

## OF THE WORTHY RECEIVING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

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

THESE words contain a mean for preventing the great evil which men are apt to fall into with respect to the Lord's supper; and so for our purpose they offer two things to be considered.

1. An evil, a great evil, a heinous evil, which men must use means to prevent; that is, unworthy communicating. *But let a man examine himself, &c.* This looks back to the preceding verse, wherein the apostle had declared unworthy communicants to be 'guilty of Christ's body and blood.' *But* (says he, to prevent this, and that ye may worthily partake) *let a man examine himself, &c.*

2. The way to be taken to prevent unworthy communicating: *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, &c.* A man, every man to whom the gospel comes, and who has access to this ordinance, must examine himself, as a judge does a matter of fact, or goldsmiths metals by the touch-stone, to discern what is true and what counterfeit. *And so let him eat; not, And then let him eat,* whatever case his soul be in; but let him follow out this duty till he find his soul in some fitness for that ordinance, *And so eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

The text affords this doctrine, viz.

Doctr. 'It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's supper, that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience, lest coming unworthily they eat and drink judgment to themselves.'

Here let us consider,

I. What worthiness to partake is.

II. The duty of self-examination necessary for worthy receiving of the Lord's supper.

III. The necessity of this self-examination.

IV. Deduce an inference or two.

I. Let us consider what worthiness to partake is. And,

1. What is meant by it.

2. Wherein it consists.

*First,* Let us consider what is meant by worthiness to partake.

1. Not a legal worthiness, as if we could deserve it at the hands of God; for 'when we have done all those things which are commanded us, we must say, We are unprofitable servants, we have

done that which was our duty to do,' Luke xvii. 10. Those who are that way worthy in their own eyes, are altogether unworthy: for building their acceptance with the Lord in that ordinance upon their own good qualifications, they shall meet with Simon's entertainment, Acts. viii. 20. 'Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money;' for they run quite cross to the end of that ordinance, declaring in effect the death of Christ to be in vain as to them, Gal. ii. ult. 'For if righteousness come by the law, then is Christ dead in vain.'

2. But it is a gospel-meetness and fitness for that ordinance as we are to 'bring forth fruits meet for repentance,' Matth. iii. 8. so one communicates worthily, when he is fit for receiving that sacrament according to the rules of the gospel, comes to it in such a manner as Christ bids and welcomes his guests. And much of that lies in coming with a deep sense of our utter vileness and emptiness, Isa. lv. 1.

*Secondly*, Wherein does this worthiness to partake consist? I answer, In two things.

1. In habitual meetness for it, in respect of a gracious state. The soul in the black state of nature is utterly unfit for this ordinance, Psal. v. 5. 'The foolish shall not stand in thy sight, thou hatest all workers of iniquity.' Such a soul is a dead soul, 'dead in trespasses and sins,' Eph. ii. 1. And a dead man is not fit for a feast nor a dead soul for the Lord's table, but rather to be buried out of his sight. And from the Lord's table such a one may be expected to come away twice dead.

2. In actual meetness, in respect of a gracious frame. In our addresses to God not only life, but liveliness is requisite, Psal. lxxx. 18. A sleeping man is not fit for a feast neither; and therefore even a true believer may communicate unworthily, as some in the church of Corinth did, 1 Cor. xi. 30, 32. So it is necessary that we not only have oil in our vessels, but have our lamps burning if we would be fit, Cant. i. 12.

II. Let us consider the duty of self-examination necessary for worthy receiving of the Lord's supper. And here,

1. The rule or touchstone by which we must examine.

2. The matter we are to examine ourselves about.

*First*, Let us consider the rule or touchstone by which we must examine.

1. Beware of false ones. (1.) The common guise of the world. It is not enough that ye are like neighbour and other, aye and better than many, like the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11. Though an ape be liker a man than a dog is, yet the one is no more a man than the

other. Though mere moralists and formalists are liker true Christians than openly profane ones are, yet the former are no more true Christians than the latter. (2.) One's being better than sometime before, 2 Cor. x. 12. One may be like Saul, who got another heart, but not the new heart, 1 Sam. x. 9. (3.) The letter of the law. So did the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11; and Paul before his conversion, Rom. vii. 9. (4.) The seen practice of the godly, which is but their outside, and so is but an unsafe rule, because you cannot see the principle, motives, and ends of their actions, which are great characteristics, whereby the sincere are distinguished from hypocrites.

2. The only true rule or touchstone in this case is the word of God, Isa. viii. 20. 'To the law and to the testimony,' &c. The Spirit of the Lord speaking in the scriptures is the supreme Judge of all questions in religion, whether relating to faith or practice; and the word itself is the rule by which the decision is made. God hath given us marks in the word, by which one may know whether he be in Christ or not, 2 Cor. v. 17; whether born of God or not, 1 John iii. 9; and the like.

*Secondly*, Let us consider the matter about which we are to examine ourselves. The great thing to be inquired into and examined here, is the state of our souls before the Lord, whether we be in Christ or not, regenerate or not, have true grace or not, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. This we should examine at all times with respect to death and eternity, because our eternal state depends on our being in a state of grace here. And this is to be examined in respect of the sacrament.

The reason is, This sacrament is not a converting, but a confirming ordinance, as baptism also is, Rom. iv. 11. It is a seal of the covenant, and so supposes the covenant entered into before by the party. It is appointed for nourishment, which presupposes life. And if it were not so, what need of self-examination? so let him come, not otherwise. It is the word that is the converting ordinance, not the sacrament, Rom. x. 17; and the nature of excommunication evinces this, 1 Cor. v. 13.

But more particularly, because there are some graces, namely, knowledge, faith, repentance, love, and new obedience, which in a particular manner are sacramental graces, these are to be examined. And,

FIRST, Our knowledge is to be examined, 1 Cor. xi. 29.

And here let us consider,

1. What is to be examined concerning our knowledge.
2. How this may be known.
3. The necessity of this.

*First*, What is to be examined concerning our knowledge.

1. The measure of it, whether competent or not, Hos. iv. 6. The nature of this ordinance is such, that it cannot be managed to spiritual advantage, but loss, without a competent measure of knowledge. And this not only ministers should inquire into, but people themselves, after all examination by ministers.

2. The quality of it, whether saving or not, 1 Cor. xiii. 1. There is a notional, idle, inefficacious knowledge of spiritual things, which leaves men still in their natural darkness, as to any saving uptaking of spiritual things: and therefore it cannot be sufficient to fit men for this ordinance.

*Secondly*, How may this be known?

1. Competency of knowledge. There may be an ignorance of several not fundamental points of religion, where yet there is a competency of knowledge for this ordinance. But there are two things necessary to it. (1.) An understanding in some measure of the fundamentals of religion, the nature of God, the persons of the Trinity, the fall of man, with the sinfulness and misery of our natural state, the natures and person of Christ, and the way of redemption and salvation by him, our need of him, and of faith as the way how we come to be interested in him. There must be some sensible knowledge of these things, that men be not like parrots, who may be taught to say the creed, without understanding a word of what they say. (2.) An understanding of the nature, use, and ends of this ordinance in particular. Without such a knowledge, there can be no discerning of the Lord's body; for what spiritual thing can one perceive in the ordinance, the nature of which he is ignorant of?

2. Saving knowledge may be discerned by these two marks. (1.) When, by an inward teaching, one is made to see the truth of man's lost state, and his absolute need of Christ, as to be brought out of himself to Jesus Christ wholly for his whole salvation, John vi. 45. 'It is written in the prophets, And they shall be taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' Here are two things, in one of which, if not both, the knowledge of the most refined hypocrite fails. (2.) When it is influential on the life for sanctification, Matth. xi. 29. While notional knowledge leaves always the heart unhumbled, and the life unhallowed, saving knowledge humbles the heart, as it did in the case of Job, chap. xlii. 5, 6. 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes;' and it sanctifies the conversation, Jer. xxii. 15, 16. 'Did not my Father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy: then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the Lord.'

*Thirdly*, Let us consider the necessity of this knowledge.

1. Ignorant persons are utterly unfit to come to this ordinance, and have no right either before God or before the church. They are unconverted, unbelieving sinners, Acts xxvi. 18; ever under the power of some lusts, 1 Pet. i. 14. They are incapable of self-examination, and cannot discern the Lord's body in the ordinance, being ignorant of the mystery of Christ. Therefore a competency of knowledge is necessary.

2. Those destitute of saving knowledge are unfit for this ordinance; and however they may have a right to it before the church, they have none before God. For they are without faith, Isa. liii. 11; without repentance, Luke xv. 17. And they cannot rightly discern the Lord's body neither in that ordinance, for it must be spiritually discerned, 1 Cor. ii. 14. To discern the Lord's body in this ordinance is, in the looking-glass of the elements, to behold with a spiritual eye the body of the Son of God, by death making atonement for sin, and peace with God; which draws the heart to a resting in and on him, as overcome with his glory discerned. They who are void of saving knowledge may imagine it, but cannot spiritually discern it, 1 Cor. ii. 8.

SECONDLY, Our faith must be examined. And here let us consider,

1. The necessity of faith in this ordinance.
2. The marks of true faith.

*First*, Let us consider the necessity of faith in this ordinance.

1. Without true faith one has no right to this ordinance. For unbelievers are not within the covenant of grace, faith being that by which one enters into it, and therefore they have no right to the seal, they are not of the family of heaven, and therefore have no right to the children's bread, John i. 12, 13. Nay, they can please God in nothing they do, Heb. xi. 6.

2. Without faith there can be no feeding on Christ. *Take, eat*, implies a spiritual action, a spiritual feeding. Faith is the hand and mouth of the soul. An unbeliever may feed on the bread of the Lord, as the beasts drank of the water of the rock in the wilderness; but they cannot feed on that bread which is the Lord.

*Secondly*, Let us consider the marks of true faith.

1. A superlative desire of Christ and his grace, i. e. above all persons and things, Isa. xxvi. 9. Matth. v. 6. for himself as well as his benefits, and not for his benefits only, Psal. lxxiii. 25. A desire of a whole Christ, not only for justification, but sanctification too, and that not only as sanctification is the way to make the soul happy, but to conform it to the image of God. It is absolute, without any reserve, condition or exception, Acts ix. 6.

2. A receiving and use-making of Jesus Christ in all his offices, John i. 12. Col. ii. 6. If sensible of thy absolute need of Christ, and thy own inability to help thyself, thou fleest out of thyself unto the Lord Jesus, renouncing thy own wisdom, righteousness, and will, to be guided by his Spirit, saved by his righteousness alone, and ruled by his law; and if in the course of thy life thou lookest to him for direction, acceptance with God, and strength in the battle against corruption, then undoubtedly thou believest.

*Thirdly*, Our repentance must be examined.

Here let us consider,

1. The necessity of repentance in this ordinance.
2. The marks of it.

*First*, Let us consider the necessity of repentance in this ordinance.

4. Without it there can be no suitable remembrance of a crucified Christ. He is represented there as broken and dying for our sins: and communicating impenitently with a hard heart, looks liker a triumph over Christ's death, than an affectionate remembrance of it. And so it brings upon the person the guilt of the body and blood of the Lord.

2. Without it one cannot expect a sealed pardon, which is the end of the sacrament. God will not seal a pardon to an impenitent soul, nor give Heaven's comforts to insensible sinners, Acts ii. 38. As the sun refreshes the earth when softened by rain, but otherwise parches and scorches it; so God revives the spirit of the contrite at a sacrament, while he is full of wrath against impenitent sinners there.

For this cause it is necessary to examine your sins, search them out, and search them thoroughly.

*Secondly*, Let us view the marks of true repentance.

Ye may know it by this, that the heart is thereby turned from all sin unto God, Psal. cxix. 59. 'I thought on my former ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.' Ask,

1. Have I turned from sin unto God, or am I yet living in my sins? Acts xxvi. 18.

2. Have I turned from all sin, Ezek. xiv. 6. from all gross sins in my practice, and from all sin simply, in my heart and affections? Is my heart loosed from sin? and do I hate all sin? Psal. cxix. 104.

3. If so, why have I done it? Is it only for the wrath annexed to it, or is it not, because of the contrariety in it to God's nature and will? Ezek. xxxvi. 31.

*Lastly*, And are the remains of corruption a burden to my spirit, as they are to God's Spirit?

FOURTHLY, Our love must be examined.

And here let us view,

1. The necessity of it in this ordinance.
2. The marks of it.

*First,* Let us consider the necessity of love to God in this ordinance.

1. Love to God is necessary in it, because therein is held forth the greatest display of God's love in giving his own Son to the death for us. Here is that which of all things may warm the heart most, and make it burn with love to God and Christ.

2. Love to our neighbour is necessary, because God's love, herein represented to us, doth require it, Eph. iv. ult. And if any man love not his neighbour, he does not, he cannot love God. And they that love God, will love his image wherever it is: they will 'love the brethren,' 1 John iii. 14. not only the rich, but the poor, even though they may have several faults, and possibly esteem them not so highly; and this not for their being of the same opinion, but precisely because of the grace of God appearing in them, and not because they are like themselves. And they that truly love Christ will love their brethren of mankind, by using proper endeavours to convince them of sin: to persuade them to believe in Christ, if they are yet strangers to him, or to walk worthy of the gospel, if they have been made partakers of the grace thereof; by associating with the saints, and avoiding all unnecessary commerce with the wicked; and by forgiving personal injuries, and doing good to all men, especially those of the household of faith.

*Secondly,* Let us view the marks of love to God,

1. True love to God is supreme love. As Moses' rod, when turned into a serpent, swallowed up the rods of the Egyptian magicians; so the love of God will swallow up all affections to the creature, whether lawful or unlawful enjoyments, Luke xiv. 27; and ever sit exalted above them all.

2. Love to our neighbour will make us wish well to all men, 1 Cor. v. 8; forgive those that have done us wrong, as we desire to be forgiven of God, Matth. v. 23, 24; and love the people of God of whatever denomination, because of the image of Christ appearing in them, 1 John iii. 14.

*FIFTHLY,* Our new obedience must be examined. Without new obedience we cannot pretend to be Christ's disciples, Matth. xi. 29. I shall give a few marks of it.

(1.) It is new in respect of the principle it proceeds from, the love of God, Heb. vi. 10. (2.) In respect of the end of it, which is God's glory, 1 Cor. x. 31. (3.) It is universal, Psal. cxix. 6. 'I have a respect unto all thy commandments.' (4.) It is constant, Matth. xxiv. 13. And wherein the believer fails, it is his burden, and it

sends him always to the blood of Christ, because of the sinfulness that attends it.

III. I proceed to shew, the necessity of self-examination. It is necessary in two respects.

1. To prevent the sin of coming unworthily to the Lord's table. If we rush on this ordinance without previous examining ourselves, how can we miss of communicating unworthily?

2. To prevent the danger of coming so, which is eating and drinking damnation to one's self. The danger is great, (1.) To the soul, 1 Cor. xi. 29. 'For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.' (2.) To the body, ver. 30. 'For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.'

*Inf.* Examine yourselves, then, as to the state and case of yourselves, in order to prepare for this ordinance. And let none venture upon it without this antecedent exercise, for the danger is very great. And,

1. Be resolute in your self-examination. Resolve to set about this important duty, and resolute to follow it out: because ye will find no small difficulty in it, arising from several causes. *1st*, From yourselves, even your own corrupt hearts; and that on several heads. (1.) The ignorance of many makes it difficult. They have not the knowledge necessary to discern the nature or marks of grace. Ye must, then, endeavour the rather to discern these, or any one of them that is given. (2.) A secret respect to some bosom-idol which they would fain keep quiet, John iii. 20. There are stolen goods, which they have no will to restore, and therefore have no inclination to search them out. But, O consider that 'one thing thou lackest.' (3.) A secret fear that all is wrong with them. Perhaps it is not so. But if it be really so, ye have the more need to get matters set to rights. *2dly*, From Satan. He has a singular pique at this duty, and therefore will be ready to muster up all his forces to keep men from venturing on it, or to desist from it; and that [1.] By suggesting unto men the insuperable difficulty of the duty: There is a lion in the way, a lion in the streets. [2.] By telling them, they will mar their own peace with it, but can never come to see the truth of grace, or to assurance by it. [3.] By setting them on to some other duty, which, though good in itself, is then unseasonable, to jostle out that which is then proper and necessary. Satan knows it to be an eminently useful duty, and therefore sets himself in opposition to it, that where matters are not right, they may be kept so; and where persons are in a good state, he may rob them of the comfort of it. On these considerations, ye



must be resolute and active in this exercise. The exhortation to it is doubled, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. 'Examine your own selves, prove your own selves.'

2. Ye must be impartial in this inquiry. Ye are in this matter judges in your own cause, and under a strong bias to partiality. But the best way is, to take the matter to the highest Judge, with a resolution to know the worst of your case, 1 Cor. xi. 31. Be not as Saul, when sent to destroy the Amalekites, who spared Agag and the fattest of the cattle. Overlook not right eyes and right hands. What Solomon says of flocks, may we say concerning your souls, Prov. xxvii. 23. 'Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.' However partial ye may be, God will not be so to you; so that your foolish partiality can do you no good, but a great deal of ill, as it will make you ignorant of your own case, which it is your greatest wisdom and interest to know.

*Quest.* May one who doubts of his being in the state of grace approach to the table of the Lord? *Ans.* They whose consciences bear witness, that they do unfeignedly desire Christ and his grace, and to depart from all iniquity, may come notwithstanding of their doubts, which are their weakness, and which they are to struggle against. But if one's conscience witness to him, that he is not clear for Christ as he is offered in the gospel, he cannot come safely, Mat. v. 6. and xi. 6. 1 John iii. 20, 21.

Let every one therefore, carefully examine himself as to his spiritual state, before he approach to this holy ordinance of the Lord's supper, lest he contract the horrid guilt of trampling on the body and blood of Christ, to which he has a right at the Lord's table.



#### THE NECESSITY OF SELF-EXAMINATION CONSIDERED.\*

2 Cor. xiii. 5.—*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.*

THE dispensations of providence begin to be alarming to this secure generation, and look like the beginning of sorrows, in the great

\* Though this discourse, consisting of two short sermons, was not delivered as any part of this catechetical work, yet it is here inserted on account of its affinity to the preceding discourse, and from a persuasion that it may, through the divine blessing, be useful to the reader, as the subject is of no small importance both to saints and sinners; and were the design of it properly attended to, might prove a happy means