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Preparation-Sermon FOR THE

C O M M U N I O N.

1 Cor. 11. 29. *For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's Body.*



IT hath been so ordered in the good providence of God, that ye have lately heard of that main, very comprehensive and indispensibly necessary duty, called for from all that would worthily partake of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, for which we are now making ready, *viz.* *Self-examination*; in reference to which, the apostle having perceived many faults and failings in these *Corinthians*; and much unsuitableness as to their communicating; gives advertisement, that whoever for the time to come would aright approach to the table of the Lord, *would examine themselves, and so eat*: And, knowing well that this is a difficult exercise, and that there is naturally a great deal of averness in peoples hearts from it, he judgeth it meet to press the exhortation to that necessary, tho' difficult duty, by a reason or motive set down in the words now read in your hearing; *For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself*: As if he had said, You had need to look well to the examination of yourselves, for, if ye neglect or miscarry in that duty, your hazard and danger is dreadfully great through unworthy communicating; which if ye would escape, then make conscience narrowly and carefully to examine yourselves. The last words of the *verse* are a confirmation of
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the reason, and do shew why the Lord is so holily severe in punishing and plaguing those who approach to his table unworthily through not examining of themselves, because *they discern not the Lord's Body*: The force whereof is, that there is a most singular and gracious presence of the Lord Christ in the sacrament of his supper, and therefore the person who goes not aright about it, doth put a great disrespect upon, yea, doth even vilify him who is thus present in that ordinance.

It is the *first* part of these words, that at this time we would mainly speak to; wherein we would explicate the meaning of these *three*. *1st*, *To eat and drink unworthily*, here, is to eat and drink unsuitably or unbecomingly; as the apostle, when he willeth the *Christian Romans*, Chap. 16. 2. to receive *Phebe as becometh* and is suitable to *saints*, he makes use of the word *worthily*, for so it is in the original; and this, being the opposite to that, is to be understood unsuitably and unbecomingly to such a manifestation of the love of Christ, in giving himself to and for his people: As in our common language, when a man does a thing unsuitably, we say he did it unworthily, when it answers not the end proposed. *2dly*, *Judgment, or Damnation*, here, takes in these *three* things. 1. A temporal stroke; as, *v. 30, 31. For this cause many among you are sickly and weak, and many sleep*. 2. It may look to eternal judgment; as damnation is often taken in scripture. 3. It may look to spiritual judgments; for tho' a believer be not capable of eternal judgment, yet by unworthy communicating he may draw upon himself temporal strokes and spiritual judgments; he may much wear out the life of grace, and bring himself under blasting and withering: And unbelievers draw upon themselves not only those, but eternal damnation, and that with a higher degree of aggravation. *3dly*, That he is said to *eat and drink* this to *himself*, as in the former *verse* a man is commanded to *examine himself*: It may take in these two, as aimed at by the apostle, 1. It is to provoke every man to his particular duty, from his particular hazard; he hazards his own soul. 2. 'Tis put here, to shew the restriction of the judgment according to the sin; and so, if a man examine himself, tho' others neglect it, the judgment

ment shall not overtake him; but if he examine not himself, whoever escape judgment, he shall not escape it: And thus 'tis an encouragement to a man to go about the duty of self-examination, as well as a motive of terror: *Corinth* being corrupted with many abuses, one Person could not amend all: Well (says he) *Let a man examine himself*, and so he shall escape the hazard; if not, he will fall under it.

We shall first draw some *observations* from the words, and then speak a word for *use*.

First, It is supposed here, that in this ordinance of the Lord's Supper there is a special eminency, excellency, dignity and worth; or, this ordinance of the Lord's Supper is of a singular solemn nature: And this I gather partly from this *verse* considered in itself, *He that eats and drinks unworthily*, implies that there is a special worthiness in it, that a man should not offer indignity to; and partly from the connexion of this *verse* with the former, for it is made a reason why he presses particular and strict self-examination, which shews that there is a more singular excellency in this ordinance than in others; and partly from the context, for every circumstance speaks out a solemnity in this ordinance; as, (1.) The night when it was instituted, *v. 23. The same night in which he was betrayed*, and when he was taking his goodnight of his disciples. (2.) His jealousy of, and his quarrelling and threatening for the abuse of this ordinance, speaks out a special excellency in the ordinance, that all who approach thereunto should be suitably affected with. All the ordinances of the Lord are excellent; for if all his works be excellent, then much more the gospel-ordinances, as being a step above those; and yet this ordinance of the Lord's Supper seems dignified with an eminency and excellency above them all. 1. In reference to what it sets out and exhibites: They all set out love, but this sets out love in an eminent degree; for it sets forth the Lord's death, wherein the most eminent step and degree of his love shines; yea, this ordinance sets out his actual dying, and so sets out his love in its liveliest colours, and as the great masterpiece of it. 2. In respect of the excellent benefits communicated in it: It is true, there is no other thing on the

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matter communicate in it, than there is communicate in the word and baptism; yet, if we look to the words, *Take ye, eat ye, this is my body*, they hold out Christ Jesus not so much giving any particular gift, as actually conferring himself in his death and suffering: And the main scope being to confer Christ and all that is in him to the believer, it holds out some way the excellency of this ordinance beyond others. 3. In respect of the manner how our Lord Jesus makes over himself; whereby I mean not only the clearness of his making over himself, for in this ordinance there is the clearest view of a slain Saviour, and of covenanting with God; and often the most comfortable manifestations of love go alongst with it, for which cause 'tis called eminently *the communion*: But also that there is here a clear glance of heaven upon earth, Jesus Christ and his people mixing (to speak so) and being familiar together; he condescending not only to keep company with them, but to be their food and refreshment; and he giving them not only the word to their faith, but himself (as it were) to their sense, in so far as the mean whereby he communicateth himself is more sensible; it is by his Spirit that the mean is made effectual. And there is not only a fixedness of faith on our part, but a sort of divineness in the ordinance itself; the very first-fruits of heaven being communicate, as it were, to the very senses of the believer: *I say unto you* (says the Lord, *Mat. 26. 29.*) *I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom*: Where he seems to point out a more special way of keeping communion with his people in this ordinance, in resemblance to that which he will have with them in heaven; there being here a more special union and communion betwixt the head and members sealed up, a type of that which is to be in heaven, a taste whereof is sometimes given in this ordinance of the communion: Hence 'tis not only called *the communion*, as in the foregoing chapter, but *the communion of the body and blood of Christ*, and *the table of the Lord*.

The first *Use* of it serves to let us see how much we are obliged to Christ Jesus: What could he have given more than himself? And what mean could have been invented,

that could have more confirmed and warmed the hearts of his people than this, which is so lively a representation and commemoration of his blessed body? Very like we might come to discern his body better, if there were a more high estimation of this ordinance; not as if there were any efficacy in it of itself to communicate grace; yet, in respect of Christ's institution, 'tis a most lively mean of grace: And there is not a circumstance in all the action, but it is to be wondred at; as, that it was instituted the same night he was betrayed, and after the paschal supper, when the traitor *Judas* was going to bring the band of soldiers to take him; that he warrants us to take it, and that we have therein sweet communion amongst ourselves: Every thing in it ought to draw us to admire his sufferings, and the great love they came from, and the notable effects thereof to us.

The second *Use* serves to provoke us to study to be in a solemn divine heavenly frame for such a solemn divine heavenly action as this is, and thorowly to examine ourselves, and to see that all things be in good order; like to a bride that is to be married to-morrow, who will be trying on her marriage-clothes, and seeing that all things be right. I shall not descend to particulars, but, in *three* or *four* words in the general, only point at such a frame as we conceive is called for from you. 1. It should be such a frame as ye would desire to be in, if Christ were coming personally and visibly to marry you to-morrow: And O that this night might thus be a brydel or marriage-evening to us all! Consider what frame we would wish to be in, if we were to meet with him, and strike hands with him personally and visibly: Study and seek after such a frame. 2. It should be such a frame as we would desire to have, if we were going to give up the ghost, when all earthly things will be insignificant and of little worth to us; even such a frame as if our eternal peace and happiness were depending on that chock. This would be the night of making our testament (as it were) and of the adjusting our accounts with God, and of putting things to a point betwixt him and us; otherwise our debt may increase and grow greater, and it will not be so easy for us to win to a discharge of it. 3. It should

should be such a frame as we would desire to be found in, if the day of judgment were coming, and if that day were to be to-morrow: O how humble, how abstracted from the things of a present world, and how confirmed in the faith of God's love, would we study to be, if the voice of the arch-angel and of the last trumpet were sounding, and a solemn meeting of all before the tribunal of Christ were presently to be! What a frame (I say) would ye desire to be in, in such a case! Even such a frame should ye study to be in this night, as ye would desire to be found in, in that day: We fear it will be to many then a prick and a sting in their consciences within them, that they made so little conscience to be in a suitable frame for this so solemn an ordinance: The text tells that a sentence will pass on every one of you, and you would by all means labour to be in such a posture as the sentence may not be terrible to you. 4. It should be a heavenly and divine frame; for, if it be a heavenly and divine action, ye would consider what a frame it calleth for; how abstracted (as I just now said) the heart should be from the world, and from your carnal delights; how much in heaven, and conversant with God; what a pitch your communion with God should be raised to, in apprehending of, and meditating on him, in considering of, and admiring at the sufferings of Christ, and at the love they came from; tasting that he is good, and even delighting and solacing yourselves in his love; which is the Lord's allowance on his people, when the action is humbly and reverently gone about.

Secondly, observe, That tho' this be a most singularly solemn ordinance, and solemnly to be gone about, yet oft-times men and women go most unworthily about it, and abuse it. This is implied in the words, and we need not many proofs of it: If we will read from the 20 *ver.* to this, we will find it sufficiently proved; and if we look forward to *ver.* 30. & 31. we will find that many sad strokes came on these *Corinthians* for abusing and profaning this ordinance, and the apostle would have them gathering their unworthy communicating from these strokes. There is a readiness both in unbelievers and in believers themselves to miscarry in going about this ordinance; a readi-

ness in unbelievers; for as they spoil all things, all ordinances and duties they meddle with, *all things being unclean to the unbeliever*, so there is a miserable and woful necessity lying upon them to spoil this ordinance; and a readineſs even in believers, who alſo may miſcarry therein, as is implied in the laſt words of the chapter, compared with *ver. 32. When we are judged, we are chaſtised of the Lord, that we ſhould not be condemned with the world.* Some of them that were believers were chaſtised for this fault, to prevent their eternal ruin: And are there any acquainted with their own corrupt nature, but they may and will in ſome meaſure find in themſelves an aptitude to miſcarry, as in all other duties and ordinances, ſo in this? But the doctrine holds out a ſingular and peculiar bentneſs to miſcarry in this duty and ordinance; ſo that one who will pray with advertency, and be carried fairly thorow in that and ſeveral other duties, may yet in this ordinance fall under the guilt of unworthy communicating: The reaſons of it may be theſe, *First*, Becauſe the more ſolemn the duty be, and the greater concurrence of duties be in it, there is the greater difficulty in going about it; for a ſoul cannot be right in this, except it be right in a number of other duties and graces, as in prayer, faith, love, and repentance: And that word, *Let a man examine himſelf*, takes in a complication of duties and graces; there would be a good ſtate and a good frame, and graces would be in ſome vigour, and every duty ſuitable and proportionable to the nature of the action and of the day. And if it be a great and difficult work to carry rightly on an ordinary ſabbath, or in prayer, or meditation, or other duties any day, what a difficult work muſt it needs be to have all theſe rightly yoked together? A *ſecond* reaſon may be drawn not only from the complication of graces and duties, that is required in this action; but from the nature of the thing itſelf, that calls for duties in a high degree of ſpirituality: If any ordinance or duty call for a ſpiritual frame, 'tis this: It requires that the exerciſe of the judgment be moſt clear, that faith be moſt diſtinct, that meditation be moſt divine, &c. And the more ſpiritual the duty be, there is certainly the more aptneſs in us, thro' our corruption, to miſcarry

n it. A *third* reason is, Because there is in men and women naturally and ordinarily but very little study and endeavour to know and take up aright the nature of this ordinance: There is in the most part a great ignorance of the strain and series of the gospel; but generally there is a greater ignorance, darkness and blindness as to the right partaking of this ordinance, than as to most others; either thro' the difficulty of it, or thro' our laziness that puts us not to study it better: So that if it were asked at many of us who may have some affection, What is a communion? and what is the right way of partaking of it? there would be found but very little distinctness in the thing, and many content themselves to live without clearness about it: And this makes people incapable to go about it aright. A *fourth* reason is from peoples lothness to bestir themselves in the work of preparation for it: There is some self-examination requisite for every duty, but there is a more solemn self-examination enjoined in reference to this; and how very reluctant are we to it? And seeing examination of ourselves is as the door and entry to this duty, is it any wonder that most persons communicate unworthily? this exercise of self-searching being so much slighted, which is to the most part so very difficult, and to many through their own fault impossible.

The *first Use* serves for warning as to this matter. It is easy to get a token and to come to the table, but it is not so easy to eat and drink *worthily*, not so easy to discern the *Lord's body*, and to get Christ himself in the ordinance; and, in a word, so to go about partaking of the Lord's supper, as ye may have solid quietness of mind in reflecting on it. Is it not a wonder, then, that the most part do so securely and in a manner even desperately rush upon it, who have it may be ten, some twenty, some thirty years without trouble under this guilt? We would think it a good piece of preparation, if ye were seriously afraid to become guilty of the *body and blood of the Lord*: Want of this holy fear breeds security, and keeps from stirring up to duty, and from reflecting on ourselves; whereas, if the heart were stirred and roused with such a fear, there would be greater and more seriously sharpened diligence in all these duties, whereof we heard from the

foregoing words, to which this is a strong and pressing motive.

The *second Use* serves for trial, who among the great company gathered together here this day are afraid of sinning against God, and taking his name in vain in so solemn an ordinance. Many think they are prepared, but we think not that person the better prepared, that is not afraid and holily jealous over himself: Wo, wo to many on account of the communion-days that are past and gone without fear: It were good that ye were afraid lest this day prove like many former days, and lest any of you come short of what hath been attained in former communion-days.

Thirdly, observe, That the sin of unworthy communicating is a wrath-provoking and a judgment-drawing-on-sin: *He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to-himself.* There is hardly any sin that the Lord will more readily, speedily, and sadly plague and punish, than this: It is true, the Lord hath annexed that certification to the *third commandment*, that *He will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*; But is there any ordinance wherein the threatening is more expressed, and in reference to which the judgment hath been more severely and some way indifferently inflicted? as is clear, whether we read before or after the words of the text: And there is good reason for it; For, 1. If the duty be more solemn, if the presence in it be more gracious, and the bounty that flows in it be more abundant, then sure the sin of abusing, or of unbecoming going about it, must be the greater. 2. If we look to the sin not only in respect of its greatness in several other respects, but in respect of the nature of it, 'tis a more direct disrespect put upon, and despite done in some respect even unto Christ; 'tis to be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; 'tis as if the spear had been in such a man's hand that pierced Christ's side, and as if he had driven by his own hand the nails thorow his hands and feet: The reason is, because Christ in this ordinance brings himself and his death so very near, that the sinner is put to it in a special manner, either to receive him, or to refuse and reject him; and when he refuses and rejects him, he thereby practically says, that
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he makes very little or no account of him at all, and that, if he had been living in those days when he was crucified, he would also have joined with the multitude, and cried, *Away with him*: Thus such an one *crucifies the Son of God afresh, and puts him to an open shame*: O hair-bred and horrid guilt!

The *first Use* serves to alarm you, That, if the fear of sin will not prevail with you, the fear of judgment, of God's curse and wrath, and of the vengeance of the Mediator (represented in this ordinance very clearly, as crucified, and bleeding out his precious life for sinners) here, and eternally hereafter, may prevail with you to be serious in the work ye are now called to.

Let me (which is a *second* and more particular *Use* of the doctrine) advise you, as to examine yourselves seriously in reference to all your other ways, so to take a special look of your bygone communicating: O that many of you who are so whole at the heart, that there is no provoking nor awakning of you, and who are so senseless, that ye scare at nothing, could be prevailed with to charge yourselves with this horrid sin of being *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*, that thereby ye may be awakned! It will certainly one day awake you; therefore, in your self-examination, take special notice: If ye have communicated unworthily, make special addresses to God for removing of this dreadful guilt, and have a special eye for the time to come that ye fall not in it; I say again, take a special review of your bygone carriage in this ordinance, and say to yourselves, Whether are we guilty of this sin? and whether are we in hazard to fall into it of new? And, to stir you up to this, consider, 1. What temporal strokes from God have come or may come for it: Who knows but our outward captivity, the blood that hath been shed, the many new and unheard-of, or but very little heard-of diseases that are among us, have in a great part been for this sin? 2. Know, that, beside temporal strokes on the outward man, ye may fall under spiritual plagues: The Lord may blast the ordinances for the time to come, that they shall do you no good; and he may blast any parts and gifts that ye have; he may make your ears dull of hearing, and your eyes blind, and
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your hearts fat; And, if ye quench any convictions that ye may possibly be under for the time, it may be that ye shall never be privileged with such convictions again, nor be brought so near heaven hereafter; but more delusion and seduction by error, more prophanity, security, hypocrisy and presumption may break in among you; And tho' these be not thought much of now by some at least, but lookt at as very light things, yet the day will come when they will be found to be insupportably heavy; and men will be put rather to wish, that this house, wherein we now are, had fallen on them and bruised them, or that the sword had fallen in upon them and slain them, than to ly under such a weight. 3. Know, that it may bring on eternal judgment; and O but this will draw deep on the score of many professors, even the abuse of the Lord's table, in partaking of his table, and of the table of devils! I shall name but a few sins here, that ye would notice and try yourselves in as to this: 1st, Ye have often communicate, have ye also often examined yourselves? Can many of you pitch on such an hour or half-hour, that ye set apart to try your soul's condition? 2^{dly}, I would ask, What repentance hath there been? Right examination makes discovery of guilt, and discovery of guilt brings out repentance, which hath some pricking and soul-panging with it. 3^{dly}, What effect hath followed? what engagements have been kept? how have many of us reformed our walk? is not our carriage as it was? passion and pride as quick and lively as they had wont to be? deadness, security and worldly-mindedness as they were before? Are we not as little self-denied, as unready to forgive, as ignorant, and having as little knowledge of gospel-mysteries as we were, and had many a year since? But very few can say on good grounds that they have made any progress in mortification and holiness; and, except it be some conviction, some flash of affection, or some faint resolutions to amend things amiss, what use hath been made of, or what benefit hath been reaped by many, and that not of the worst sort, by the communion? And therefore, in the *next* place, let me say, That it were not unbecoming or unsuitable to the communion, to make this night a night of humiliation before God, and

of prayer to him to be delivered from *blood-guiltiness*; there is not a more legible evidence of our unkindness, than our being little pricked at the heart for this sin: A word of reflection from our neighbour, or the apprehension of some great man's displeasure and feud, hath lien nearer our hearts, than the wronging of the Son of God at this rate, hath done; for which it were good now to cast an eye to *look to him*, and to *mourn as one mourneth for his only son, and to go to Zion weeping as we go, asking the way thitherward*. These are no uncouth nor strange things, but such as are ordinarily prest upon us. We are afraid that many have lothed and left the simple way of godliness, to get and look after some shining and glistering thing to the eye; and that way will never profit them. Take a serious look of your soul's condition, and be in good earnest in the exercise of repentance, as the life of your preparation; even that ye may come, knowing well what ye need, and what ye are to receive if ye come aright.

The *third* and main *Use* is, That, seeing there is so great ground to fear communicating unworthily, and that so great judgments follow upon it, it would be, as our fear to communicate unworthily, so our uptaking business, how we may communicate worthily: This is the end of the day, and should be our task and work this night, even to endeavour to be worthy communicants tomorrow. Ye will readily ask, How is such a frame to be attained and come by? I would, for answer, desire you seriously to mind what ye have heard on these words, *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat*; which comprehend the sum of what is called for from you: And we shall now add these *four* things, that, in your preparing yourselves to communicate rightly and worthily, ye would seriously mind; 1. A right up-taking of yourselves. 2. A right up-taking of the ordinance. 3. A right acting in reference to both. 4. A right manner of acting or a right frame in your going about the work. For the *First*, We say, There would be a right up-taking of ourselves, that we may know what we are, what are our sins, spiritual wants and necessities, that we may have some distinct errand to God: This is implied in these words, *Let a man examine himself*; that he may be well acquainted with

with himself. If there be not some time taken for attaining to a right consideration of ourselves, we cannot come rightly to this ordinance; or if any word come that suits our condition, 'it will come by guess as to us, and we may come to the communion, and neither know what we need, nor what we are seeking or would be at.

For the *Second*, we say, There would be a right uptaking of the ordinance itself, which, when wanting, it mars us, that we know not how to communicate: In the ordinance we would take up the substance of it, the end of it, and how it effectuates the end. *1st*, The substance of the ordinance is Christ Jesus himself, who, tho' he be not bodily, yet is he really present in the sacrament: His words are not empty words, the signs are not empty signs; but *the bread his body, and the wine is his blood*: For if there be a presence in the word, as he makes it known through his Spirit, by the efficacy of it on the heart; then, in a more special and solemn manner, there is a presence in the sacrament, which also he makes sensible to the spiritual senses of the believer. *2dly*, The end and use the ordinance, for which God hath appointed it, would also be rightly taken up; and this is large: It serves for the manifesting of his love in his death till he come again; and this would be a piece of your exercise, to discover the love of Christ in it, and to put your faith to exercise on that love: In which respect, Christians have not only their particular case to look to in the sacrament, but also that their spirits be taken up with the thoughts of the wonderfully condescending love of Christ, who hath given and left behind him a token and memorial of it. And especially these ends would be looked to and considered, *viz.* That 'tis given for instruction, for it gives us a sight of Christ crucified; it shews us the way of making up our union with him, and the necessity of it, and the warrant given us to make use of him. And as 'tis given for instruction and teaching, so for sealing and confirming; the Lord would have us thereby knowing the truth of his promises and covenant for our greater consolation, and that we may with the greater liberty apply them: Even as when a prince offers peace to a rebel, and grants him a pardon, to make him the more sure, and to remove all doubts

doubts and jealousies, there is a seal appended to the pardon, which confirms it, and consequently strengthneth the faith of the rebel to rest upon it; so this is a special end of the sacrament, to seal and confirm; God having graciously condescended to covenant and promise, and to swear to the truth of his covenant and promise, *that the heirs of promise may have strong consolation*; he also appends seals to his covenant. But, *3dly*, We are to consider how it effectuates these ends: And thus we are to look on the sacrament as exhibiting and applying Jesus Christ and his benefits; which must needs be a spiritual and sublime thing, holden out in these words, *Take ye, eat ye, this is my body, &c.* Where we have Jesus Christ giving over himself to the believer, so as he and the believer become one, and he hath Christ to feed upon. 'Tis true, there is no physical conjunction here; Yet as, in the word, the offer and promises convey Christ holden out in the promises to the soul, being received by faith, there is an union thus made up betwixt Christ and the person; so, in the right partaking of the sacrament, the Spirit going along with the word and seal, and the believer receiving the seal as given him of God for that end, as well as the word, there results an union and communion, a mystical and spiritual uniting and joining of Christ and the believer together; which, altho' it doth not always necessarily presuppose faith going before, yet it supposes faith necessarily to go along with it: And in this there is most express covenanting and bargaining betwixt Christ and the believer, Jesus Christ not giving himself here indefinitely, as he doth in the word and offer of the Gospel, but particularly; and thus the believer's faith hath the most distinct ground and reason to make application of him, and so the more distinct confirmation.

For the *Third*, There is a right acting in reference to both the former to be looked to. *1st*, There is something that our judgment and memory would be taken up with, which is as the key to what follows: We are to remember the Lord's death, the end of it, the love he had in dying, and his instituting of this ordinance when he died for this end, that we might remember his death and love therein till he come again, and have our minds meditating on these.

24ly, There would be the exercise of our graces, as of repentance, from reflecting on ourselves; of love, from looking to Christ, and of continued spiritual mourning, resulting from both: And especially there would be the exercise of faith, as being the main thing that on our part makes up the union, and whereby our communion is entertained. And there is a *threefold* act of faith called for in worthy communicating; 1. An act receiving. 2. An act giving. 3. A ratifying act, that knits both the acts together. (1.) I say, an act of faith receiving Christ's word and ordinance, and himself therein. (2.) An act of faith giving, resigning or committing ourselves to him: The covenant being in this respect mutual. And, (3.) A ratifying act, coupling or knitting these together, *viz.* Christ giving himself to us, and our giving ourselves to him; his engagement to us, and ours to him. To clear these a little further, 1. The receiving act of faith looks to the institution and covenant to which the sacrament is appended, and to Christ, in the words of institution and in the covenant, making offer of himself, which is to be considered as in the word and covenant, to which the sacrament is appended: And accordingly it welcometh him, as it doth in the word; for, as there is a receiving act of faith as to the word, so there is a receiving act of faith as to the sacrament: That is, when the soul is put to dispute, whether about the offer if it be made to it, or about the promise that supposes the condition, if it may lay hold upon it; the believing soul's taking of the sacrament is the permitting and allowing of itself to be confirmed, by virtue of Christ's appointing that ordinance for its confirmation, that the offer is made to it, and that the promise belongs to it in particular: As when a penitent sinner comes to the communion, and that promise rolls in his thoughts, *Thy sins and thy iniquities will I remember no more*, and he would fain believe it; the receiving act of faith is to take the sacrament as God's putting his seal to that word of promise, that he will make it good to the soul in particular, *Thy sins and thy iniquities will I remember no more*: Or when a soul hath its secret longing after Christ, and cannot dispense with the want of him, and cries out, *O! when wilt thou come unto me?* In the sacrament it looks on the insti-

instituted, and takes it as a seal of confirmation to put it out of question, that he that hath promised to come, *will come, and will not tarry*; and it looks on Christ giving the communion, as if it saw him taking the pen, and with his own hand subscribing the contract, and lays it up in its heart as in a charter-chest, as an evidence and confirmation of its right to Christ. And indeed there is much need of being distinct in this; for there are many who make conscience of engaging to Christ in this ordinance, who look not on it as Christ's engaging to them; but the receiving act of faith looks on it immediately as his engaging to the soul: As a person that hath a hard heart, looking on that promise, *I will take away the stony heart, and give a heart of flesh*, and, expecting the making out of it, takes the sacrament as a seal that he will perform that promise, because he articles so with him to get that promise made good; even as a man, that would have some debateable clause in his right to such a piece of land cleared and put out of question, brings it to his superior to get it sealed of new: Now this receiving act of faith doth not only dispose and fit us to receive from God; but as the hand takes or receives the elements, so faith receives God's offer of the covenant, and that which is represented and sealed up in that ordinance. 2. The act of faith giving, is (as I said) that whereby we give ourselves away to Christ; and so, as we get one right, we give (as it were) another; or, as we take one hand, we give another: We receive Christ engaged to us according to the covenant, and we engage and give ourselves away to be his. Our very receiving supposeth our consenting, and faith's delivering and giving up itself or the person to Christ, and taking Christ to it, or to himself, so making (as it were) an exchange. (O wonderful exchange, by which we receive infinitely more and better than we give!) when the soul hath gotten him, it gives itself to him, to be changed and made better; and renews its purposes, resolutions and promises to that end, and takes the sacrament to make these sure and secure. 3. The ratifying act of faith is this, when we have taken Christ's promise by faith, and have given our promise to him, and surrendered and delivered up ourselves unto him, and we go about the communion, and exercise our faith

faith to get both confirmed; as we use to speak, *We will take our sacrament on it*; we take the communion to seal his part of the covenant to us, and to confirm ourselves as to the performance of that which we have engaged to him; and thus that which was before a bond on Christ's side, and a bond and engagement on our side, becomes now a mutual contract and bargain; both are put in one, and complicated together, sealed with one seal, and made use of for both these ends: The believer thinks himself surer of God's promise, and himself more securely engaged to God; and tho' this engaging hath no new promise with it, yet thereby the more explicitly is our duty brought forth, and the promise more particularly becomes ours.

As for the *Fourth* and last thing, It is a right manner of acting, or a right way and suitable frame in our going about this ordinance; which takes in several things, as, 1. Fear, because it is a very difficult thing rightly to communicate, and we had need to fear lest we mistake and miscarry. 2. Distinctness and clearness, which is a part of the result of self-examination: We would at least be so far clear in our condition, as to know and be convinced that the general strain of our way hath not been right as it should have been by very far, when we cannot so well find out and condescend upon the particular evils that we have been given to, or have done; and tho' we know not all nor many of the particular promises of the covenant, yet we would be clear in that general, that in the covenant God maketh over himself a God all-sufficient to the believer. 3. Faith in, and dependence on God for preparation, and for a suitable frame, for gaining new ground of corruptions, for more humility and tenderness, for more thorough turning to the Lord: *Convert me* (says *Ephraim*, Jer. 31.) *and I shall be converted.* There would be many serious and sincere-resolutions, engagements, and purposes, and much heart-melting, and prayer in the making of them; as it was with *Israel* and *Judab*, Jer. 50. 5. whose great desire and design was, to have the covenant betwixt God and them so secured, that it might hold perpetually, and never any more be forgotten; they desired to keep (as we use to speak) no hank in their own hand, they allow of no reservations or exceptions, and they go about this
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