.] Remember *the sufferings of Christ*; this is a main thing. Now the sufferings of Christ may be considered three ways:— 1st. The sufferings *in his soul*; 2dly. The sufferings in his body; 3dly. The sufferings *of his person* in the dissolution of his human nature, soul and body, by death itself.

1st. Remember the *sufferings in his soul*; and they were of two sorts:— (1st.) *Privative*, his sufferings in the desertion and dereliction of God his Father; and, (2dly.) *Positive*, in the emission of the sense of God’s wrath and the curse of the law on his soul.

(1st.) The head of Christ’s sufferings was in *the divine desertion*, whence he cried, out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” It is certain Christ was forsaken of God;



he had not else so complained, — forsaken of God in his soul. How? The divine nature in the *second person* did not forsake the human; nor did the divine nature in the *third person* forsake the human, as to the whole work of sanctification and holiness, but kept alive in Christ all grace whatsoever, — all grace in that fullness whereof he had ever been partaker: but the desertion was as to *all influence of comfort* and *all evidence* of love from God the Father (who is the fountain of love and comfort), administered by the Holy Ghost. Hence some of our divines have not spared to say, that Christ did *despair* in that great cry, “My God, my God,” etc. Now, *despair* signifies two things:— a *total want of the evidence of faith* as to acceptance with God; and a *resolution in the soul to seek no farther after it*, and not to wait for it from that fountain. In the first way Christ *did despair*, — that is *penal only*; in the latter he *did not*, — that is *sinful also*. There was a total interception of *all evidence* of love from God, but *not a ceasing* in him to wait upon God for the manifestation of that love in his appointed time. Remember, Christ was thus forsaken that his people might never be forsaken.

(2dly.) There were *sufferings positive* in his soul, when he was made sin and a curse for us, and had a *sense of the wrath* and anger of God on his soul. This brought those expressions concerning him and from him: “He began to be sore amazed, and said, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” He was “in an agony.” I desire no more for my soul everlastingly to confute that *blasphemy, that Christ died only as a martyr, to confirm the truth he had preached*, but the consideration of this one thing: for courage, resolution, and cheerfulness, are the principal virtues and graces in him who dies *only as a martyr*; but for him who had the weight of the wrath of God and the curse of the law upon his soul, it *became him to be in an agony*, — *to sweat great drops of blood*, — to cry out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? which,¹⁵ had he been called to for nothing else but barely to confirm the truth he had preached, he would have done without much trouble or shaking of mind.

I shall not now speak of *the sufferings in his body*, which I am afraid we do not consider enough. Some poor souls are apt to consider *nothing but* the sufferings of his body; and some do not *enough* consider them. We may call this over some other time, as also the sufferings of his person in the dissolution of his human nature, by a separation of the soul from the body; which was also comprised in the curse.



15 The close of this sentence is obscure, and hardly develops and completes the author’s argument. If it were not too great a liberty with the text, the following alteration might have been made, and seems to elicit the meaning designed to be conveyed:— “[whereas] had he been called to [die] for nothing else but barely to confirm the truth he had preached, he would have done [it] without much trouble or shaking of mind.” It must be borne in mind that these discourses were not only posthumous, but printed from notes taken by the hearers of Owen. — Ed.

“This do in remembrance of me.” What are we to remember? These are things of no great research; they are not hard and difficult, but such as we all may come up to the practice of in the administration of this very ordinance. Remember the unspeakable grace and love of God, in setting forth Christ to be a propitiation. Remember the love of Christ, who gave himself for us notwithstanding he knew all that would befall him on our account. Remember the compact and agreement between the Father and the Son, that what was due to us he should undergo, and the benefit of what he did should redound to us. Remember the greatness of the work he undertook for these ends, in the sufferings of his whole person, when he would redeem his church with his own blood.

(2.) One word for *the act of remembrance*, and I have done. How shall we remember? Remembrance in itself is a solemn calling over of what is true and past: and there are two things required in our remembrance; the first is *faith*, and the second is *thankfulness*.

[1.] *Faith*; so to call it over as to believe it. But who does not believe it? Why, truly, brethren, *many believe the story of it, or the fact*, who do not believe it *to that advantage for themselves* they ought to do. In a word, we are *so to believe it as to put our trust for life and salvation* in those things that we call to remembrance. *Trust and confidence belong to the essence of saving faith*. So remember these things as to place your trust in them. Shall I gather up your workings of faith into one expression? — the apostle calls it, [Rom. v. 11](#), the “receiving the atonement.” If God help us afresh to receive the atonement at this time, we have discharged our duty in this ordinance; for here is the atonement proposed, from the love of God, and from the love of Christ, by virtue of the compact between the Father and the Son, through the sufferings and sacrifice of Christ, in his whole person, soul and body. Here is an atonement with God proposed unto us: the working of our faith is to receive it, or to believe it *so as to approve of it* as an excellent way, full of wisdom, goodness, holiness; to embrace it, and trust in it.

[2.] Remember, that among the offerings of old which were pointed to shadow out the death of Christ, there was a *thank-offering*; for there was a *burning of the fat upon the altar of thank-offering*, to signify there was thankfulness to God always, as part of the remembrance of the sacrifice that Christ made for us. Receive the atonement, and be thankful. The Lord lead us into the practice of these things!

Discourse XIV.

“For I have received of the Lord,” etc. — 1 Cor. xi. 23–26.

The last time I spake to you on this occasion, I told you that the grace of God and our duty in this ordinance might be drawn under the three heads of *recognition* or calling over, of *exhibition*, and of *profession*. The first of these I then spake unto, and showed you what we are to recognise or call over therein.

2. The second thing is *exhibition and reception*, — *exhibition on the part of Christ, reception on our part*; wherein the essence of this ordinance doth consist. I shall briefly explain it to you, rather now to stir up faith unto exercise than to instruct in the doctrine. And that we may exercise our faith aright, we may consider, — (1.) Who it is that makes an exhibition, that offers, proposes, and gives something to us at this time in this ordinance; (2.) What it is that is exhibited, proposed, and communicated in this ordinance; and, (3.) How or in what manner we receive it:—

(1.) Who *is it that makes an exhibition*? It is *Christ himself*. When Christ was given for us, God the Father gave him, and set him forth to be a propitiation; but in this exhibition it is *Christ himself*, I say, that is the *immediate exhibiter*. The tender that is made, of whatever it be, it is made by Christ. And as our faith stands in need of directions and boundaries to be given to it in this holy duty, it will direct our faith to consider Jesus Christ present among us, *by his Spirit* and *by his word*, making this tender, or this exhibition unto us. It is Christ that does it; which calls out our faith unto an immediate exercise *on his person*.

(2.) What *is it Christ does exhibit and propose to us*?

[1.] Not *empty and outward signs*. God never instituted such things in his church. From the foundation of the world he never designed to feed his people with such outward symbols. Those under the Old Testament were not empty, though they had not a fullness like those under the New. They had not a fullness, because they had respect to what was yet to come and could not be filled with that light, that grace, that evidence of the things themselves, as the present signs are, which are accomplished. Christ doth not give us empty signs. Nor, —

[2.] *Does Christ give us his flesh and blood, taken in a carnal sense*. If men would believe him, he has told us a long time ago, when that doubt arose upon that declaration of his [about] eating his flesh and drinking his blood, [John vi. 52](#) (though he *did not then speak of the sacrament*, but of that which was the essence and life of it), “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” He told us, that eating his flesh profited nothing, in that way they thought of eating it; for they apprehended, as the Papists do now, that they were to eat flesh, — body, bones, and all. Why, says he, “The flesh profiteth nothing; it is the Spirit that quickeneth; that power that is to be communicated to you is by the Spirit.” So that Christ does not give us his flesh and blood in a carnal manner, as the men at Capernaum thought, and others look for. This would not feed our souls.



But then, what is it that Christ does exhibit, that we may exercise our faith upon? I say, it is *himself* as immediately discharging his great office of a *priest*, being sacrificed for us. It is himself, as accompanied with all the benefits of that great part of his mediation, in dying for us. May the Lord stir up our hearts to believe that the tender Christ makes unto us is originally and principally of himself; because all the benefits of his mediation arise from that fountain and spring, when God purchased the church with his own blood. A way this is which the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the wisdom of God, has found out and appointed, to make a special tender of his person to our souls, to be received by us. And he tenders himself, in the discharge of his mediation, in the most amiable and most glorious representation of himself to the soul of a sinner. Christ is glorious in himself, in all his offices, and in all the representations that are made of him in the Scripture unto our faith; but Christ is most amiable, most beautiful, most glorious to the soul of a believing sinner, when he is represented as dying, — making atonement for sin, making peace for sinners, as bearing our iniquities, satisfying the wrath of God and curse of the law, to draw out our hearts unto faith and love. Christ in this ordinance makes such a representation of himself, as bleeding for us, making atonement for our sins, and sealing the everlasting covenant: and he proposes himself unto us with all the benefits of his death, of that redemption he wrought out for us, — peace with God, making an end of sin, bringing in everlasting righteousness, and the like. I intend only to remind you of these things; for we are at a loss sometimes as to the exercise of faith in and under this duty.

3. There remains to be considered, *reception*; for unless it be received, there is nothing done to any saving purpose. Notwithstanding all this tender that is made, the issue of all the benefit and consolation lies upon receiving.

There are two ways whereby we do receive Christ:— (1.) We receive him *sacramentally*, by obedience in church-order; and, (2.) We receive him *spiritually* and really by faith, or believing in him.

(1.) We receive him *sacramentally*. This consists in the due and orderly performance of what he has appointed in his word for this end and purpose, that therein and thereby he may exhibit himself to our souls. It doth not consist (as some have thought) *in partaking of the elements*; that is but one part of it, and but one small part. Our sacramental reception consists in the due observation of the whole order of the institution according to the mind of Christ.

(2.) We receive him by faith *spiritually*; and if we could rightly understand that special *act of faith* which we are to exercise in the reception of Christ, when he does thus exhibit himself to us, then should we glorify God, — then should we bring in advantage to our own souls.

I have but a word to say; and that is this, — it is that acting of faith which is now required of us which draws nearest unto *spiritual, sensible experience*. Faith has *many degrees*, and

many acts; — some at a kind of distance from the object, in *mere reliance and recumbency*; and many other acts of faith make very near approaches to the object, and rise up to *sensible experience*. It should be (if God would help us) such an act of faith as rises up nearest to a sensible experience. It is that which the Holy Ghost would teach us by this ordinance, when we receive it by eating and drinking, which are things of sense; and things of sense are chosen to express faith wrought up to an experience. And they who had some apprehension hereof, — that it must be a peculiar acting of faith and rising up to a spiritual experience, — but finding nothing of the light and power of it in their own souls, gave birth to *transubstantiation*; that they might do that with their mouths and teeth which they could not do with their souls.

Faith should rise up to an experience in two things, — [1.] In *representation*; [2.] In *incorporation*:—

[1.] The thing we are to aim at, to be carried unto by faith in this ordinance, is, that there may be a *near and evident representation* of Christ in his tender unto our souls, — faith being satisfied in it; faith being in this matter the evidence of things not seen, making it exist in the soul, making Christ more present to the soul than he would be to our bodily eyes if he were among us, — more assuredly so. Faith should rise up to evidence in that near and close representation it makes of Christ in this exhibition of himself. And, —

[2.] *Faith is to answer the end of eating and drinking, which is incorporation*. We are so to receive Christ as to receive him into a spiritual incorporation, — that the flesh and blood of Christ, as communicated in this ordinance, through faith, may be turned and changed in our hearts into *spiritual, vital principles*, and unto growth and satisfaction. These are the three things we receive by nourishment, and wherein incorporation does consist:— there is an increase and quickening of vital principles, there is growth, and there is satisfaction, in receiving suitable food and nourishment. Faith, I say, should rise up to these three things in its acts. I mention these things to direct the actings of our faith in this holy administration.



Discourse XV.¹⁶

I shall offer a few words to direct you in the present exercise of faith in this ordinance. I design no more but to give occasion to that particular exercise of faith which is now required of us, whereby we may sanctify the name of God in a due manner, give glory to him by believing, and receive establishment unto our own souls: and I would do it by minding you of that word of our Lord Jesus Christ in

John xii. 32, — “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

What he means by his *lifting up*, the evangelist expounds in the next words, which are these, “This he said, signifying what death he should die.” So that the lifting up of *Christ on the cross*, is that which he lays as the foundation of *his drawing sinners unto him*. No sinner will come near to Christ unless he be drawn; and to be drawn, is to be *made willing* to come unto him, and to follow him in chains of love. Christ draws none to him whether they will or no; but he casts on their minds, hearts, and wills the cords of his grace and love, working in them powerfully, working on them kindly, to cause them to choose him, to come to him, and to follow him. “Draw me; we will run after thee.” The great principle and fountain from whence the drawing efficacy and power of grace doth proceed, is from the lifting up of Christ. Drawing grace is manifested in, and drawing love proceeds from, the sufferings of Jesus Christ on the cross.

But that which I would just mind you of at present is this, that the *look of faith* unto Christ as lifted up is the only means of bringing our souls near to him. Our faith is often expressed by *looking unto Christ*: Isa. xlv. 22, “Look unto me,” says he, “and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” The conclusion is, that those who so look unto him shall be justified and saved: Isa. lxv. 1, “Behold me, behold me.” And it is the great promise of the efficacy of the Spirit poured out upon us, that “we shall look upon him whom we have pierced,” Zech. xii. 10. God calls us to look off from all other things; look off from the law, look off from self, look off from sin, — look *only* unto Christ. Is Christ said to be lifted up in his death, and to die that manner of death wherein he was lifted up on the cross? — so it was expressed in the type; the brasen serpent was lifted up on a pole, that those who were smote with the fiery serpents might look to it. If the soul can but turn an eye of faith unto Jesus Christ as thus lifted up, it will receive healing, though the sight of one be not so clear as the sight of another. All had not *a like sharpness of sight* that looked to the brasen serpent, nor have all *the like vigour of faith* to look to Christ: but one sincere look to Christ is pleasing to him; so as he says, Cant. iv. 9, “Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished



¹⁶ Delivered September 5, 1675.

my heart with one of thine eyes.” A soul sensible of guilt and sin, that casts but one look of faith to Christ as lifted up, it even raises the heart of Christ himself; and such a soul shall not go away unrefreshed, unrelieved.

Now, brethren, the end of this ordinance is, to lift up Christ *in representation*: as he was lifted up really on the cross, and as in the whole preaching of the gospel Christ is evidently crucified before our eyes, so more especially in the administration of this ordinance. Do we see, then, wherein the special acting of faith in this ordinance does consist? God forbid we should neglect the stirring up our hearts unto the particular acting of faith in Jesus Christ, who herein is lifted up before us. That which we are to endeavour in this ordinance is, to get a view by faith, — faith working by thoughts, by meditation, acting by love, — a view of Christ as lifted up; that is, as bearing our iniquities in his own body on the tree. What did Christ do on the tree? what was he lifted up for, if it was not to bear our sins? Out of his love and zeal to the glory of God, and out of compassion to the souls of men, Christ bore the guilt and punishment of sin, and made expiation for it. O that God in this ordinance would give our souls a view of him! I shall give it to myself and to you in charge at this time, — if we have a view of Christ by faith as lifted up, our hearts will be drawn nearer to him. If we find not our hearts in any manner drawn nearer to him, it is much to be feared we have not had a view of him as bearing our iniquities. Take, therefore, this one remembrance as to the acting of faith in the administration of this ordinance, — labour to have it fixed upon Christ as bearing sin, making atonement for it, with his heart full of love to accomplish a cause in righteousness and truth.

Discourse XVI.¹⁷

To whet our minds, and lead us to a particular exercise of faith and love in this duty, I shall add a few words from that Scripture which I have already spoken something to upon this occasion, namely, —

[John xii. 32](#), — “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

This lifting up, as I said before, was the lifting up of Christ on the cross, when, as the apostle Peter tells us, “he bore,” or, as the word is, he carried up, “our sins in his own body on the tree.” Christ died for three ends:— 1. *To answer an institution*; 2. *To fulfil a type*; and, 3. *To be a moral representation of the work of God in his death*.

1. It was to answer *the institution*, that *he who was hanged on a tree was accursed of God*, [Deut. xxi. 23](#). There were many other ways appointed of God to put malefactors to death among the Jews. Some were stoned; in some cases they were burned with fire; but it is only by God appointed that *he that was hanged on a tree was accursed of God*: and Christ died that death, to show that it was he who underwent the curse of God; as the apostle shows, [Gal. iii. 13](#), “He was made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”

2. Christ died that death to *fulfil a type*. For it was a bloody and most painful death, yet it was a death wherein a bone of him was not broken; typified of him in the *paschal lamb*, of which a bone was not to be broken. Christ was lifted up on the cross to fulfil that type: so that though his death was bitter, lingering, painful, shameful, yet not a bone was broke; that every one might have *a whole Christ, an entire Saviour*, notwithstanding all his suffering and rending on our behalf.

3. He was so lifted up that it might be a *moral representation unto all*; to answer that other *type*, also, of the serpent lifted up in the wilderness: so that he was the person that might say, “Behold me, behold me.” He was lifted up between heaven and earth, that all creatures might see God had set him forth to be a propitiation.

“And I, when I am lifted up,” — what will he then do? “When I have answered the curse, when I have fulfilled the types, when I have complied with the will of God in being a propitiation, ‘I will draw all men unto me.’ ” It is placed upon *Christ’s lifting up*. Now that is actually past; nor was it done merely while Christ was hanging on the cross. There are two ways whereby there is a representation made of Christ being lifted up to draw men unto him:—

1. By *the preaching of the word*. So the apostle tells us, [Gal. iii. 1](#), that “Jesus Christ was evidently set forth crucified among them, before their eyes.” The great end of preaching the

594

595

word is, to represent evidently Christ crucified; — it is to lift up Christ, that he may draw sinners unto him. And, —

2. It is represented *in this ordinance of the Lord's supper*, wherein we show forth his death. Christ is peculiarly and eminently lifted up in this ordinance, because it is a peculiar and eminent representation of his death.

Now there are *two ways* of Christ's drawing persons to himself:— 1. His way of drawing *sinner*s to him *by faith and repentance*. 2. His way of drawing *believers* to him, as to *actual communion* with him.

Christ draws sinners to him by faith and repentance, as he is lifted up in the preaching of the word; and he draws believers to him, as unto actual communion, as by the word, so in an especial manner by this ordinance. I shall only speak a word on the latter, — how Christ is lifted up in this ordinance that represents his death unto us; or, how he draws us into *actual communion* with him.

1. He does it *by his love*. The principal thing that is always to be considered, in the lifting up of Christ, is his love. "Who loved me," says the apostle, "and gave himself for me;" and, "Who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." I could show you that love is attractive, that it is encouraging and constraining. I will only leave this with you: whatever apprehensions God in this ordinance shall give you of the love of Christ, you have therein an experience of Christ's drawing you, as he is lifted up, unto actual communion with him. It is of great concernment to you. Christ is never so lovely unto the soul of a sinner as when he is considered as lifted up; that is, as undergoing the curse of God, that a blessing might come upon us. O that he who has loved us, and because he has loved us, would draw us with the cords of his loving-kindness! as God says he does, [Jer. xxxi. 3](#), "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

2. The *sufferings of Christ in soul and body* are attractive of, and do draw the souls of believers to him. "They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and mourn." It is a look to Christ as pierced for sin, under his sufferings, that is attractive to the souls of believers in this ordinance; because these sufferings were for us. Call to mind, brethren, some of these texts of Scripture; see what God will give you out of them:— "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "He was made a curse for us;" and "he bore our sins in his own body on the tree;" and "died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God." If Jesus Christ be pleased to let in a sense of his sufferings for us, by these Scriptures, upon our souls, then we have another experience of his drawing us as he is lifted up.

3. Christ draws us as he is *lifted up*, by *the effects* of it. What was he lifted up for? It was to make peace with God through his blood: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." When? When "he made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." It is the sacrifice of atonement; it is the sacrifice wherewith the covenant between God and us was sealed.



This is one notion of the supper of our Lord. Covenants were confirmed *with sacrifice*. Isaac made a covenant with Abimelech, and confirmed it with sacrifice; so it was with Jacob and Laban: and in both places, when they had confirmed the covenant with a sacrifice, they had a *feast upon the sacrifice*. Christ by his sacrifice has ratified the covenant between God and us, and invites us in this ordinance to a participation of it. He draws us by it to faith in him, as he has made an atonement by his sacrifice.

These are some of the ways whereby Christ draws the souls of believers unto communion with him in this ordinance, that represents him as lifted up:— by expressing his love, by representing his sufferings, and tendering the sealing of the covenant as confirmed with a sacrifice, inviting us to feed on the remainder of the sacrifice that is left to us, for the nourishment of our souls. O that he would cast some of these cords of love upon our souls! for if he should be lifted up, and we should not come, if we should find no cords of love cast upon us to draw us into actual communion, we should have no advantage by this ordinance.

How shall we come in actual communion unto Christ in this ordinance, upon his drawing? what is required of us? Why, —

1. We are to come by faith, to “receive the atonement,” [Rom. v. 11](#). We come to a due communion with Christ in this ordinance, if we come to receive the atonement made by his death, as full of divine wisdom, grace, and love; and, as the truth and faithfulness of God is confirmed in it, to receive and lay hold on this atonement, that we may have peace with God. [Isa. xxvii. 5](#), “Let him take hold of my strength; and he shall be at peace with me.” Brethren, here is the arm of God, Christ the power of God, Christ lifted up. We ourselves have sinned, and provoked God. What shall we do? shall we set briers and thorns in battle array against God? No; says he, “I will pass through and devour such persons.” What then? “Let him take hold of my strength,” of my arm, “and be at peace.” God speaks this to every soul of us, in this lifting up of Christ. Now, receive the atonement as full of infinite wisdom, holiness, and truth.

2. Faith comes and brings the soul to Christ as he is thus lifted up; but it is always *accompanied with love*, whereby the soul *adheres to Christ* when it is come.

Doth faith bring us to Christ, on his drawing, to receive the atonement? — set love at work to cleave unto him, to take him into our hearts and souls, and to abide with him.

3. It is to come *with mourning and godly sorrow*, because of our own sins. “Look unto him whom we have pierced, and mourn.” These things are very consistent. Do not think we speak things at random: they are consistent in experience, — that we should receive Christ as making an atonement, and have peace with God in the pardon of our sins, and nevertheless mourn for our own iniquities. The Lord give experience of them in your hearts!

Let us now pray that some of these cords wherewith he draws the souls of believers may be on our souls in this ordinance.



Discourse XVII.

When we have opportunity of speaking to you on these occasions, it is for the direction of the exercise of your faith in this ordinance in a due manner. Here is a representation of the death of Christ; and there is in the word a representation of that which we should principally consider, and act faith with respect unto, in the representation that is made in this ordinance; and that is, of a blessed change and commutation that is made between Christ and believers, *in the imputation of their sins unto him, and in the imputation of his righteousness unto them*: and the principal part of the life and exercise of faith consists in a due consideration and improvement thereof. God taught this to the church of the Old Testament in the type of the offering of the *scape-goat*:—

“And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat,” etc.

— [Lev. xvi. 21.](#)

Aaron was not only *to confess* all the sins and iniquities of the people over the head of the goat, but he was *to put all their sins* upon him. Here is a double act:— *the confession of sin*, which is, as it were, the gathering of all their sins together; and *the putting of them on the goat*, to give a lively representation of it unto faith. So God did instruct Aaron to the putting of the guilt of our iniquities *typically* upon the sacrifice, *really* upon Jesus Christ.

He doth not say, “He shall bear the *punishment*,” but, “He shall take the *sin itself*” (that is, as to the *guilt* of it), “and carry, it quite away.” And therefore in the sacrifice appointed in [Deut. xxi.](#) for expiation of an uncertain murder, — when a man was killed, and none knew who killed him, so none was liable to punishment, but there was *guilt upon the land*; — then the elders of the city that was nearest the place where the murder was committed, to take away the guilt, were to cut off the neck of a heifer, by God’s appointment; and that took away the guilt. Thus did God instruct the church under the Old Testament in this great, sovereign act of his wisdom and righteousness, in transferring the guilt of sin from the church unto Christ. Therefore the prophet says, [Isa. liii. 5, 6](#), “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” What then? “By his stripes we are healed.” The stripes were all due to us; but they were due to us for our iniquities, and for no other cause. Now, our iniquities being transferred to Christ, all the stripes came to be his, and the healing came to be ours. To the same purpose the apostle says, “He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” As we are made the righteousness of God in him, so he is made sin for us. We are made the righteousness of God in him by the *imputation* of his righteousness unto us; for our apostle is to be believed, that righteousness is by imputation: “God imputes righteousness,” says he. We have no righteousness before God



but by imputation; and when we are made righteous, — the righteousness of God, which God ordains, approves, and accepts, it is the righteousness of Christ *imputed to us*. And how is he made sin for us? Because our sin is *imputed to him*. Some will say, “He was made sin for us; that is, a sacrifice for sin.” Be it so; but nothing could be made an expiatory sacrifice, but it had first the sin imputed to it. Aaron shall put his hands on the goat, confessing all their sins over his head; — be their sins on the head of the goat, or the expiatory sacrifice was nothing.

The same exchange you have again in [Gal. iii. 13, 14](#), “He was made a curse for us.” The curse was due to us, and this Christ was made for us. And to confirm our faith, God did institute a visible pledge long beforehand, to let us know he was made a curse for us. He had made it a sign of the curse, for one to be hanged on a tree; as it is written, “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” What, then, comes to us? Why, “the blessing of faithful Abraham.” What is that? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Justification and acceptance with God is the blessing of faithful Abraham. Here is the great exchange represented to us in Scripture in these things, — that all our sins are transferred upon Christ by imputation, and the righteousness of Christ transferred to us by imputation. Both these are acts of God, and not our acts. It is God who imputes our sin to Christ: “He hath made him to be sin for us.” And it is God who imputes the righteousness of Christ to us: “It is God that justifieth.” He who made Christ to be “sin,” he also makes us to be “righteousness.” These acts of God we ought to go over in our minds by faith; which is that I now call you to.

The way to apply the benefits and advantage of this great commutation to our souls, is in our minds, by faith, to [put our] seal to these acts of God. Christ in the gospel, and especially in this ordinance, is “evidently crucified before our eyes,” [Gal. iii. 1](#). God hath set him forth to be a propitiation; so he is declared in this ordinance. And Christ at the same time calls us to him: “Come unto me: look unto me, all the ends of the earth;” — “Come with your burdens; come you that are heavy laden with the guilt, of sin.” What God has done in a way of righteous *imputation*, that we are to do in this ordinance in a way of *believing*. We are, by the divine help, to lay our sins by faith on Jesus Christ, by closing with that act of God which is represented to us in the word, — that God has imputed all our sins to Jesus Christ. Let you and I, and all of us, say “Amen,” by faith; “So be it, O Lord, — let the guilt of all our sins be on the head of Jesus Christ:” and therein admire the goodness, the grace, the love, the holiness, the infinite wisdom of God in this matter. If we were able to say Amen to this great truth, we should have the comfort of it in our souls, — to acquiesce in it, to find power and reality in it.

Then the other act of God is, the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to us. It is not enough to us that *our sins* are all carried away into a land not inhabited; we stand in need of a *righteousness* whereby we may be accepted before God. He makes us to be the



righteousness of God; we do not make ourselves so, but are made so by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ.

Our second act of faith, that God may stir us up unto in this ordinance, is, to “receive the atonement.” So the apostle expresses it, [Rom. v. 11](#). We receive together with it *all the fruits* of the atonement.

Now, if the Lord will be pleased to stir up our hearts from under their deadness, — to gather them in from their wanderings, to make us sensible of our concern, to give us the acting of faith in this matter, that truly and really the holy God has laid all our iniquities upon Christ, and tenders to us life, righteousness, justification, and mercy by him, — we shall then have the fruit of this administration.

Discourse XVIII.¹⁸

I shall offer a few words, with a view to prepare our minds to the exercise of faith and communion with God in this ordinance: and because we ought to be in the highest exercise of faith in this ordinance, I shall take occasion from those words, which express as high an acting of faith, I think, as any is in the Scripture; I mean those words of the apostle in

Gal. ii. 20, — “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

Our inquiry now is, How we may act faith? It acts two ways:—

1. By *way of adherence*, — cleaving to, trusting and acquiescing in, God in Christ, as declaring his love, grace, and good-will in his promises. This is the faith whereby *we live*, whereby we are justified, — the faith without which this ordinance will not profit, but disadvantage us; for without this faith we cannot discern the Lord’s body, — we cannot discern him as crucified for us. This is that we are in an especial manner to examine ourselves about in reference to a participation of this ordinance; for *self-examination* is a gospel institution proper for this ordinance. And this is the faith whereby we are in Christ; without which a participation of the outward signs and pledges of Christ will not avail us. So, then, with faith thus acting, we are to be qualified and prepared unto a participation of this ordinance.

2. Another way by which faith ought to act in this ordinance, is that of *special application*. “Who loved me, and gave himself for me;” this is faith acting by particular application. I hope the Lord has given us that faith whereby we may be prepared for this ordinance. And now I am to inquire and direct you a little in that faith which you may act in this ordinance. I say, it is this faith of special application to our own souls that God now requires we should act; and I prove it thus:— It is because in this ordinance there is a proposition, tender, and communication of Christ to *every one in particular*. In the promise of the gospel Christ is proposed *indefinitely*, to all that believe; and so the faith I mentioned before (of acquiescence in him) answers what is required of us by virtue of the promise in the gospel: but in this ordinance, by God’s institution, Christ is tendered and given to me and to thee, — to every one in particular; for it is by his institution that the elements in this ordinance are distributed to every particular person, to show that there is a tender and communication of Christ to particular persons. Now, such a particular communication is to be received by this particular faith, the faith of application, to receive him to our own souls.

And then, moreover, one great end of the ordinance is, manifestly, that it requires the acting of faith in a particular way of application to every one of us. It is for a farther incor-

18 Delivered April 16, 1676.

poration of Christ in our souls; it is for receiving Christ as nourishment, — as the bread that came down from heaven, — as giving his body and blood for spiritual food. Now every one knows, that whatever feasts be prepared in the world, unless every one in particular takes his own portion, and eats and digests it, it will not turn to nourishment unto him. This particular act of application answers that eating, drinking, and digesting, which the nature of the ordinance does require. So, brethren, this is that I aim at, — that it is our duty, in this ordinance, to act a particular faith as to the application of Christ and all his benefits, each one to his own soul.

You will say, then, “What is *the special object* of this special faith?” Truly that which the apostle tells us here; — it is *special love*, in the first place; and it is *the special design* of the death of Christ, in the next place: “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.” The object you ought to fix upon, in the exercise of this faith of application to your own souls, is the special love of Christ, — that Christ had a special love, not only to the church in general, but the truth is, Christ had a special love *for me* in particular. It will be a very hard thing for you or me to rise up to an act of faith that Christ hath a love for us in particular, unless we can answer this question, *Why should Christ love you or me in particular?* What answer can I give hereto, when I know he does not love *all the world*? I can give but this answer to it, *Even because he would*. I know nothing in me, or in any of you, that can deserve his love. Was there ever such a thing heard of, — that Christ should have a particular love for such as we are? would ever any person go and fix his love on a creature who was all over leprous? is this the manner of man? Truly, Christ would never have fixed his love upon any of our poor, defiled, leprous souls, but upon this one consideration, *I know I can cleanse them, and I will*. He loved us.

But what will he do with such deformed, polluted creatures as we are? Why, “he loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might wash and purify it, and present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Though we are altogether deformed and defiled, — though no example, no instance can be given, in things below, or among the creatures, of any fixing love on such as we are, yet Christ has done it out of sovereign grace; with this resolution, that he would cleanse us with his own blood, to make us fit for himself.

O that God would help you and me to some firm, unshaken acts of faith, that Jesus Christ did, out of sovereign grace, love us in particular; and that in pursuit of this love he has washed us in his blood, to make us lovely and meet for himself! This is love to be adored and celebrated in time and to eternity.

This special love of Christ is not only to be considered by us, in this special acting of faith, as *free* and undeserved, but it is to be considered as *invincible*, — that would break through all oppositions, or whatever stood in the way, — that nothing should hinder or turn him aside in his design of doing good to our souls. It is a glorious pitch that the spouse

rises to in [Cant. viii. 7](#), “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned;” speaking of her own love to Christ: nothing could quench, nothing could drown it, nothing could make a purchase of it from her; but her love was invincible, and would carry her through all difficulties. O how much more was the love of Christ! for our love being once fixed on Christ, meets with no difficulties of that nature that the love of Christ met withal when it was fixed on us. What did the love of Christ meet with, when it was fixed on us? *That* we must take along with us, — namely, “the curse of the law” was the first thing that presented itself to him: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die;” — “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them.” That he was to make “his soul an offering for sin,” was presented to him. We are to look on this love of Christ as sovereign and free, and with a design of making our souls lovely; so invincible, also, that it broke up the eternal obstacles, — that nothing could stand before it until it had accomplished his whole work and design: “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

I speak on this manner, and of these things, to encourage and direct the weakest and most unskilful in the mysteries of the gospel, — to instruct them in the exercise of faith in this ordinance: and therefore I say, that as this special faith (which I proved to you to be our duty in this ordinance) is to respect the love of Christ; so it is to respect more especially the *peculiar acting* of the love of Christ, whereby he gave himself *for us*. Gave himself! how is that? Truly thus, brethren, — the Lord help me to believe it! — that I stood before the judgment-seat of God, charged with my original apostasy from him, and with all the sins of my life, multiplied above the hairs of my head, and being ready to perish, to have the sentence pronounced against me; then Christ came and stood in my place, putting the sinner aside, and undertaking to answer this matter: “Let the poor sinner stand aside a while. Come, enter into rest; abide here in the cleft of the rock; I will undertake thy cause, and plead it out at God’s judgment-seat.” In this undertaking God spared him not; as if God should say, “If you will stand in the place of the sinner, and undertake his cause, then it must go with you as with him; I will not spare.” “Lo, I come,” says Christ, notwithstanding this, “to do thy will, O God;” — “Whatever thou dost require to make good this cause I have espoused, lo, I come to do it.”

So Christ loved me, and gave himself for me. Everlasting rest and peace will dwell upon our souls, if the Lord will be pleased to help us to exercise faith on Christ’s love in this ordinance, wherein all these things are represented to us.



Discourse XIX.¹⁹

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” — Gal. ii. 20.

The apostle in this place is expressing the *vigour*, and indeed the *triumph*, of the life of faith: “Nevertheless I live.” To show the excellency of that life, says he, “Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,” etc. That which I would to our purpose observe from these words is this, that the exercise of faith *on the death of Christ* — “Who loved me, and gave himself for me” — is *the very life* of faith. This is that we are now called to, — to the exercise of faith on the death of Christ. And I cannot more recommend it to you than by this observation, to show that the life of faith does greatly consist in this peculiar exercise of it upon the death of Christ. And that, —

1. *Because Christ in his death, as the ordinance of God for the salvation of believing sinners, is the proper and peculiar object of faith as it justifies and saves.* Now, when faith is in its exercise upon its direct, immediate, proper object, it is like a person that is feeding on his proper food, which gives refreshment, spirits, and strength; for faith and its object are in Scripture set out as an appetite and food; and especially it is so represented to us *in this ordinance*, where the spiritual food of our souls is conveyed to our faith under the symbol and representation of food to our bodies, which we eat and drink. Therefore, brethren, our faith is in its proper place, it is about its proper work, it is directing the soul to its special food, when it is exercised about the death of Christ as the ordinance of God for the salvation of sinners.

2. As the death of Christ is thus the immediate and direct object of our faith, — for “God hath set him forth as a propitiation for sin, through faith in his blood,” which is the proper object of faith, as it justifies, — so the ultimate and supreme object of our faith is, *the properties of God, as manifested and glorified in the death of Christ*; so that you shall see how faith has its plain and full work in coming to this, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.” The properties of God are God *himself*; the properties of God, as manifested and glorified, are God’s *name*; and God himself and his name are the supreme and ultimate object of our faith and trust. All the inquiry, then, is, what special properties of the nature of God, God did design to manifest and glorify in the death of Christ, so as we should make them the special, ultimate object of our faith, — that which faith will find rest and satisfaction in, and wherein it will give glory to God. For the reason why God has made faith the *alone* instrument (and no other grace) of justification, and so of salvation, it is not because it is so fitted and



¹⁹ Delivered June 11, 1676.

sued to receive in us, as that it is the only grace whereby we give glory to God, and can do so.

Now let us see, that we may know how to exercise faith therein, what are those properties of the divine nature which God designs to manifest and glorify in the death of Christ; that our faith may stand in and be fixed upon them. I find several things that God distinctly proposes of his divine excellency for our faith to fix upon in the death of Christ:—

(1.) His *righteousness*: [Rom. iii. 25](#), “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness.” I shall not now show how or wherein; but, to me, this it is that manifests his righteousness in granting forgiveness of sin in the death of Christ, — in that he caused all our iniquities to meet upon him. Remember, brethren, we are here to give God the glory he designed to himself in sending Christ to die for us; and he tells us plainly what it was: and therefore it is expected of us that we should give glory to him. Let us labour to be in the actual exercise of faith, whereby we may declare the righteousness of God in this thing.

(2.) God designed to *glorify his love*. This is more particularly insisted on than any property of God in this matter. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.” “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” There is no property of the nature of God which he doth so eminently design to glorify in the death of Christ as his love. That we may know that God is love, that the Father himself loves us, he has sent Jesus Christ, out of his eternal love, to save sinners; and if we have not due apprehensions of these things, it is not our appearing in this place that will give glory to God.

(3.) God does design to *glorify his grace or pardoning mercy*. [Eph. i. 6](#), “He hath made us accepted in the Beloved, to the praise of the glory of his grace.” This God purposed, to make his grace in pardoning sinners very glorious by giving Christ to die for us.

(4.) God designed to *glorify his wisdom*. [Eph. i. 8](#), “He has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence.” [Eph. iii. 10](#), There appeared “the manifold wisdom of God.” [1 Cor. i. 24](#), “Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”

Now, let us gather up these things:— The special, ultimate object of faith, whereby we are justified, are those divine properties of God’s nature which he designed to manifest in the death of Christ, — his righteousness, his love, his grace, his wisdom.

The reason, therefore, why the life of faith does consist in its exercise on the death of Christ, is, because the death of Christ is the immediate, proper object of faith, as the ordinance of God for the salvation of sinners; and because the glorious properties of the nature of God, which are manifested in the death of Christ, are the ultimate object of our faith, wherein we give glory to him, and find rest to our own souls.



Let us, then, be called on and be stirred up to this exercise of faith upon this present occasion. And to that end, —

1. We might consider *the deplorable condition of all our souls without this blessed provision* and ordinance of God for our deliverance by the death of Christ. We had been in a deplorable condition, the wrath of God abiding on us, had not God made this a blessed way for our deliverance.

2. If you would be found acting faith in this matter, labour to come up to a *firm, vigorous assent of your minds*, not only that these things are true, but that this is *the way wherein God will be glorified to eternity*. The truth of it is, that person who is firmly satisfied and heartily pleased that this way of the death of Christ for the salvation of sinners, by the forgiveness of sin, is the way whereby God is and will be glorified; I say, that person is a true believer. Now, let not your assent be only to this thing, — that it is true that Christ came into the world to save sinners; but to this, — that this is the way whereby God is and will be glorified. He will be glorified in pardoning such guilty creatures as we are, in imputing righteousness to such sinners as we are. He is glorified in laying all our iniquities on Christ. By this way, his righteousness, his love, grace, and wisdom, are all manifested; this is God's being glorified. If our souls come up to a free close with these things, that all these properties are manifested in this way, — that is an act of faith; and may the Lord help us unto it!

3. Let us *gather up our minds to this institution*, whereby these things are represented to us. Here is represented the death of Christ, the immediate object of our faith, as God's ordinance. If the Lord help us to see it so represented to us, as that divine righteousness and wisdom, love and grace do all centre therein, and appear eminently to our souls, we shall have communion with God in this ordinance.



Discourse XX.²⁰

You have been minded of, and instructed in, the nature and benefit of our love to God; and I shall take occasion thence a little to mind you of the love of Christ unto us, the love, in an especial manner, which he showed in dying for us; which is that we are here gathered together to remember and celebrate; not barely the death of Christ, but that which is *the life of that death*, — the love of Christ in his death. And I would ground it on that which the apostle speaks in

Rom. v. 5, — “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.”

This is that which I know you all long for, and prize above life: “The loving-kindness of God is better than life.” Why so? “For,” says he, “when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

An apprehension of the love of Christ, as dying for us ungodly creatures, is that which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Do not let your minds go upon uncertainties. When the Holy Ghost gives you a due apprehension of Christ’s love in dying for ungodly sinners, as we are, then is this love shed abroad in our hearts. The apostle there proceeds to show how *great* this love was, in that Christ died. He died, not for *good* men, and *righteous* men, and for *friends*; but he died for the *ungodly*, for *sinners*, and for *enemies*. This was great love, indeed. We are here to remember that love of Christ wherewith he gave himself to death for us when we were enemies, and would have continued so to eternity, had he not loved us, and given himself for us.

Brethren, if we barely remember the love of Christ in the way of an ordinance, and our hearts be not powerfully affected with it, we are in danger of being disadvantaged by our attendance. Pray remember it; you know how plainly I use to speak on these occasions: I say, we have frequent opportunities of remembering the love of Christ in dying for us, in this ordinance representing of it; but if our hearts be not powerfully influenced and affected by it, we shall be losers by the frequency of ordinances.

I will add one word more. According as our hearts are affected with the love of Christ, so will be our love to Christ, and no otherwise. And truly, even that faith which discovers too much selfishness is very dangerous. If we come here to act faith, to look for no other effect of it but what evidence and sense we have of the pardon of our own sins, — how our consciences may be quieted and cleared, — faith ends *in self*; it is dangerous, lest it should be only a branch from, and commensurate with, convictions. True faith, acting itself on Christ in this ordinance, will work by love unto Christ: I would not say, principally, or in

²⁰ Delivered September 3, 1676.

the first place, — I know poor creatures are apt to look after themselves, and their own relief; but it will so work also. And truly, brethren, this it will not do, we shall not have faith working by love towards him, unless we have some sense of the love of Christ on our hearts.

How shall we know whether our hearts are under the powerful influence of the love of Christ in dying for us? Why, the love of Christ in dying for us has three properties with it, which will have an influence on our souls, if we are affected with it:—

1. It has a *transforming* power, property, and efficacy with it. They are plain truths I am speaking, but of great concern to our souls, to know whether we are affected with the love of Christ or not. If we are rightly affected with it, I say, it will transform and change our whole souls in some measure into the likeness of Christ. How so? I will tell you in the most familiar manner I am able:— If you are affected with the love of Christ, it lays hold upon and possesses your *affections*; the affections being possessed, stir up many *thoughts*; thoughts are the very image of the soul, represent it, to show you what the soul is: and those things concerning which your thoughts do most abound, they carry *the frame of the soul*. Let a man profess what he will, if his thoughts are generally conversant about earthly and worldly things, he has an earthly and worldly mind; and if [his] thoughts are conversant about sensual things, he has a sensual and carnal mind: for, whatever he may outwardly say, *as he thinks, so is he*; — there is the image and likeness of the soul.

Now, if we are affected with the love of Christ, it will beget in our souls many thoughts of Christ, in our lying down and in our rising up, in our beds, in our ways, on our occasions, as well as in ordinances. If, indeed, our hearts are affected with the love of Christ, our thoughts of Christ will abound; and those thoughts will work again on our affections, and conform our souls more and more unto the image of Jesus Christ. That man who thinks much of the earth, because affected with it, his soul is like the earth; and that man who thinks much on the love of Christ, because he is affected with it, his soul is like Christ.

If it has been thus with us, brethren, in our preparation for this ordinance, or at any time, that thoughts of Christ have not abounded, verily there has been a failing in us. Let us strive for the future to amend it, that we may find the love of Christ begetting in us many thoughts of him, working upon our affections, and, with a transforming power, changing the frame of our souls into his own likeness.

Again: 2. The love of Christ, if we are affected with it, has an *attractive* power: [John xii. 32](#), “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” I cannot stay to show you the drawing power and efficacy there is in the love of Christ, when dying on the cross; but this I will say, it is that which converted the world of all that did believe. It was the love of Christ, set forth in his death as one crucified for them, that drew all men unto him. “When I am lifted up, — when I have accomplished, manifested, and evidenced the unspeakable love which I have for the sinful sons of men, in being lifted up for them, — I will draw them unto me.” If you have a true sense, brethren, of the love of Christ in dying for you, it will



draw your souls unto him. [Cant. i. 4](#), “Draw me, we will run after thee.” I do not now speak to you about the *first drawing* of Christ, which is as unto believing (I hope Christ has so drawn all our souls); but the *following efficacy* of the love of Christ to draw souls that do believe *nearer* unto him. Whoever is sensible of this attractive power of the death of Christ, it will have this efficacy upon him, — it will have adherence and delight, — it will cause him more to cleave to Christ. The soul will cleave to Christ with delight, that is affected with the attractive, drawing power of his loving-kindness in his death. There is a great deal in that word, “Cleave unto Christ with love and delight,” with the best of our affections and dearest of our valuations; to cleave to him with trust, and to him alone. I do but remind you of what you know, that you may reduce it into practice. Pray, in this ordinance, labour to have such a sense of the drawing power of the love of Christ in his death, that you may resolve to cleave unto him with full purpose of heart, to cleave unto this Christ who has thus loved us.

3. Whenever we are affected with the love of Christ, it is accompanied with a *constraining power*, [2 Cor. v. 14](#), “The love of Christ constraineth us;” and that constraint is unto obedience: it constrains us to judge that we ought to live to him who died for us. It is a blessed thing, brethren, to walk in our obedience under a sense of the constraining efficacy of the love of Christ. Take but this one word, to discover to you whether you walk in your obedience under a sense of the constraining power of Christ, it comprehends all others, [1 John v. 3](#), “His commandments are not grievous” When a soul works out of love, what it doth is “not grievous.” And the inward and outward commands of Christ will be grievous to all that are not under the constraining power and efficacy of his love.

I have no more to say, but only to tell you that we should labour to have our hearts affected with the love of Christ in this ordinance. I have showed you the danger if it be otherwise; and given you some ways to examine your hearts, whether they are so affected or not. The Lord grant that where they are, it may be increased; and where they are not, that God would renew it by his Spirit in us.



Discourse XXI.²¹

We have had, through the providence of God, so good and so seasonable a word unto the present occasion, that there is no need, as well as but little time, to offer any thing farther unto you; yet a few words, in compliance with what we have heard, may not be altogether unseasonable or unuseful.

Our business and duty is, to set forth the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therein principally to call to mind his love. What you have heard may very well occasion us to think of that passage of the apostle wherein he earnestly prays for them, —

[Eph. iii. 19](#), — “And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.”

This is a *peculiar* kind of expression. The meaning is, that we may know that *experimentally*, which we cannot know *comprehensively*; — that we may know *that* in its *power* and *effects*, which we cannot comprehend in its *nature* and *depths*. A weary person may receive refreshment from a spring, who cannot fathom the depths of the ocean from whence it doth proceed. And if we would have our hearts, in this ordinance, and at other times, affected with the love of Christ, which is the thing we are to aim at (to know his love, and to experience the power of it), it is of great advantage to us to consider that it is such a love as passes knowledge; that our faith, concerning it must issue in *admiration*, not *comprehension*.

I shall name two or three things that may give a little sense of this love as it passes knowledge.

1. The *love of Christ is the fountain and spring of all the glory that is in heaven, or shall be there unto all eternity*. God’s eternal glory is eternally the same, “From everlasting thou art God;” but all the created glory that is in heaven, or that ever shall be there, springs out of the love of Christ. It is true, the angels were not *redeemed* by him; but they were *confirmed* by him. They were not recovered out of a lost estate by him; but they were continued in their first estate by him. Hence it is that God gathered all things in heaven and earth unto a head in him, [Eph. i. 10](#). And there is a great deal to the same purpose in that expression of the apostle, when he had mentioned “principalities and powers,” [Col. i. 17](#), “By him all things consist;” they have their consistence in him. All would dissolve and fall to nothing, if they had not their consistence in Jesus Christ. Certainly this is a love that passes knowledge, that is the fountain and spring of all the glory that is in heaven. If God help us by faith to look within the veil, and to take a view of all those glories wherewith the holy God is encompassed, we shall see that this love is the fountain and spring of them. The interposition of Christ saved the creation, and brought in that everlasting glory that shall



21 Delivered October 29, 1676.

dwell in heaven. God knows this love, — God understands the way of it; but as to us, it passes knowledge.

Again: 2. This *love of Christ passes the comprehension and knowledge of angels*; and therefore Peter tells us, [1 Epist. i. 12](#), speaking of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that followed, “Which things,” says he, “the angels desire to” bow down and “look into.”²² The angels in heaven live in an admiration of the love of Christ unto sinners; that is, that love he expressed in suffering, and in the glory that did ensue. And, oh! what thoughts ought *we* to have of this love, who have all the benefits of it? The angels had no benefit by the sufferings of Christ; but their benefit and advantage ensued on the assumption of the human nature to bring the creation into a consistence, and in his interposition between God and all his creatures. They admire and adore it. What ought such poor creatures as we are to do? It may well be said to pass *our* knowledge, for it passes the knowledge of *all the angels* in heaven.

3. It passes knowledge, in that *the effects of it in Christ himself pass all our knowledge and comprehension*.

To give but two instances:— (1.) His *condescension to assume our human nature passes all our comprehension*. No man can fully understand the mystery of the assumption of our nature into the personal subsistence of the Son of God. Some dispute whether we shall *understand* the *mystery of the incarnation in heaven*; here we believe it. It is love which passes knowledge, that the eternal Son of God should take our nature into personal union with himself: it is that we may admire, and ought to admire; and God help us, we are such poor earthly creatures, that we cannot admire it as we ought, though it be much in our nature to admire what we cannot comprehend.

(2.) We *cannot fully understand his passion and sufferings*. God alone knows what is in the curse of the law; we do not know it. God alone knows what is *the true desert of sin*; it cannot be fully understood by any but himself. They who undergo it must suffer to eternity; there is no end, — they never see, never know, what sin deserved. How do we know, then, what Christ suffered, when the punishment due to our sin, when all our iniquities met upon him, with the curse of the law? God only knows what is in these things. The *fruits and effects* of this love in himself, in his incarnation and passion, are past our knowledge; therefore *the love itself* surpasses our knowledge.

4. Give me leave to say, *the very fruits of it in ourselves do pass knowledge*. No man that lives knows what there is in these three general heads of the fruits of Christ’s love, — in *justification* and pardon of sin, — in the *renovation* and sanctification of our natures, and in the *inhabitation* and consolations of the Holy Spirit. No man living can find out these

22 Owen seems desirous, by this paraphrase, to express the full meaning of the original word, παρακύψα. — Ed.

things to perfection. None of us fully understands and comprehends what it is to be justified in the sight of God, to have sin pardoned, to have our natures renewed and transformed into the likeness of God, and to have the Holy Ghost dwell in us. The love of Christ, therefore, passes all knowledge; for the very fruits of it in ourselves are beyond what we can comprehend, — there is a greatness in them we cannot reach unto. Why, then, my brethren, let us labour to have our hearts affected with this love. If God would be pleased to give unto every one of us some sense and impression of the greatness of this love of Christ, glance it into our hearts, beam it upon us in this ordinance, — we should have cause to bless him all the days of our lives. The faith and light of it issue in admiration; the light of glory will bring us to comprehension. Let us have such a sense as may cause us to admire what we cannot now comprehend.

(1.) I could speak something, but I will not now, to *the actings of faith* in admiration; it being the proper nature of faith to issue itself in the admiration of that which is infinite. If we can get our souls up to a holy admiration of this love, we have some gracious sense of it upon our hearts, if we can go no farther.

(2.) Let us learn to *run up all the mercies* we are partakers of, whatsoever it be we value, *to the proper spring*: “Who loved me, and gave himself for me.” If we have any relief, or supply, or refreshment of soul, in a sense of pardon of sin, in spiritual light or consolation, pray let us exercise ourselves to run up all these things to the fountain:— it is all from the love of Christ, that unspeakable love which passes knowledge.

(3.) *In this let us be ashamed*, [that] seeing the love of Christ to us is such as passes our knowledge, our love to him is so weak, that *sometimes we know not whether we have any or not*. For this let us be greatly humbled. This is not the way to answer that love which passes knowledge, to know not whether we love Christ again or not. Let us be ashamed for our want of love.

And lastly, *let us abound in praise and thanksgiving for his love*, and all the fruits of it.

For my part, I do not know whether that vision in [Rev. v. 9](#) does express the rejoicing of the *church above*, or the duty of the *church below*; but both, I am sure, are of so near affinity, that apply it to which you will, you do not miss it. And what do they there? Why, it is said, “They sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests,” etc. And it is said again, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing;” and again he repeats it in [verse 13](#). I say, I know not whether this be a representation of the rejoicing of the church above, or a representation of the duty of the church below; but I can conclude from it, that the enjoyment of the one and the duty of the other consist greatly in continual giving praise and thanks to Christ for his unspeakable love in our redemption.



Discourse XXII.²³

“And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” — [Matt. iii. 17.](#)

We are met here to remember the death of Christ, in the way and by the means that he himself hath appointed; and in remembering *the death of Christ* we are principally to remember *the love of Christ*: “Who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” And that which on our part is required herein is *faith in Christ*, who died for us; and *love to Christ*, who loved us so as, to give himself an offering and a sacrifice to God for us.

1. That which I would now observe is this (to make way for the stirring up of our love), that *the person of Christ is the adequate, complete object of the love of God, and of the whole creation that bears the image of God*; — I mean, the church of God above, the angels and saints; and the church of God below, in believers: which are the creation that has the image of God upon it.

The person of Christ is the first complete object of the love of God the Father. A great part (if I may so speak, and I must so speak) of the essential blessedness of the holy Trinity consists in the mutual love of the Father and the Son, by the Holy Ghost; which is the love of them both.

That which I would now take notice of, I say, as the foundation of all, is this, — that the *divine nature* in the person of the Son is the only full, resting, complete object of the love of God the Father. I will give you a place or two of Scripture for it, and so go on to another instance: [Prov. viii. 30](#), “Then,” saith he (that is, from everlasting), “I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;” that is, as the special object of his love, — as among you men, one that is brought up with you, as your child is. The delight of the Father from all eternity was in the Son. The ineffable love and mutual delight of the Father and the Son by the Spirit is that which is the least notion we have of the blessedness of the eternal God. [John i. 18](#), “The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father.” Pray observe it, that I speak yet only of the divine person of Christ *antecedent* unto his incarnation, and the ineffable mutual love of the blessed persons in the holy Trinity; which Jesus Christ wonderfully sets out in [John xvii](#). There is his relation unto God; he is “the only begotten Son,” by eternal generation. What follows? He is “in the bosom of the Father,” — is in the Father’s eternal, infinite love. Herein is God’s love; and every thing else of love is but a free act of the will of God, — a free emanation from this eternal love between the Father and the Son. God never did any thing *without himself*, but the end of it was to manifest what is *in himself*. The old and new creation that God hath wrought



²³ Delivered February 18, 1676.

was to manifest what was in himself. God made this world to manifest his power and wisdom; — God made the new world by Jesus Christ to manifest his grace, his love, goodness, etc.

The sole reason why there is such a thing as love in the world among the creatures, angels or men, — that God ever implanted it in the nature of rational creatures, — was, that it might shadow and represent the ineffable, eternal love that the Father had unto the Son, and the Son unto the Father, by the Spirit.

Contemplative men of old did always admire love; wherein they would have the life, lustre, and glory of all things to consist: but they could never see the *rise* of it; and they traced some things to this, — that God necessarily loved himself. And it is true, it cannot otherwise be; but God's loving of himself absolutely as God, is nothing but his eternal blessed acquiescence in the holy, self-sufficing properties of his nature. This they had some reach after; but of this eternal, ineffable love “of the Father to the Son, and of the Son to the Father, by the Spirit,” that they had no conjecture of. Yet this is the fountain and spring-head; and all such things as love in the old and new creation, as I said, is but to resemble and shadow out this great prototype of divine love. I acknowledge there is little discerned of these things, by reason of the weakness of our understandings; but the Scripture has so directly declared to us the mutual love of the Father and the Son (which, truly, is of such singular use, that I would fix persons upon it in conceiving of the doctrine of the Trinity), that it is matter of admiration and thankfulness to us. Here lies the foundation of all love, whereunto we hope to reduce our love unto Christ, — namely, in the unchangeable love of the Father to the Son.

2. The person of Christ, as *vested with our nature*, and undertaking the work of mediation, is the first object of the Father's love wherein there is any mixture of any thing *without himself*.

The first love of God the Father to the Son is that which we call *ad intra*, where the divine persons are objects of one another's actings; — the Father knows the Son, and the Son knows the Father; the Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father; and so, consequently, of the Holy Ghost, the medium of all these actings.

But now, I say, the first act of the love of God the Father wherein there is any thing *ad extra*, or *without the divine essence*, is the person of Christ considered as invested with our nature. And had not the love of God been fixed in the first place in all things upon the person of Christ, there would have been no redundancy to us, nor communication of love unto us. From the first eternal love of God proceeds all love that was in the first creation; and from this second love of God, to the person of Christ as incarnate, proceeds all the love in the second creation. See how God expresses it in a prospect of what he should be, [Isa. xlii. 1](#), “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.” And this is singular in the whole Scripture, that God spake the same words twice from heaven immediately; and they were these, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” — at his



baptism, [Matt. iii. 17](#), and at his entrance on his sufferings, [Matt. xvii. 5](#); — which was the voice which came from “The excellent glory.” I would observe this unto you, because I think it is what God would have us take notice of, the emphasis in the words, “Behold my servant, mine elect, my Son, my beloved Son!” What of him? — “In whom I rest, in whom I am well pleased and delighted.” All of them emphatical words. Saith God. “Let the sons of men (I speak it from heaven again and again) take notice of this, that the infinite love of my whole soul is fixed on the person of Jesus Christ as incarnate.” And you will find the Lord Jesus Christ pleading this as the ground of that trust committed unto him, and all that he received, [John iii. 35](#), “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.” [John v. 20](#), “The Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these.” He lays the foundation of all the trust that God the Father committed unto him in the peculiar love of the Father to him, as the Son incarnate.

Truly, I shall not go beyond this foundation to manifest to you that the person of Christ is the complete, adequate object of the love of the Father. The great satisfaction of the soul of God, wherein he rests and delights, consists in love to Christ as incarnate.

I will make but this one inference from it:— proportionable to the renovation of the image and likeness of God upon any of our souls, is our love to Jesus Christ. He that knows Jesus Christ most, is most like unto God; for there the soul of God rests, — there is the complacency of God: and if we would be like to God, have pledges in ourselves of the renovation of this image upon us, it must be in the gracious exercise of our love to the person of Jesus Christ. And pray let me observe it to you, the world, that is full of enmity to God, doth not exercise its enmity against God *immediately* under the first notion of God, but exerciseth its enmity against God *in Christ*: and if we return to God by the renovation of his image, we do not exercise our love to God immediately as God, but our love to God by and in Christ: “That ye through him might believe in God.” Here is a trial, brethren, of our return to God, and of the renovation of his image in us, — namely, in our love to Jesus Christ. There God and man do meet, there God and his church above and below centre. The Lord grant that this ordinance may be the means to stir up our hearts more to the exercise of this grace!



Discourse XXIII.²⁴

I shall speak to them who have a mind to be found performing their duty, but, it may be, it doth not occur to them what is particularly required of them. They are such as are least acquainted with this mystery that I would have most respect unto, that nothing of God's provision in his house may be lost to his children for want of understanding aright to come to his table, where he makes this provision.

I pray you, brethren, exercise your thoughts unto the *institution* of this ordinance, wherein you exercise your obedience; unto the *proposition* of Christ in this ordinance, wherein consists the peculiar acting of your faith; and unto the *exhibition* of Christ in this ordinance, which is the ground of your thankfulness.

What shall I do that I may please God now, please Jesus Christ, and benefit my own soul, in the administration of this ordinance?

Why, — 1. Consider the *institution* of it, wherein we have the authority of Jesus Christ put forth and acting towards our souls: "This do in remembrance of me." Labour, therefore, to bring your hearts into an actual obedience to the authority of Jesus Christ in what we are about. This the Lord Jesus doth require at our hands. We do not come here in a customary manner, to satisfy our convictions, because we ought to come; we do not come here merely to make use of our privilege; but our hearts are to *bow to the authority of Jesus Christ*. Consider, I pray you, the institution of this ordinance, and labour to bring your souls into actual obedience to Jesus Christ. We do it because Christ has required it of us. If our hearts are in that frame, that we are here upon the command of Christ, to do what he has appointed, and we can recommend our consciences unto him, that it is in obedience to his command that we are here, then our obedience is in exercise.

2. Consider the *proposition* that is made of Jesus Christ in this ordinance to us, that our faith may be in its proper exercise.

The Lord take off our hearts from the consideration of the outward signs merely! Christ in his love, Christ in his bloodshed, agony, and prayer, Christ in his death, is here proposed before us. "Ye do show the Lord's death." Who proposes it? He that hath appointed these things proposes it. And there is the engagement of the faithfulness of God and Christ in this proposition and tender that is made of Jesus Christ; and it is a peculiar way, and, as I could prove, full of love, that God hath found out a way to propound Christ as dying, and crucified, to all our souls. Therefore stir up your hearts to this. To every one of you there is, by the grace and faithfulness of God, a proposal of Jesus Christ in his death, and all the benefits of it, unto your souls. The whole question is, whether you will stir up your hearts to a new and fresh receiving of Jesus Christ, who is thus proposed and tendered unto you, evidently cru-

24 Delivered July 8, 1677.

cified before your eyes, offered to you by the love and faithfulness of God? But if we do not endeavour, every one of us, in the participation of this ordinance, a fresh acceptance of Jesus Christ, we do what we can to make God a liar, as though he was not tendered unto us. The especial exercise of your faith in this ordinance is upon the love, grace, and faithfulness of God, proposing and tendering of Christ unto you, — the death of Christ, and the benefits of Christ, in this way which he has chosen. Submit unto it, and embrace it.

3. As your obedience is required with respect to the institution (we give this account before God, angels, and men, that we are here in obedience to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ), and as faith is required with respect to the proposition of Christ, whereby he is evidently proposed and tendered by God unto us; so in this ordinance, to them that believe, there is an *exhibition* of Christ. Christ is really exhibited and communicated to the souls of men who exercise faith upon him in this ordinance, — really exhibited, with all the benefits of his death. And want of receiving by faith in particular Christ as exhibited and communicated in this ordinance, is the great ground of our want of profiting by it, and thriving under it, — of our want of receiving strength, joy, and life by it; because we do not exercise ourselves to the receiving of Christ as he is exhibited, as God doth really give him out and communicate him to them that do believe.

That there is such an exhibition of Christ, appears, — (1.) By *the sacramental relation* there is between the *outward elements* and the *thing signified*. “This is my body,” says Christ, — “this bread is so;” and, “This is my blood.” It is the body of Christ and the blood of Christ that we are invited to the participation of. If there was no more in this ordinance exhibited but only the outward elements, and not, by virtue of sacramental relation upon God’s institution, the body and blood of Christ, his life, and death, and merits, exhibited unto us, we should come to the Lord’s table like men in a dream, eating and drinking, and be quite empty when we have done; for this bread and wine will not satisfy *our souls*.

(2.) As it is plain, from the sign and the thing signified, that there is a grant or a real communication of Jesus Christ unto the souls of them that do believe; so it is evident *from the nature of the exercise of faith* in this ordinance. It is by *eating and drinking*. Can you eat and drink, unless something be really communicated? You are called to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man; unless *really communicated*, we cannot eat it nor drink it. We may have other apprehensions of these things, but our faith cannot be exercised in eating and drinking; which is a receiving of what is really exhibited and communicated. As truly, my brethren, as we do eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, which is really communicated to us; so every true believer doth receive Christ, his body and blood, in all the benefits of it, that are really exhibited by God unto the soul in this ordinance: and it is a means of communicating to faith.

We come to receive a crucified Christ, come to be made partakers of the body and blood of the Lord, — to have the Lord Jesus really united to our hearts more and more. The Lord



open our hearts to embrace the tender, receive the exhibition, take in Jesus Christ as food; that he may be incorporated in our hearts by faith, that he may dwell in us plentifully more and more, — that we may go away refreshed by this heavenly food, this glorious feast of fat things, which the Lord has made in his mount for his people! The whole of our comfort depends on our particular receiving of Christ by faith, and carrying him away by believing.



Discourse XXIV.²⁵

We are met together again, by the patience and kindness of God, for the celebration of this great ordinance; and therein to show forth the death of the Lord.

I have often spoken to you on this occasion concerning the nature of this ordinance, the expression of the love of God and Christ that is in it, and the especial acts of faith and love that are required of us in this ordinance.

I have one word now, somewhat of another nature, but yet such as I judge not unseasonable; and it is to this purpose, that we, who so frequently enjoy the privilege of the representation of the death of Christ unto us, ought to be very diligent in inquiring after *an experience of the power of the death of Christ in us*. Without this, our privilege will not be to our advantage.

The power and efficacy of the death of Christ, which we now remember in a peculiar manner, is twofold:—

1. Towards *God*, as the consummation of the sacrifice of atonement. This we have often spoke to.

2. Towards *our own souls* and towards the *church*; and that is, to be an example, a precedent, a pattern of what is, to be wrought in us. In this sense the power of the death of Christ, is its efficacy to [produce] conformity with Christ in his death. It is to be “crucified with Christ,” as the apostle speaks, [Gal. ii. 20](#). Power comes forth from the death of Christ, if received by faith in a due manner, to render us conformable to him in the death of sin in us. The apostle has a great and glorious word concerning himself, [2 Cor. iv. 10](#), “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.” I acknowledge, the words are usually applied to the representation of the sufferings of Christ in the sufferings of the ministers of the gospel, concerning which the apostle there discourses; but the antithesis in the following words, “That the life of Jesus might be manifest in our body,” does certainly lead to a larger sense. Then, brethren, we may have an experience of the power of Christ in us, when we can say we always carry about with us the dying of the Lord Jesus, — carry it in our meditation, carry it in our conversation, carry it in our constant, universal endeavours for conformity to it; and without this we have not experience of the power of his death in us, and it will not avail us to have the nature of his death represented to us.

1. We are always to carry about the dying of Jesus Christ in *our thoughts and meditations*. O that our thoughts were much fixed upon it! I verily believe that the life of faith doth answer in proportion to our thoughts about the dying of Jesus. The dying of Jesus compriseth the love from whence he died, the death itself he died, and the end for which he died. Let us

25 Delivered September 30, 1677.

carry about us always thoughts hereof, for his sake who loved us, and who died for us. Meditate more on these things.

2. In our *conversation*. It is not a time to reflect upon any, unless I did it upon myself. But truly, brethren, I am afraid we do not carry about and manifest to all the dying of the Lord Jesus in our conversation; or perform all things so as it may appear and be made manifest to ourselves and others that our hearts are set upon his dying love, and that we have not such quick, such active and vigorous affections to the world and the things of the world, nor that fury of diligence after them and in them, as other men have, and we have had; *we* cannot do it, — the dying of the Lord Jesus crucifies our hearts. These are hard words, I know; — how far from our practice! But if we live not in an endeavour after it, in all things to manifest that our hearts are full of the dying of the Lord Jesus, we have not experience of the power of it in our souls. These things depend on one another. If we dwell more upon this subject in our meditations, we should manifest it, and carry it about and represent it more in our conversation.

3. Carry it about, in *a constant endeavour for conformity to Jesus Christ in all things in his death*. Did Christ die, and shall *sin* live? Was he crucified in the world, and shall we have quick and lively affections to the world? O where is the temper and spirit of that apostle who, by “the cross of Christ, was crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him”? If there be any among us that should be indulgent to the life of any one lust or corruption, that soul can have no experience of the power of the death of Christ in himself, — cannot carry about him the dying of Christ. Endeavour to destroy sin, that we may be like unto Christ.

I will not make particular application of these things to all the concerns of our walk, but leave it with you with this word; begging of you and my own heart, and of God for us all, that, having these blessed representations of the death of Christ to us, we may have no rest in our spirits but when we have experience of the power of the death of Christ in us.



Discourse XXV.²⁶

It is a common, received notion among Christians, and it is true, that there is a peculiar communion with Christ in this ordinance, which we have in no other ordinance; that there is a peculiar acting of faith in this ordinance, which is in no other ordinance. This is the faith of the whole church of Christ, and has been so in all ages. This is the greatest mystery of all the *practicals* of our Christian religion, — a way of receiving Christ by *eating and drinking*, — something peculiar, that is not in prayer, that is not in the hearing of the word, nor in any other part of divine worship whatsoever, — a peculiar participation of Christ, a peculiar acting of faith towards Christ. This participation of Christ is not *carnal*, but *spiritual*. In the beginning of the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he began to instruct them in the communication of himself and the benefit of his mediation to believers, because it was a new thing, he expresses it by eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, [John vi. 53](#), “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” This offended and amazed them. They thought he taught them to eat his natural flesh and blood. “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” They thought he instructed them to be cannibals. Whereupon he gives that everlasting rule for the guidance of the church, which the church forsook, and thereby ruined itself; — saith he, “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” “It is a spiritual communication,” saith he, “of myself unto you; but it is as intimate, and gives as real an incorporation, as if you did eat my flesh and drink my blood.” The church, forsaking this rule of a spiritual interpretation, ruined itself, and set up a monster instead of this blessed, mysterious ordinance.

We may inquire, therefore, how faith doth peculiarly act itself towards Christ in this ordinance, whereby we have a distinct participation of Christ, otherwise than we have by and in any other ordinance whatsoever. And I would mention four things unto you, which you may make use of:—

1. That faith hath a peculiar respect to the *sole authority of Christ* in the institution of this ordinance.

All other ordinances draw upon the *light of nature* and upon the *moral law*, as prayer, preaching the word, and singing of psalms to the praise of God; but *this*, that we should receive Jesus by eating of bread and drinking of wine, it has no respect to the light of nature or the moral law at all: and we should as soon choose to honour God by sacrifices and eating the flesh of them, if it were not for the authority of Jesus Christ. Herein doth faith give honour to Christ in his *kingly office*. This is the most direct profession of the subjection of

26 Delivered September 20, 1682.

our souls and consciences to the authority of Christ in all our religion. We can give no other reason, we can take no allusion from things, but merely this, — Christ would have it so.

2. Faith hath a peculiar respect to *the love of Christ in dying for us*, making the atonement for us by his blood, and therein the glorifying of the wisdom, love, and grace of God the Father. Faith is led into special communion with Christ as dying for us to make the atonement; and therein we give glory to Christ in *his priestly office* in a peculiar manner in this ordinance, it respecting the sacrifice of Christ, whereby he made atonement for us.

3. Faith hath respect to *this special manner of the exhibition of Christ to the souls of believers*, under the outward signs and symbols of bread and wine, by his institution making such a sacramental union between the thing signified and the sign, that the signs remaining to be what they are in themselves, they are unto us the thing that is signified, by virtue of the sacramental union that Christ hath appointed between his body and blood and the benefits of it: and this bread and wine, though not changed at all in themselves, yet they become to us, by faith, not what they are in themselves, but what is signified by them, — the body and blood of Christ. Herein we give glory to Christ in his *prophetical office*. It is he who has revealed, taught, and instructed his church in this truth, which depends on the sacramental union which follows by his institution. That is the third thing wherein faith peculiarly acts itself in this ordinance.

4. The fourth thing is, the *mysteriousness*; which I leave to your *experience*, for it is beyond expression, — *the mysterious reception* of Christ in this peculiar way of exhibition. There is a reception of Christ as tendered in the *promise of the gospel*; but here is a *peculiar way* of his exhibition under outward signs, and a mysterious reception of him in them, really, so as to come to a real substantial incorporation in our souls. This is that which believers ought to labour after an experience of in themselves, — to find that indeed, under these four considerations, they submit to the authority of Jesus Christ in a peculiar manner, giving him the glory of his *kingly office*; mixing faith with him as dying and making atonement by his blood, so giving him the glory and honour of his *priestly office*; much considering the sacramental union that is, by his institution, between the outward signs and the thing signified, thus glorifying him in his *prophetical office*; and raising up their souls to a mysterious reception and incorporation of him, — receiving him to dwell in them, warming, cherishing, comforting, and strengthening their hearts.

I have mentioned these things as those which lie in your practice, and to obviate that (if I may mention it) which you may be tried with. There is but one plausible pretence that our adversaries, who design to oppress us, have in this business: “If,” say they, “there be not a *real presence* and a real substantial transmutation of the elements into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, show you a way whereby you may have a peculiar communion with Christ, any more than in the word preached.” We say, we have in these things *experience*



of a peculiar communion with Christ, in a way made proper to this ordinance, which is not to be found in any other ordinance. _____

Three Discourses Suitable to the Lord's Supper.



Prefatory note.

In 1798 a volume was published in Edinburgh under the title, “The Lord’s Supper fully Considered, in a Review of the History of its Institution; with Meditations and Ejaculations suited to the several parts of the Ordinance: to which are prefixed Three Discourses delivered at the Lord’s Table; by the Late Rev. John Owen, D.D.” It needs but a glance at the three discourses in order to feel assured, from internal evidence, that they belong to Owen. The rest of the volume is assuredly not Owen’s, as it consists of “Remarks on the ‘Plain Account,’ ” etc., — a work published long after our author’s death. These remarks are directed against a treatise of the celebrated Hoadly, bishop of Bangor, and latterly of Winchester. His treatise bears the title, “A Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Lord’s Supper,” and was published in 1735. An answer to it was published by Thomas Brett, LL.D., an English divine and controversialist; but whether his answer is identical with the “Remarks,” we have failed to ascertain. The three discourses subjoined are not of much importance, but as they have already appeared in print, we include them in this edition. — Ed.

Discourse I.

June 8, 1673.

Faith is bounded, in every ordinance, by its objects and acts. The general object of saving faith respecting God, is the truth of his word and promises, [Rom. xv. 8](#). The special object of our faith in this ordinance is the sufferings and death of Christ. Herein he is “evidently set forth crucified before our eyes.” And we must act faith upon three things with respect to his death:—

First, The personal love of Christ to our persons, from whence it was that he died for us. So saith the apostle, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me,” [Gal. ii. 20](#). Were we helped to raise up our hearts by faith to apprehend Christ’s love to our persons, it would greatly help us in this ordinance. The Lord lift us up above our fears, and give us a view by faith, not only of the love of Christ in general, but that he personally loved us, even this whole church!

Secondly, The sufferings of Christ. In this ordinance we are to act faith upon his death, as therein undergoing the punishment due to our sins. It is [intended] to mind us that “he made his soul an offering for sin,” that “he suffered for sin, the just for the unjust,” “bearing our sins in his own body on the tree,” that we should not come into judgment.

Thirdly, The effects of Christ’s death; which were, the making an atonement for all our sins, — the making peace between God and our souls, bringing in everlasting righteousness. Under the law we find that “the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh,” and that the people were thereby legally cleansed; “how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” [Heb. ix. 13, 14](#).

The acts of faith in this ordinance are, first, *recognition*. That faith which is exercised on the death of Christ, that is past, is to call it over, and make it present to the soul. It is to realize it and bring it before us. It is not a bare remembrance of it, but such a one as makes it present. And where there is faith, there is the same advantage to a believing soul in the participation of this ordinance as there would have been if we had stood by the cross.

Secondly, Faith works by reflecting to *humiliation*. “They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn” for all their unkindness and unthankfulness to their Saviour. And when we come to this work in this ordinance, self-abasement, self-abhorrence, and brokenness of heart, will be acted, and flow forth in abundance of love to Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, Another act of faith in this ordinance is, *thankfulness to God* for his wisdom and grace in contriving this way of our salvation; and *thankfulness to Christ*, in whom was this mind, that, “being in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, he took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death



of the cross,” that he might save us from our sins. If the Lord be pleased to lead us to act faith in any of these things, in some signal and eminent manner, we shall find an advantage in this ordinance.

Discourse II.

July 6, 1673.

To help you in the exercise of faith in the administration of this ordinance, I would briefly show what it is to have a sacramental participation of Jesus Christ.

When the world had lost the understanding of this mystery, for want of spiritual light, they contrived a means to make it up, very easy on the part of them that partake of it, and very prodigious on the part of the priest; for he, by a few words, turns the bread into the body of Christ, and the people have no more to do but to receive it as such into their mouths! It was the loss of the understanding of this mystery that put them upon that invention.

There is, indeed, a figure or representation in this ordinance; but that is not all. When the bread is broken, it is a figure, a representation, that the body of Christ was broken for us; but there is also a real exhibition of Christ unto every believing soul. This is distinct from the tender of Christ in the promises of the gospel. In the promises, the person of the Father is particularly looked upon as proposing and tendering Christ to us. In this ordinance, as God exhibits him, so Christ makes an immediate tender of himself, and calls our faith to have respect to his grace, to his love, and to his readiness to unite and spiritually incorporate with us. He tenders himself to us not in general, but under a special consideration, — namely, as having “made an end of sin,” and done all that was to be done between God and sinners, that they might be at peace.

Christ made a double presentation of himself, as the great mediator; — first, when he offered himself a sacrifice on the cross, for the accomplishing the work of man’s redemption; secondly, when he presented himself to God in heaven, there to do whatever remained to be done with God on our behalf by his intercession. The intercession of Christ is the presentation of himself to God upon his oblation and sacrifice. He presents himself to God, to do with him what remains to be done on our part, — to procure mercy and peace for us; and he presents himself to us in this ordinance (which answers to that intercession of Christ above, and is a counterpart of it) to do what remains to be done on the part of God, — to give in peace, and mercy, and the sealed covenant to us.

There is this special exhibition or tender of Jesus Christ; and this directs to a special exercise of faith, that we may know how to receive him in this ordinance. And, first, let us receive him as one that hath actually accomplished the great work of making peace with God for us, blotting out our sins, and bringing in everlasting righteousness; secondly, as one that hath done this work by his death. It is a relief when we have an apprehension that Christ can do all this for us: but he does not tender himself to us as one that can or will do it, upon such and such conditions as shall be presented, but as one that hath done it; and so we must receive him if we intend to glorify God in this ordinance, — namely, as having blotted out all our sins, and purchased for us eternal redemption.



Let us act faith on Jesus Christ, as one who brings along with him mercy and pardon, procured by his death, — all the mercy and grace that are in the heart of God and in the covenant. To have such a view of him, and so to receive him by faith, is the way to give glory to God, and to have peace and rest in our own bosoms.



Discourse III.

August 10, 1673.

To a due attendance on this ordinance it is requisite not only that we be in a spiritual frame, but that we endeavour to bring and fix our hearts to some special thoughts with respect to this special ordinance; wherein the principal act on the part of God, and the principal act on our part with respect to Christ, are gloriously represented. The great act of God with reference to Christ is the exhibiting of him. God did two ways exhibit Christ:—

First, There was, as I may call it, on the part of God, a legal exhibition of Christ, mentioned by the apostle, [Rom. iii. 25, 26](#), “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” This I call God’s legal exhibition of Christ, when he set him forth to undergo the curse of the law that we might be blessed. This setting forth of Christ is here represented in this ordinance when the bread is broken. And this is that which you may exercise your faith on in this ordinance, that as the bread is here set forth to be broken, so God, to declare his own righteousness, hath set forth Christ to be bruised and broken, to undergo the sentence of the law. Thus we have a gracious sight of God’s holiness in this ordinance.

Secondly, He doth exhibit Jesus Christ in the promises of the gospel. And it might be with some respect to this ordinance that the gospel invitations, which have the nature of promises, were in the Old Testament set forth by eating and drinking: [Isa. lv. 1](#), “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” God having provided Jesus Christ to be the food of our souls, he doth propose and exhibit him in the gospel as such. And what a blessed representation is there hereof in this ordinance! Here God makes a visible tender of Christ, as exhibited in the promises of the gospel, for the life, food, and strength of our souls. To answer the promises, he here makes this tender unto us.

Thus you see the principal act of God in this ordinance is the exhibiting of Jesus Christ unto us. The great act on our part, with respect to Christ, which is also represented in this ordinance, is the reception of him by faith. It is not enough that God hath set forth Christ to declare his righteousness, and in the promises of the gospel: unless we receive Christ, we shall come short of all the design of grace and mercy therein. “As many as *received* him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name,” [John i. 12](#). If there be any thing that is tendered to you, unless you receive it, there is nothing done; things are but in the same state wherein they were. Notwithstanding all the tenders that God makes of Jesus Christ, in both the ways mentioned, if there be not an act of faith in receiving him, we shall have no benefit by it. Now, can any thing be more lively represented to us than our receiving of the bread in this sacrament? but if we act not faith therein, it will



be but a bare representation. Therefore, if we believe that God is in good earnest with us in the tender that he makes of Christ, let us not be backward on our part, that the sacrament rites may not be empty signs to us.

Indexes

Index of Scripture References

Genesis

24 28:16 35:1 35:1-5 35:2-3

Exodus

12:24-27 19:10-11 20:24

Leviticus

10:3 16:21 17:11

Numbers

5:15 5:15

Deuteronomy

21 21:23

Joshua

5:15 24:19

1 Kings

9:11 18:27

2 Kings

2

1 Chronicles

15:12-13 15:14-15

2 Chronicles

30:18-20

Psalms

16:6 16:10 16:11 18:2 22:1 22:12-21 26:6 32:8-9 40:6 40:6-7 40:6-8 40:12 66:18
84 93:5

Proverbs

8:30 8:30-31

Ecclesiastes

5:1

Song of Solomon

1:4 4:9 5:9-16 6:12 8:7

Isaiah

25:6 27:5 33:14 33:17 42:1 45:22 50:5-6 50:7-9 53:5-6 53:6 53:7 53:10-11 53:11
55:1 57:15 63:17 65:1

Jeremiah

23:23 31:3 31:25-26

Ezekiel

14:4 43:27

Zechariah

12:10 12:10 12:10

Malachi

1:6

Matthew

3:17 3:17 17:5 18:20 27:62 28:17 28:20

Luke

22:44 23:46

John

1:12 1:18 3:14-15 3:16 3:16 3:33 3:35 4:21 5:20 6:52 6:53 12:32 12:32 12:32
14:24 16:7 17

Acts

2:39 3:21 4:27 17 17:16 17:23

Romans

3:25 3:25 3:25 3:25 3:25 3:25 3:25 3:25-26 5:5 5:8 5:11 5:11 5:11 6:5 6:6 8:32
8:32 10:10 10:10 14:11 15:8 15:30-31

1 Corinthians

1:24 10:16 10:16 11:23-26 11:23-26 11:24 11:24 11:24-25 11:26 11:26 11:28 11:28

2 Corinthians

3:18 4:10 5:14 5:21 5:21 8:9 9:13

Galatians

2:20 2:20 2:20 2:20 2:20 2:20 3:1 3:1 3:1 3:1 3:1 3:13 3:13 3:13 3:13-14 3:13-14

Ephesians

1:6 1:6 1:8 1:10 3:10 3:10 3:17 3:19

Philippians

2:5-6 2:6-8 3:10

Colossians

1:17 1:20 3:16

Hebrews

2:13 2:14 5:7 9:13-14 9:16 10:5 10:10 10:20 12:2 12:2 12:28-29

1 Peter

1:12 3:18 4:1-2 4:15-16

2 Peter

2:4-6

1 John

3:16 4:10 5:3

Revelation

1:5 1:5 1:5-6 1:5-6 5:9 5:13

Index of Scripture Commentary

Leviticus

16:21

Isaiah

53:11

Matthew

3:17 28:17 28:20

John

6:53 12:32 12:32

Romans

5:5

1 Corinthians

10:16 10:16 11:23-26 11:23-26 11:24 11:26 11:26 11:28 11:28

2 Corinthians

4:10 5:21

Galatians

2:20 2:20

Ephesians

3:19

Philippians

3:10

1 Peter

3:18

Index of Greek Words and Phrases

εὐλογία: [12](#)

ζῶσα καὶ πρόσφατος: [46](#)

παρακύψα: [93](#)

πρὸς, φάω: [46](#)

πρόφατον: [46](#)

Index of Latin Words and Phrases

De Propagandâ Fide: [26](#)

ad extra: [96](#)

ad intra: [96](#)

depictus crucifixus: [23](#)

Index of Pages of the Print Edition

517 518 519 520 521 522 523 524 525 526 527 528 529 530 531 532 533 534 535 536 537 538 539
540 541 542 543 544 545 546 547 548 549 550 551 552 553 554 555 556 557 558 559 560 561 562
563 564 565 566 567 568 569 570 571 572 573 574 575 576 577 578 579 580 581 582 583 584 585
586 587 588 589 590 591 592 593 594 595 596 597 598 599 600 601 602 603 604 605 606 607 608
609 610 611 612 613 614 615 616 617 618 619 620 621 622 527 528 529 530 531