

miss affections to Jesus Christ? O look upon him this day in his red garments! Behold him in the strength of his love, breaking through the curse of the law, the wrath of God, the agonies of death, to bring home the fruits of his eternal love to thy soul; and whilst thou art beholding, and musing upon it, let thy heart melt, thy eyes drop, and thy very soul cry out, ‘Behold how he loved me! Blessed be God for Jesus Christ.’



A FAMILIAR
CONFERENCE

BETWEEN A

MINISTER AND A DOUBTING CHRISTIAN,

CONCERNING THE

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Christian.] **S**IR, if it may be no interruption to your studies, I would be glad to be resolved of several doubts, that arise in my mind, about receiving the blessed sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Minister.] ‘I shall be very glad to contribute any thing for removing those scruples which may disturb you upon that account; therefore, pray go on.’

Christian.] Sir, I have heard many sermons, and read several discourses, which do much urge and declare the necessity of communicating in this blessed ordinance; and yet I durst never presume to join therein.

Minister.] ‘Have you then hitherto lived in the neglect of this important duty?’

Christian.] To speak freely, Sir, I never yet did communicate therein all my life; because I have much questioned, whether I were worthy to receive that blessed and holy seal, to the glory of God, and my own edification and comfort; since I never truly understood the institution, nature, administration, and ends of it, nor the qualifications of those who are to be partakers thereof, according to the appointment of Jesus Christ.

Minister.] ‘Well then, I hope, if these things be plainly opened to you, it may conduce to satisfy your scruples.’

Christian.] Sir, I shall receive your instructions with thankfulness, and if my heart deceive me not, shall rejoice in the light and knowledge that I may gain thereby.

Minister.] ‘Let us then, *first*, enquire into the qualifications of a sincere Christian in general; and, *secondly*, of the qualifications of such Christians as are meet to partake of the Lord’s supper; for they are distinct, and sometimes separate.’

Christian.] I hope, in doing this, you will much help me to judge of my present state and condition God-ward. And now, in the first place, pray inform me, how I may know if I am a sincere Christian.

Minister.] ‘All true believers, among other graces, have such a knowledge of God in Christ, as works by love, and stirs up in them an earnest study of the will of God, and a sincere endeavour to live in the faith, knowledge, and practice of it.’

Christian.] Sir, I cannot boast of my knowledge; yet, by the grace of God shewed to me, those conceptions which I have of God in Christ, have, I hope, so far prevailed upon me, that to live in the knowledge, love, and enjoyment of him, and to have my all devoted to his will and praise, is all the heaven that I desire in this world, and a great part of that which I hope for in the world to come.

Minister.] ‘These are good signs of a real and renewed change in your soul, and so doubtless have wrought good dispositions in you: of which you have had evidence in your heart, and have made it appear in your life and actions.’

Christian.] I would be loth to flatter myself; but yet I hope, that I find some delight in the word of God, both read and preached: and do seriously meditate thereon, that I may ‘grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord.’ And though I am sometimes tempted with vile and vain thoughts, yet I endeavour to stifle them, and my heart rises against them. I thank God, I strive to resist the first motions to sin, and avoid all occasions of evil; and I am never more uneasy, than when I happen into the company of profane and ill people, having a hatred to lying, obscene and filthy discourses, swearing, cursing, and all dishonourable reflections upon God and godliness. I make conscience of taking up a slander against my neighbour; and to be just, and to do good to all, according to my ability; and ‘to walk in all the commandments of the Lord, blameless.’

Minister.] ‘If these be the fruits and effects of your faith, it is not a dead faith; yet we must not rest upon our own works, or righteousness, for justification, merit, or satisfaction; because it will be derogatory to the merits and righteousness of Jesus Christ, and dangerous to our own souls.’

Christian.] Sir, I know right well, there is no justification, but by the blood of Jesus; neither dare I trust to my own righteousness, but to his only, for the pardon and remission of my sins. And if by grace

I am enabled to bring forth any fruit meet for a gospel faith, repentance, and love; these I bless God for, as a part of my duty and happiness, and desire to look on them as proofs of faith, (if they are worthy to be such) and no otherwise.

Minister.] ‘This is well. But do you find your soul always in a good frame and temper, without haltings, slips, or excursions?’

Christian.] Sir, I dare not say I do: for I must with sorrow acknowledge, that at sometimes my thoughts are polluted, my words are unsavoury without edification, my actions not adorning the doctrine of the gospel of God my Saviour; but such as I fear may prove a grief and snare to others. My spiritual relish of God’s word is very insipid, and its authority not so sensibly powerful; so that I am unready to any thing that is good, even like a dead man, as if my religion had no life nor soul in it.

Minister.] ‘Well: but when you thus fall into sin, or fail in your duty, what do you think of yourself and ways? How are you affected therewith?’

Christian.] When I am in this deplorable condition, my soul is much disturbed, my joy and peace of conscience are gone: but when I am a little roused out of this sinful lethargy, my heart is then melted with sorrow for my folly and miscarriage, and I address myself to God with the greatest fear and shame, humbly imploring him to *renew a right Spirit within me.*

Minister.] ‘Well, friend, if your conscience confirms what your tongue has uttered, you have expressed enough to evidence the sincerity of your obedience to God, and that you are a sound believer, and a sincere convert. And I hope you have faith also in Jesus Christ the mediator; without a due respect to whom our faith and good affections will not deserve the name of being truly evangelical and saving.’

Christian.] Through grace, I desire to acknowledge and embrace the Lord Jesus Christ upon the terms on which he is offered in the gospel; to believe all his doctrines, as my teacher and guide; to trust and depend upon him, as the “High-priest of our profession, who makes atonement by his sacrifice and intercession.” And I desire to submit to his government, as Lord and King of his church.

Minister.] ‘These are very considerable attainments, and include the substance of saving-faith. But are you sensible how you arrived to this good disposition and frame of mind? Do you imagine it was natural to you, or the result of the improvement of your natural reason, powers, or faculties?’

Christian.] Oh, Sir, I dare by no means ascribe that to nature, which is only the effect of divine grace. If I have any measure of sanctification, it is only by the gift and grace of God; for I have had too much experience, that by nature I am alive to vanity and sin; but dead and lifeless to God, and to all real goodness; that I am darkness; folly possesseth my soul; I am at enmity with God, and altogether unable

to will, or to do what is pleasing in his eyes; having a great contrariety in my heart to the way of salvation proposed in the gospel of Christ.

Minister.] ‘And have you taken up strong resolutions, that, by the help of God, and the assistance of his blessed Spirit, you will endeavour to persevere in the faith and practice which you have now declared, to your life’s end?’

Christian.] Sir, there is nothing that I more dread than apostatizing, or relaxing in my duty and profession, and that I should have a backsliding heart from the Lord; and I earnestly watch and pray against every symptom and degree thereof.

Minister.] ‘Do you think, that by your own strength and ability, you have power to preserve and continue in the faith and obedience of the gospel, against the many temptations and corruptions that assault us, and the lamentable miscarriages of those who seemed pillars in the house of God?’

Christian.] I have no confidence in my own ability, Sir, I assure you; but do wholly rely on the *Rock that is higher than I*; even upon him who hath promised, that he will *perfect a good work begun to the day of Christ*. I rest upon him, who is the *author and finisher of our faith*; I beg his holy Spirit, to instruct, guide, assist, and comfort me. And I earnestly desire and purpose, (by the grace of God) to expect those aids, in a constant and universal attendance upon God in his ordinances, with an honest, humble, and believing heart.

Minister.] ‘These are all plain evidences of the saving grace of God: which I beseech the Lord may always continue, and grow in your heart; that so you may have a full assurance of his love, who hath dealt so graciously with you.’

Christian.] The Lord grant, that in the sense of his love to my soul, I may walk worthy of his grace. And now, Sir, by what has been said, do you think I may presume to feed on Jesus Christ at his table, and receive that blessed seal of my Redeemer’s love?

Minister.] ‘You know I told you, that a man may be a true Christian, and yet may not be fit to partake of this holy ordinance: because he may believe unto salvation, and yet be so ignorant of this mystery, as not to be able to make a due application of it to his own soul.’

Christian.] Ah, Sir, I would willingly be informed, what is necessary to be done by a sound believer, in order to the partaking of this blessed ordinance?

Minister.] ‘*First*, He must consider, that the elements and matter of this ordinance, are not common bread and wine after consecration, but set apart to a holy use, and so to be received with an holy understanding and fear. And therefore the Corinthians were blamed by the apostle, for their ignorance and irreverence, 1 Cor. xi. Again, that these elements, so blessed and set apart by Christ’s appointment, do represent a crucified Redeemer; and we are to partake of them

with love, as a memorial of his death; and with faith, as the seal of the promise, and the means appointed by God, to convey the benefits of Christ crucified to the soul.

Christian.] Sir, these considerations raise up my desires to come to the Lord's table, which I hope to be a partaker of, with the same sentiments that you have now laid before me; and that I shall feast mine eyes on that lovely object, which is so full of love; and that my eye will so deeply affect my heart toward my holy Redeemer, that I may meet with my blessed Lord in all the ways of his appointment.

Minister.] 'Again; you ought to set your soul upon self-examination, that so you may be sensible of your wants and defects, and come to Christ for a supply of the graces of his holy Spirit; that you may exercise faith, love, repentance, and all other graces, with such warmth and vigour, that Jesus Christ may delight in you, and you in him; and there may be a mutual and joyful renewing of your covenant of love and obedience to your blessed Saviour.'

Christian.] Sir, we cannot suppose that there should be the actings and exercises of grace, where the habits are wanting, no more than there can be motion without life: but it is usually said, that the holy Sacrament is a quickening, cherishing, comforting, and confirming ordinance.

Minister.] 'No doubt but the worthy prepared receivers of this blessed banquet, have by a due participation found their love inflamed, their faith strengthened, their obedience confirmed, their humility increased; so that they have appeared vile in their own sight, and have had an utter detestation of all sin, and an earnest expectation and desire after the glorious appearance of their blessed Lord and Redeemer.'

Christian.] Sir, since the benefits and blessings are so great, it makes me the more earnestly long to be a communicant in these sacred mysteries.

Minister.] 'It is the duty of all Christ's ministers, to give the sacramental bread of life, and the cup of consolation, to those who hunger and thirst after Jesus Christ, and his righteousness, and kingdom. And now I have told you your duty, I shall be willing to declare to you the nature and the circumstances of this blessed ordinance.'

Christian.] Sir, I must confess I am not so well instructed herein; and if I may not be too troublesome, would be very glad to understand what this holy ordinance is, and why it is called a sacrament.

Minister.] 'It is a seal of the covenant of God in Christ, wherein, by certain outward signs, instituted by our Saviour, Christ and all his benefits are signified, conveyed, and sealed to the worthy receiver. The word sacrament hath been anciently used, both to signify baptism and the supper of the Lord; and was taken up by the ancient fathers, from the oath by which the Roman soldiers were sworn to their duty, and were not admitted to be soldiers, until they

had solemnly taken that oath or sacrament. It is called by several other names in scripture, namely, breaking of bread, Acts ii. 42. the Lord's table, 1 Cor. x. 21. the communion, 1 Cor. x. 16.'

Christian.] Pray, Sir, how many sacraments were instituted under the New Testament, and by whose authority were they appointed?

Minister.] 'There are only two, baptism, and the Lord's supper? and they were ordained by the sole and immediate authority of Jesus Christ; and those other five which the Papists have added, and called by that name, as order, or ordaining of priests, penance, marriage, confirmation, and extreme unction, or anointing at the hour of death; all these were neither immediately instituted by Christ, nor have the proper ends of a sacrament.'

Christian.] What are the elements to be used in the sacrament of the Lord's supper?

Minister.] 'Bread and wine, and no other, Luke xxii. 19, 20. And all communicants are to receive both of them, notwithstanding the bold and sacrilegious practice of the Papists, who give the people the bread, or wafer only, none but the priest receiving both the bread and the wine. And this without any sound reason, or scripture warrant; and they may as well corrupt, totally abolish, or add to any of the ordinances and institutions of Christ Jesus, as presume to do this.'

Christian.] What resemblance or congruity is there between bread and wine, the signs, and what is signified by them in the Lord's supper?

Minister.] 'Bread is so necessary, that it is often put for all kind of food, and necessaries; and the least morsel of it is completely bread. Thus Christ is food, and all necessaries to the soul; and every worthy communicant receives a whole and complete Christ: And as corn is not bread, till it be bruised or ground; so Jesus Christ had not been food for us, if he had not been bruised with wounds and sorrow. And as bread is the common food of all people, so is Jesus Christ of all real Christians. Again, as bread being a solid body, may properly denote the body of Christ; so wine, being liquid, may represent his blood: And as wine is pressed from the grape, so the blood of Jesus was forced out by his agony, and the wounds of the cross.'

Christian.] May not the bread and wine at our common tables signify the same thing?

Minister.] 'No; because this is solemnly set apart, and consecrated to sacramental use by prayer and blessing, and by applying the words of our dear Redeemer used in the institution of this ordinance.'

Christian.] Is not the bread and wine after consecration transubstantiated, or transformed from the substance of bread and wine, into the real substance and essence of the body and blood of our Saviour;

since Christ's own words are, *This is my body, &c. This is my blood, &c.*

Minister.] 'No, by no means; this being a Popish error, attended with many absurdities and idolatrous practices. But it is the body and blood of Christ, in the sense that Christ spake it; but he did not say. This is no longer bread in substance, but the very substance of my body. And such phrases are often used in scripture, and yet not always to be taken in a strict sense, no more than that 'Rock was Christ, and I am the true vine, the door, the shepherd, &c. Moreover, Christ intended it for a sacrament, that is, a sign of what it represents; now it cannot be the real body of Christ, and the sign of it also. Again, our senses of seeing, smelling, and tasting, assure us that it is bread and wine, and no way substantially changed after the words of consecration. And if we must deny our senses in this, we may as well doubt whether these words, *This is my body, &c.* be recorded in holy scripture, though we see them there.'

Christian.] If the bread and wine be not the body and blood of Christ really and substantially, how then doth the true believer, in receiving, eating, and drinking them, receive, eat, and drink the body and blood of Christ?

Minister.] 'By receiving those elements so consecrated, as signs, seals, and conveyances of Christ and his benefits to the soul; and a true Christian hath them conveyed to him thereby, as really as a writing under hand, seal, and witnesses, can convey lands, or other benefits, which are not really in the writings themselves.'

Christian.] What are the actions of the Minister, in administering this ordinance?

Minister.] 'After blessing the bread, he breaks it, and delivers it to the communicants in the words of Jesus Christ, signifying thereby a crucified Jesus, who was wounded for our transgressions. He then pours out the wine in the sight of the congregation, and delivers that to them also, after blessing it in the words of Christ. And hereby is represented to us, our dear Redeemer shedding his blood for us; which is the sacrifice of atonement, whereby we obtain remission of sins. In which action, the minister, standing in Christ's stead, as his minister, (wherein Christ is present, and by his Spirit and authority) doth as really tender and bestow himself and benefits, as if he had spoken the same words in his own visible person.'

Christian.] But say some, since our Saviour restrained this ordinance to the time of his coming; he being come in the Spirit, it is now at an end, and abolished.

Minister.] 'If these enthusiasts mean the coming of the Spirit, in its sanctifying operations; then it seems, that it was appointed only for unbelievers; and that the disciples, who communicated with Christ at the institution thereof, had not the Spirit, but were unbelievers; which is false and absurd. If they mean the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, or the pouring it forth in an extraordinary measure; the

practice of the apostles and the church of God, both at that time, and long after, will abundantly contradict that assertion; Acts ii. 42. 1 Cor. x. 16.'

Christian.] What are the benefits that Christ gives, and we receive in this ordinance?

Minister.] 'The exercise and increase of every grace; the cleansing our souls from the guilt of sin; healing the wounds which sin hath made in our consciences; a confirmation of the truth and promises of God; an humble and holy delight in Christ, and our fellow Christians; and a more earnest longing for, and expectation of, the blessedness of the life to come: And is an ordinance chiefly intended for confirmation of our faith, love, and increase in grace; so that no person ought to come thereunto, but in faith.'

Christian.] What are the necessary preparations for this solemn ordinance?

Minister.] '(1.) That a man have the habit of faith. (2.) That he have an hearty disposition and willingness, to receive Christ as his Lord and Redeemer. (3.) That he be in charity with all men; John i. 7. Mat. xv. 26. We must also exercise renewed acts of repentance, and clear up our interest in Christ, and have our souls full of faith and love toward him.'

Christian.] Sir, there is one scripture that, I believe, discourages many from partaking of the Lord's table; neither do I indeed well understand it: 1 Cor. xi. 27, 28, 29. "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation (or judgment) to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

Minister.] 'I am indeed of the opinion, that the want of right understanding this scripture, has been a stumbling-block to many, and so I shall endeavour briefly to explain it. The apostle here truly represents, and very much aggravates the danger of unworthy receiving this holy sacrament: but he does not deter the Corinthians from it, because they had sometimes come to it without due reverence; but exhorts them to amend what had been amiss, and to come better prepared and disposed for the future. And therefore after that terrible declaration, that "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord," &c. He does not add, therefore let Christians take heed of coming to the Lord's table; but let them come prepared, and with due reverence; not as to a common meal, but to a solemn participation of the body and blood of Christ: "But let him examine himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." For if this be a good reason to abstain from this ordinance, for fear of performing it in an undue manner; then a wicked man may as well lay aside all other holy duties, as prayer, hearing, and reading the word of God, for fear of the unworthy use of them; since, *The prayer of*

the wicked, (that is, one that resolves to continue so) *is an abomination to the Lord*. And Christ says, *Take heed how you hear*. And the apostle says, that those who will not believe the gospel, *it is the savour of death to them*: That is, it is deadly and damnable to such persons. Now there is as much reason for men to give over praying, or attending the word of God, as not to receive the sacrament; since he that prays unworthily, that is, without spiritual benefit and advantage, is guilty of great contempt of God, and Jesus Christ, and aggravates his own damnation; as well as he, who, by partaking of the Lord's supper unworthily, eats and drinks his own judgment. And when the apostle adds, "But let a man examine himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup:" It seems clear, by the occasions and circumstances of his discourse, that he does not intend we should examine our state of grace, whether we are true believers or no, and sincerely resolved to continue so; but he speaks of the actual fitness and worthiness of the Corinthians at that time, when they came to receive the Lord's supper. And therefore, ver. 20. he sharply reproveth their irreverent and unsuitable carriage at the Lord's table; they coming thereunto disorderly, one before another. It was the custom of Christians then, to meet at the feast of charity, in which they did communicate with great sobriety and temperance; and when that was ended, they celebrated the Lord's supper. Now, among the Corinthians, this order was broken: The rich met, and excluded the poor from this common feast; and after an irregular feast, (one after another eating his own supper as he came,) they went to the sacrament in great disorder: One was hungry, having eaten nothing at all; others had drunk and eat intemperately; and the poor were despised and neglected. This the apostle condemns as a great profanation of that solemn institution, for behaving themselves with as little reverence, as if it were a common supper, or feast: And this he calls, *not discerning the Lord's body*: making no difference between the sacrament and a common meal; which contemptuous carriage, he calls *eating and drinking unworthily*: for which he pronounceth them *guilty of the body and blood of Christ*; by which he tells them, they did incur the judgment of God, which he calls eating and drinking their own judgment; for so the word signifies in the Greek, and not eternal condemnation. It is meant of some temporal judgment and chastisement, in order to the preventing of eternal damnation: Which is evident from what follows: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself." And then he says, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." That is, for this irreverence of theirs, God sent among them several diseases, of which many had died. And then he adds, "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." That is, if we would censure and examine ourselves, so as to be more careful for the future, we should escape the judgment of God in these temporal punishments. "But when we are judged,

we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." That is, when by neglecting thus to judge ourselves, we provoke God to judge us; he inflicts these temporal judgments upon us, to prevent our eternal damnation.

Christian.] Sir, I am much obliged to you for the satisfaction you have given me in these weighty points, referring to the Lord's supper: And now, though in a deep sense of my great unworthiness, yet with humble confidence in my dear Redeemer, who graciously invites *all that are heavy laden* to come unto him; I do intend, by the blessing of God, to address myself to the Lord's table the next Lord's day; humbly beseeching the assistance of your prayers, that I may not come without the *wedding-garment*; but may be so qualified, as to obtain those glorious privileges and blessings, which are there represented and sealed to every worthy communicant.

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H Y M N

UPON

ROMANS v. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

6. **W**HEN we were destitute of strength,
Ourselves to help or save,
Christ for ungodliness, at length,
His life a ransom gave.
7. For one that's righteous, we would grudge
To lay our life at stake;
And for a good man, it were much
Such an exchange to make.
8. But God his matchless love commends
In that Christ Jesus dies
For us, when we were not his friends,
But wretched enemies.
9. Much more, being justified, and free
Thro' his own blood, from sin;
From wrath to come we sav'd shall be,
Ev'n by the life of him.
10. For if, when enemies, for us
Christ's death did end the strife;
Much more, when reconciled thus,
He'll save us by his life.