

## THE DANGER OF UNWORTHY COMMUNICATING.\*

1 COR. xi. 29.—*For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

It is a seasonable advice which Solomon gives, Prov. xxiii. 1. 'When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee.' We expect the great Ruler of heaven and earth is to cover a table for us in this place; but at it some may get their *viaticum* for heaven, others theirs for hell. The Jews say of the manna in the wilderness, that it tasted according as every one desired. This I may say of the sacrament, it will be different according to the different palates and constitution of the communicants, like the word; to some the savour of life unto life, and to others the savour of death unto death. The apostle compares baptism to the passing through the Red Sea, which to the Israelites gave a passage to Canaan, but it was a grave to the Egyptians, to swallow them up. The Lord's supper is an open pit for destruction to some, and a chariot to carry others on in their way to heaven. The apostle tells us here the danger of unworthy communicating, notwithstanding which people mostly need rather a bridle than a spur to it.

1. The connection, in the particule *for*; which shews the words to be a reason of that exhortation, ver. 28, 'But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup,' viz. in the right manner for the hazard is great if we do otherwise.

2. A duty supposed, *eating and drinking*; which looks sternly on the sacrilege of the Papists in taking the cup from the people, and putting in only wafers into their mouths, contrary to Christ's express command, 'Drink ye all of it.' It is the people, as well as the minister, that eat and drink judgment to themselves, ver. 30.

3. The way that many mar this duty: They do it *unworthily*, that is unsuitably, unmeetly; they mar it in the making, not going about it in the right way and manner. They are guests, but not meet guests, for the holy table. They come to the marriage-feast, but not with wedding-garments.

\* Though this discourse was not delivered in the course of this work, but many years before, when the author was minister at Simprin, it was judged advisable to insert it here, as a proper addition to, and in further illustration of the preceding discourses on the Lord's supper. And as unworthy communicating is in itself a great sin, and one of the epidemical evils of the present time, a discourse on such a subject must be deemed extremely seasonable in the present juncture; and the reader will do well to peruse it with that seriousness and attention the matter of it requires.

4. What comes of it. The consequences are dreadful. They *eat and drink damnation* [*Gr. judgment*] *to themselves*. This judgment to some is temporal, to others eternal. This they are said to eat and drink to themselves; it becomes poison to them, and so they take their death with their own hands. While the meat is in their mouth, wrath goes down with it, as the devil did with Judas' sop.

5. A particular sin lying on them, which provokes God so to treat them: They do *not discern the body* of the Lord Christ; they do not duly consider the relation betwixt the elements and Christ, and so they rush in upon these creatures of bread and wine, that are of so deep a sanctification as to be the symbols of the body and blood of the Son of God; they sit down at that table, as to their ordinary meals, without that reverence and devotion that ought to be in those who sit down at such a holy table.

Two doctrines may be observed, viz.

DOCT. I. 'Though the right way and manner of communicating be the main thing to be studied in that solemn action, yet many content themselves with the bare doing of the thing, neglecting the doing of it suitably or in a right manner.'

DOCT. II. 'He that communicates unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself, while he eats the sacramental bread, and drinks the wine.'

I shall prosecute each doctrine in order.

DOCT. I. 'Though the right way and manner of communicating be the main thing to be studied in that solemn action, yet many content themselves with the bare doing of the thing, neglecting the doing of it suitably, and in a right manner.'

Here I shall shew,

I. The necessity of communicating suitably and in a right manner.

II. Why it is, that though the right way and manner of communicating be the main thing to be studied in that solemn action, yet many content themselves with the bare doing of it, neglecting the doing of it suitably, and in a right manner.

III. Make some improvement.

I. I am to shew the necessity of communicating suitably, and in a right manner.

1. God commands it, ver. 28. 'So let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.' The particle is emphatical, as John iv. 6. 'Jesus therefore being wearied with his journey, sat thus [or so] on the well.' Acts vii. 8. 'So Abraham begat Isaac.' The matter and manner of all duties are linked together in the command of God. What God hath joined, let no man put asunder. He will have his

service well done, as well as done, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. 'And thou Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all imaginations of the thoughts.' Masters on earth challenge to themselves a power to cause their servants to do their work as they would have it; but though they leave the way of doing it sometimes to the discretion of the servants, yet the Lord never does so, but always commands not only what, but how to do, 1 Thess. iv. 1.

2. No duty is pleasing to God, unless it be done in a right manner, *ib.* Unless it be so done, it is not done to his mind. It gives not content to the heart of Christ, though it may give content to men's own blinded hearts. God's will is the supreme law; for we are his own, and what we do, we ought to study to do it to his mind: otherwise we cannot please him, do what we will.

3. Because nothing is a work theologically good, but what is done in a right manner, Heb. xi. 6. 'Without faith it is impossible to please him.' There was a vast difference betwixt Cain and Abel's offering, Gen. iv. 4, 5. 'The Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering: but to Cain and to his offering he had not respect.' See the reason, Heb. xi. 4. 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.' *Bonum non, nisi ex integra causa oritur, bonum est.* Hence the good works of the heathens were but splendid sins; and those of the unregenerate are so; for they may do much, but not with a perfect heart. One sins and damns his soul at the Lord's table, another communicates worthily. What makes the difference, but the manner of doing? Hence praying is accounted but howling; eating and drinking is not to eat the Lord's supper, 1 Cor. xi. 20. Common eating and drinking are sins, Matth. xxiv. 37. Cloth may be good, and yet the coat base, if it be marred in the making.

4. Though the work be in itself good, yet if it be done unsuitably, not in a right manner, it provokes God to inflict heavy strokes on the doer. Is not a master often at that, he would rather men had not done the work, than that it should be so done? 1 Chron. xv. 13. '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.' So Jehu did something for God, but not in a right manner; hence the Lord says, Hos. i. 4. 'I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu.' And the Corinthians having communicated unworthily, or not in the right manner, the apostle observes concerning them, 1 Cor. xi. 31. 'For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.' In the mean, little is accepted, if it

is rightly done: hence it is said of Asa, 1 Kings xv. 14. 'The high places were not removed; nevertheless Asa, his heart was perfect with the Lord all his days.'

5. Only the duty done in a right manner does prosper, and get the blessing. Mark that *so*, Matth. xxiv. 46. 'Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. A man may pray ten thousand times, and never be heard; and go from one communion to another, and never be sealed to the day of redemption. A groan from the heart will do more than all these, Rom. viii. 16. Our meat can do us no good, and our clothes cannot warm us, if we do not use them in the right manner. No wonder that many are never the better of all the sacraments they get, for they communicate not aright.

6. If we communicate not in a right manner, we do no more than others, than hypocrites actually do, and Pagans may do. Hypocrites eat and drink, who shall drink eternally of the wine of the wrath of God, Luke xiii. 26, 27. Pagans can eat bread and drink wine; nay, the very beasts may do it. And shall a Christian think that he does enough when he does no more?

7. *Lastly*, God gets no glory otherwise from us in our duty, Matt. v. 16. He gets much dishonour by the way that many of us partake of his table. The means must be suited to the end; and therefore our duty must be rightly done, if we would glorify God.

II. I proceed to shew, why it is, that though the right way and manner of communicating be the main thing in that solemn action, yet many content themselves with the bare doing of the thing, neglecting the doing of it suitably, and in a right manner.

1. Because to communicate is easy, but to communicate in a right manner is very difficult. It is easy to wait on several days and hear sermons, to get a token, and eat the bread and drink the wine: but it is a hard task to plough up the fallow-ground, to mourn for sin, to get the heart in case for communion with Christ, and by faith to feed upon him. It is easy to say, we resolve to be for Christ; but it is hard to pluck out right-eyes, and cut off right hands; it is hard to set idols to the door, and give the whole heart to a Saviour.

2. Because they obtain their end by the bare performance of the duty. As, (1.) Peace of mind. Many consciences are half-awakened; though they be not so far awakened as to give men no rest without doing duty in a right manner, yet they will not hold their peace should a man neglect duties altogether. (2.) It gains a man credit in the world, and that is a strong cord to draw a man to the outside of duties, Matth. vi. 2. It is no small matter to have a name, and to seem good; and to be called godly, is affected by those who

are at no pains to be what they would seem. These are the mean and low ends they purpose to themselves, and they get them by that way. But the high and noble ends of the Christian communion with God, strength against corruption, &c. call for other sort of work.

3. Men may get duties done, and their lust kept too: they may go to a communion table, and to the table of devils too: but to do duties in the right manner is inconsistent with peace with our lusts, Psal. lxxvi. 18. If they would have a calm sea, Jonah must be thrown overboard. Hence they take so little pains in self-examination before a communion. There are some secret lusts which the man has no will to disturb; therefore he will not light the candle and search, lest he should be obliged to cast out the old leaven.

4. Because men mostly have low and mean thoughts of God and his service, Mal. i. 6, 7, 8. It is not every one that knows the Lord. Many worship they know not what, and therefore they give him they care not what. If men had suitable thoughts of that God whom they serve, they would be careful how they serve him, Psal. lxxxix. 6, 7. Wherefore the apostle, to put men out of their sloth, and engage them to the right performance of duties, tells what a one God is, Heb. xii. 28, 29. 'Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.'

5. Because men mostly are unacquainted with communion and fellowship with God to be had in duties; they know not the necessity of it, nor the excellency of it. Hence they are not at pains about it. He that minds to entertain his prince, will be at pains to provide all things necessary for that effect, while he is not so taken up who is expecting no guests.

*Use.* Of lamentation. O how sad is it that there are so many who content themselves with the bare work of communicating, neglecting the right manner! That there are many such, take these evidences.

1. Many approach very rashly and inconsiderately to the Lord's table. It would make a tender heart to tremble, how forward many are for going to the communion-table, though it be fenced by the severe threatenings of God. They are like the horse, Job xxix. 22, 23, 24. who 'mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet.' And they are as the leviathan, by whom 'darts are accounted as stubble,' and who laugheth at the shaking of a spear,' Job xli. 29. They snatch up the holy things of God, and with pol-

luted fingers do they handle them. How few are there that find any notable difficulty in their way to it? Truly it is lamentable to think of this rashness.

2. The little pains that many are at beforehand to get their hearts prepared for this work. Any thing they do, lies mostly in hearing in public; few wrestling with God, that he would prepare them as a bride adorned for her husband.

3. The licentious lives of communicants. Many, when the work is over, turn just back to their old ways, clearly discovering that it has made no great impression on their hearts while they were at it. Many are a shame to religion, harden the profane, and grieve the hearts of the godly by their courses.

We may justly wonder that the Lord does not sometimes make a breach among us, and mingle our blood with our sacrifices. Under the law, the Lord made some sad instances of his anger; as in the case of Uzzah, 2 Sam. vi. 6, 7. of the men of Bethshemesh, 1 Sam. vi. 19. and of Nadab and Abihu, Lev. x. 1, 2. Is not the Lord as angry still with the abuse of Gospel holy things? Yes, surely; but now the dispensation is more spiritual, and the strokes of anger are more spiritual also; such as hardness of heart, and blindness of mind. Some souls may get their death's wounds at the table, though their bodies come away whole and sound.

*Use,* Of exhortation. Be exhorted to get your hearts in a case for performing this duty in a right manner. It may be some have communicated often, and never to this day communicated once right. O strive to begin now! The advantage of it is great. Ye may find that in a communion, that ye never found yet, if ye be worthy partakers; if not, the hazard is great. Which take in

DOCT. II. 'He that communicates unworthily, eats and drink judgment to himself, while he eats the sacramental bread, and drinks the sacramental wine.'

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall shew,

I. What communicating unworthily is.

II. What judgments unworthy communicating exposes people to.

III. Make application.

1. I am to shew, what communicating unworthily is. A man communicates worthily, not when he merits the sacrament, but when he is meet for it. So a man communicates unworthily, when he is unmeet for this holy ordinance, when he wants a gospel-fitness for it. To find out this then, we must enquire into the nature of this ordinance. Consider, then,

*First,* The author of this ordinance. It is Christ, 1 Cor. xi. 23. He appointed it. It belongs to him only to appoint the several

parts of worship, who was faithful in his own house as a Son; and worship commanded by men is but vain worship. Now, if Christ be the author of this ordinance, then it is meet, 1. That we have an honourable respect for it as a divine ordinance. 2. That we go about it out of respect to the command of Christ. 3. That we expect the blessing and the advantage by it from him.

1. People communicate unworthily when they have not an honourable respect for, and a due reverence to, this ordinance, when they partake of it, Mal. i. 6, 7. If it bear the stamp of divine authority, is it meet that persons should despise it, and not be touched with reverence of it? When the angel of the covenant appeared to Moses in the bush, he said to him, 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground,' Exod. iii. 5. But, behold in this sacrament there are bread and wine of deeper sanctification than that holy ground, they being the symbols of Christ's body and blood.

2. When people do not go about it out of respect to the command of Christ, may he not justly astonish such at his table with that question, 'If I be a master, where is my fear?' Mal. i. 6. Is it meet that people should communicate out of custom, vain-glory, &c.? If the sense of his command do not bring thee there, thou canst not expect the sense of his love, but rather to feel the weight of his hand, when there. As we must believe the truth because God has said it, otherwise our assent is not divine faith; so we must do our duty because God has commanded it, otherwise our obedience is not acceptable to him.

3. When people look to any other quarter than to Christ for the good of the sacrament. Some look no farther than the elements. This is to put them in Christ's stead: but be not deceived, bread and wine cannot nourish thy soul. Some are apt to look to ministers: and if such a one as they affect serve the table they are at, they think they are sure of advantage. If they knew your hearts so led aside, they would, with a sad heart and angry countenance, say to you, as Jacob did to Rachel, 'Am I in God's stead?' Gen. xxx. 2. The spouse went a little further than the watchmen before she found her beloved, Cant. iii. 4. Many smart by this respecting particular ministers, and overlooking the Master of this ordinance.

*Secondly*, Consider the time of the institution; 'The same night in which he was betrayed by Judas, when the hour and power of darkness was approaching.' If so, then it appears that this sacrament was left us as a token by our dying friend. He was now to go out of the world to the Father; but before he goes, he will leave his people a feast and token of love. Did he not know what was

abiding him? Yes, verily he knew all. O then might not the prospect of the agony and bloody drops in the garden, the racking of his body, and the load of wrath under which his soul was to wrestle, have made him mind himself and forget us? Nay, in the night in which he was betrayed, he instituted this sacrament. Surely then it is most suitable, 1. That we prize it highly as the love-token of a dying friend. 2. That we be at pains to prepare to keep the tryst which he was so concerned to set. 3. That at such a time we avenge the treachery upon our lusts. So they partake unworthily,

1. Who partake of this ordinance without a due valuing of it as the love-token of a dying Lord. A token from a friend, though it be small in itself, yet ought to be prized; a token from a dying friend more; but a token from a friend dying for us most of all; and he would be reckoned a monster of men, that would not highly value it. Not to value this ordinance highly, and so desire and delight in it, as many communicants do, who, if they could get their credit kept, could well live without it, and in their unconcernedness of heart for it and about it, say practically, The table of the Lord is contemptible, is to trample upon our dying Lord's love-token, and to say in effect, He should have been otherwise taken up that night in which he was betrayed.

2. Those communicants who are not at pains to prepare to keep the tryst our Lord set at that time. I may say, he forgot to eat his own bread, that he might provide for us. He did not so mind the cup of wrath which he was to get himself, as to forget the sacramental cup for our comfort. When he was on the cross, he trusts to meet the believing thief in heaven; and when the clouds of wrath were gathering, and ready to pour down upon him, he trusts to meet believers on earth. And shall we forget the tryst set in that remarkable night? But, ah! how many are there that will not be at pains to prepare for this ordinance, to examine themselves as to their state, frame, &c.? They have built up mountains and walls of separation betwixt Christ and them, but are at no pains to remove them, nor to employ Christ to level them. Do not these communicate unworthily?

3. Who do not avenge the treachery. How came Judas to betray him? Was it not the sins of his own people that were the spring of the unhappy action? Your sins were the chief traitors. Then surely Christ instituting this sacrament at this time, says in effect concerning our lusts, as Psal. cxxxvii. 7, 8, 9, 'Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom, in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof. O daughter of Ba-

bylon, who art to be destroyed: happy shall he be that rewardeth thee, as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.' Can a worthy communicant partake of this ordinance, and mind the treachery his Lord met with, and not break his covenant with his lusts, and renounce his old master? No, surely. They communicate unworthily who come to this ordinance at peace with any lust; they react Judas' sin-kiss of Christ, and betray him.

*Thirdly,* Consider what is represented by the sacred symbols in this ordinance. The broken bread and wine represents Christ's broken body, and his shed blood, Christ suffering for sinners. He is sacramentally crucified before our eyes in that ordinance. Now, if the bread and wine represents to us Christ's body broken for us, and his blood shed for us, it is meet that, in communicating, 1. We meditate believingly on these sufferings. 2. That our hearts be inflamed with love to him. 3. That they be filled with sorrow for and hatred of sin. Then,

1. They communicate unworthily, who do not in their partaking meditate believingly on the sufferings of Christ. Christ will ask that question at communicants, Matth. xvi. 15. 'Whom say ye that I am?' And I would ask beforehand, Do ye believe that Jesus the Son of Mary, who was crucified betwixt two thieves without the gates of Jerusalem, was the Son of God, the only Saviour of the world, and that Christ? Do ye believe that Christ suffered? If ye do indeed believe it aright, I say, as Matth. xvi. 17. 'Blessed art thou: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but *Christ's* Father which is in heaven.' And sure I am, if ye do believe, ye cannot shun to meditate on it at the sacrament. This wonderful sight will dazzle your eyes; a sight of God suffering will blind your eyes as to other objects, and make you retire into yourself, to see and wonder, and with admiration to think on this terrible sight. Do they not act most unworthily here who are not thus taken up? What would ye have said of Moses, had he not turned aside to see that great sight, the bush burning, yet not consumed? Exod. iii. Had ye been on Mount Calvary, within hearing of Christ's dying groans, within sight of his pierced, mangled, and racked body, and had unconcernedly turned your back, and passed all without notice, would ye not say, he had been just had he turned you off that place quick into hell? Here ye have the same sight; and if ye behold it unconcernedly, ye act a most unworthy part, and oppose yourselves to the most direful effects of his vengeance.

2. Who communicate without love to Christ in exercise. He is represented a king's son in love with a beggar, loving her, and

dying for her. O miserable miscreant! does not this affect thy heart, who art this beggar? Can there be greater love? John xv. 13. What hellish cold has frozen thy affections, that this fire cannot warm, nay, melt them! What a heart of a devil hast thou, that Christ, in his glorious apparel, his red garments, cannot captivate? Be astonished, O heavens, be horribly afraid; tremble, O earth; rend, O rocks; be struck blind, O glorious sun in the firmament, when ye see the communicants sitting without love to Christ, when he is sacramentally lying before them, broken, wounded, and pierced with the envenomed arrows of God's curse, and all for them!

3. Who communicate impenitently. Have ye pierced him? How unworthy will ye be, if ye do not 'look upon him whom ye have pierced, and mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son, and be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born,' Zech. xii. 10. Will ye come to the table without the tear in your eye? O! unworthy communicants, what has petrified your hearts, turned you into stones harder than the adamant, which the blood of the goat will dissolve? Christ's dying groans rent the rocks, and raised and alarmed the dead; and wilt thou sit stupid? Where sorrow for sin and hatred of it is wanting at a communion-table, there is eating and drinking judgment, which, when it begins to work within you, will make you mourn bitterly, either here or in hell.

*Fourthly,* Consider the bread and the wine is offered and given to you at the table of the Lord, in token of Christ's offering himself to you, with all his benefits, 1 Cor. x. 16; and your taking both, eating and drinking, declares your acceptance of the offer and application of Christ to your souls. Surely then it is meet, 1. That ye believe that Christ is willing to be yours. 2. That ye do sincerely and cordially accept of the offer.

1. They are unworthy communicants who partake doubting of Christ's willingness to be theirs, with all his saving benefits. Will ye not believe him when he gives you a sealed declaration of his mind? To doubt of this, is to say he is but mocking and solemnly cheating you; so that no wonder we say 'He that doubteth is damned if he eat.' What though ye be most unworthy? he stands not on that. Though your sins be many, the sea of his blood can drain them all, Isa. i. 18. Mic. vii. 18. If the devil get in thus far on you, it will be an error in the first concoction; and till ye get over it, it is impossible to communicate aright, or get good of the sacrament.

2. Who taking the elements, yet do not take Christ by faith. Then it may be said, as John i. 11. 'He came unto his own, and his own received him not.' Is the bread or cup offered to you, then?

by that Christ says, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in, Psal. xxiv. 7. Therefore we ought to set our hearts wide open, clasp him in the arms of faith, embrace and welcome him into our souls. To take the bread in your mouths, and yet to hold Christ out of your hearts, is to put a solemn cheat upon the King of glory, which will bring upon you the curse of the deceiver, Mal. i. 14. 'Which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing;' and the cheat will be discovered, if ye repent not, before the whole assembled world at the great day, to your everlasting confusion. This is to betray Christ, with a witness. Either, then, meddle not with these sacramental symbols, or take him by faith, And if ye take him, ye must let your lusts go.

*Fifthly*, Consider this ordinance is a seal of the new covenant, 1 Cor. xi. 25. 'This cup is the new testament in my blood.' Christ has covenanted and left in his testament to his people all things necessary for them. His word in itself is sufficient security; but guilt is a fountain of fears; and we are guilty, and therefore fearful souls. And therefore, that it may be more sure to us, he has appended this seal. It is meet then, 1. That they be in the covenant who partake. 2. That we take the sacrament as a seal of God's covenant to us. 3. That we believe more firmly.

1. They are unworthy communicants who are not in covenant with God, and yet come to his table. It is a profaning of God's seal to set it to a blank. It is a feast for friends, not for enemies, Cant. v. 1; and if ye come in a state of enmity, ye can expect no kind entertainment; 'For can two walk together except they be agreed?' Amos iii. 3; yea, ye will get a sad welcome such as the man got who wanted the wedding-garment, Matth. xxii. 11, 12. If there be not a mutual consent, it is no marriage: and if there be no marriage, ye have nothing ado with the marriage-feast.

2. They that use it as a seal of their covenant with God, and not of God's covenant with them. Surely the sacrament is an obligatory ordinance to obedience; but this is not the principal end of it, but rather to be a seal of God's covenant with us. The reason why so many afterwards appear to have been unworthy communicants, is, that they go to that ordinance rather to oblige themselves to obedience, than to get a full covenant sealed to them for obedience. All our strength lies in Christ; and worthy communicants go to Christ in the sacrament to get influences of grace secured to them under his own seal, that they may in time of need afterwards know what quarter to betake themselves to for supply.

3. They whose faith of the benefits of the covenant is not more

confirmed. This is to sit down at the table, but not to taste of the meat that is set thereon. Why does the Lord give us such encouragement, and yet we grow never a whit stronger in faith; and though he give us new confirmations, yet we have never a whit more confidence in him? Would not a man think himself affronted to be thus treated?

*Sixthly*, Consider this ordinance is appointed for strengthening our souls, for the nourishing of the Lord's people, and their growth in grace. It is a supper, a feast where Christ is both maker and matter, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed. The Lord's people must needs have food to nourish the new man, and grace will decay unless it be recruited. If this be so, then it is meet, 1. That communicants be spiritually alive. 2. That they actually feed spiritually at this holy table.

1. Graceless souls must needs communicate unworthily. Where there is no grace there can be no strengthening of it. There can be no communion betwixt a holy God and an unholy sinner, Prov. xv. 8. God will not make Nebuchadnezzar's image of mystical Christ. We must be born from above ere we can be capable to feed on Heaven's dainties. It was the custom of Egypt, not of Canaan, to bring dead men to feasts. They are rather to be buried out of God's sight. An unregenerate soul at the Lord's table is a monster that hath not a hand to take his meat, nor a mouth to eat it, nor a stomach to digest it, Heb. xi. 6; and all that can be expected, is, that he will come away twice dead. Therefore, '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?' 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

2. They that do not actually feed at this table; for which cause grace in exercise is necessary. He is an unworthy guest that does not eat his meat. It is dangerous to be in a spiritual sleep at the Lord's table; therefore the church prays, Psal. lxxx. 18. 'Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.' Now, the food set before us there is Christ's body and blood, John vi. 55; that is, Christ himself as crucified for our sins. By faith we feed upon him; faith realiseth the sufferings of Christ; it looks upon Christ as the common treasury of all grace, as the principle of life, and root of holiness. It eyes the promise for the conveyance of grace into our souls; looks on the sacrament as the golden pipes conveying the golden oil; and thus applies Christ, his merits and benefits to the soul, getting into his wounds, the clefts of that rock that was smitten to give nourishment.

*Seventhly*, It is appointed for the remembrance of Christ. Christ

is gone to heaven; and his people are apt to forget him. This ordinance is a memorial of his death, and herein he is to be remembered. If so, then it is meet, 1. That they who sit down at his table know him; for there can be no remembering without knowledge of and acquaintance with him. 2. That he be remembered gratefully.

1. Those partake unworthily who are ignorant persons, and are unacquainted with Christ. Those that have been always blind, cannot remember the light. Ignorant souls will, as blind men, deal blows at the Lord's table, making themselves guilty of the body and blood of Christ. It is not only necessary that we have the knowledge of the principles of religion, but that we be taught the same by the Spirit, and in conversion be acquainted with the Master of this feast. Ignorant people cannot discern the Lord's body.

2. Who do not remember him affectionately. To remember his dying love is our great work; to remember how seasonably he undertook the work of saving sinners, Psal. xl. 7; how faithfully he performed all, how willingly and constantly he obeyed and suffered. What do men sit down at the Lord's table for, if they neglect this? And this cannot be done aright, but the soul will be suitably affected.

*Lastly*, It is appointed to be a sign and token of the communion of saints, to signify, not only our communion with Christ, but with one another; not only our union with Christ, by faith, but with one another by love, 1 Cor. x. 17. It is meet, then, that we sit down at this table in love.

They partake, then, unworthily who sit down at this table with malice and envy in their hearts against others, Matth. v. 24, 25. If we forgive not others their injuries to us, God will not forgive us. This leaven must be purged out, if ye would be a holy lump. Some will make a fashion of reconciliation before the sacrament; and when that is over, they are just as they were before: but God will not be mocked.

II. The next general head is to shew, what judgments unworthy communicating exposes people to. It exposes them,

1. To bodily strokes, as the Corinthians felt, 1 Cor. xi. 30. 'For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. One falls into a decay of strength, another takes sickness after a communion, another slips off the stage. Some give one reason for it, and some another. But, O! unworthy communicating is often the procuring cause of all. What a dreadful distemper seized Belshazzar when he was abusing the vessels of the temple! Dan. v.; but the sin of unworthy communicating is more dreadful.

2. To spiritual strokes, strokes upon the soul, blindness of mind,

hardness of heart, searedness of conscience, &c. The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain; he will let guilt lie on him. Hence some after communions are let fall into scandalous sins; some meet with greater darkness and deadness than ever before, and some with sharp desertions.

3. To eternal strokes. As to such as are out of Christ, unworthy communicating will damn them, as well as gross sins in the life and outward conversation, and no doubt will make a hotter hell than that of Pagans. Murder is a crying sin, but the murder of the Son of God is most dreadful, and the Mediator's vengeance is most terrible.

And they are said to *eat and drink judgment to themselves*; which I conceive, imports,

1. That the hurt which comes by unworthy communicating comes upon the person himself, not on Christ, whose body and blood he is guilty of; for *themselves* has a relation not to others, but to Christ. They may eat judgment to ministers and fellow communicants, if they have a sinful hand in bringing them to the table. Only, though the slight is given to Christ, yet it rebounds upon the man himself, and lies heavy on him with its consequences. They do interpretatively murder Christ, in so far as they abuse the symbols of his broken body and shed blood; but they can do him no harm; they kick against the pricks, which run into their bodies and souls.

2. That they themselves are the authors of their own ruin. They take their death with their own hand, like a man that wilfully drinks of a cup of poison, and so murder their own souls. And O what a dreadful thing is this for a man to perish by his own hands!

3. That they shall be as sure of judgment upon them for their sin, if repentance prevent it not, and cut the thread, as they are of the sacramental bread they eat, and the wine they drink. Death is in the cup to them, and it will go down with the elements into their bowels.

USE. Beware then of unworthy communicating. Profane not the holy things of God by your rash approaches to this ordinance. If the love of the Lord Jesus will not allure you to a conscientious performance of this duty in a holy manner, let the terror of God affright you. Behold life and death are set before you. Venture not on the swordpoint of vengeance, even the vengeance of his temple. O sinner! hold thy hand. Do not wound the Lord of glory, and bring innocent blood on thy head. O wound not your own souls with the wound of an enemy! Provoke not God to give you blood to drink.

*Object.* 1. We had better refrain than run such a risk. *Ans.*

If you cannot think on parting with your lusts, but you must either communicate keeping them still, or not at all, then assure yourselves, God will avenge this contempt of himself and his Son upon you, and ye shall fall into the hands of the living God through eternity, Luke xix. 27. If ye think of being better disposed afterwards, ye deceive yourselves; for the longer ye keep your sins, it will be the harder to part with them. And who knows if ever your eyes may see another such occasion? But if ye mind to part with your sins now, and be in earnest for communion with God in that ordinance, then ye will make conscience of, and sincerely endeavour worthy communicating, which will be accepted; for it is a gospel, not a legal fitness, that we urge.

*Object.* 2. But that terror confounds me when I think of approaching the Lord's table, lest he be provoked to strike me dead on the spot, or I get my damnation sealed. *Ans.* Satan labours either to make us feed without fear, or else to fear so as we cannot feed. But look ye to God through the veil of the flesh of Christ, and so you will see an atoned and pacified God. If such fear seize thee, then acknowledge God is just if he should do to you as you fear: but because you need a Saviour, and he has commanded you to accept of him, take him, though with a trembling hand; and having nothing to bring with you, come to get all. Say, Lord, if thou shouldst confound me before all the people, thou art just; but I plead mercy through Christ; and if thou wilt give me thy grace, I am content to be a monument of grace. I have nothing, but I am content to be thy debtor for all. And so you will find a reviving.

I shall only say, 1. Examine yourselves as to your state, your frame, your graces, your wants, &c. and know how matters stand with you. Take a look of your former ways, and turn to the Lord with your whole heart.

2. Put away the strange gods that are among you. Look what sin has been indulged, and let this be the parting time; for one leak will sink the ship, Psal. lxxvi. 18.

3. Employ Christ for suitable preparation. Use the means, but look to him alone for the blessing.

4. *Lastly*, Do this work that ye would do if ye were to die on the communion-sabbath. *Sacramentum et articulus mortis æquiparantur.* In death we go to Christ, in the sacrament he comes to us: and who knows but some of us may get our provision there for another world, either in mercy or in wrath? But happy they who set themselves for dying furniture.