

Why, all this is here to be done as really and truly, though in a more spiritual way, at this table. And shall not such business as this is, fully fix and engage thy heart? What then shall do it?

Awake, faith; awake, repentance; awake, love; yea, let all the powers of my soul be thoroughly awakened this day to attend the Lord.

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THE SECOND

MEDITATION,

UPON JEREMIAH xii. 2.

*Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.*

**T**HIS scripture gives us the character and description of an hypocrite: And he is here described two ways; viz.

1. By what he hath.
2. By what he hath not.

*First,* The hypocrite is described by what he hath: He hath God in his mouth; 'Thou art near in their mouth;' i. e. They profess with a full mouth, that they are thy people, saith Piscator; or, they speak much about the law (as another explains it;) God, and his temple, religion, with its rites, are much talked of among them; they have him in their prayers and duties; and this is all that the hypocrite hath of God; religion only sanctifies his tongue; that seems to be dedicated to God; but it penetrates no further. And therefore,

*Secondly,* He is described by that he hath not, or by what he wants; *And (or, but) thou art far from their reins:* i. e. They feel not the power and influences of that name, which they so often invoke and talk of, going down to their very reins, and affecting their very hearts. So we must understand this metaphorical expression here, as the opposition directs: For the reins, having so great and sensible a sympathy with the heart, (which is the seat of the affections and passions,) upon that account, it is usual in scripture, to put the reins for those intimate and secret affections, thoughts, and passions of the heart, with which they have so near cognation, and so sensible a sympathy. When the heart is under great consternation, the loins or reins are scized also. As Dan. v. 6. Then the "king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, and the joints of his loins were loosed." On the contrary, when the heart is filled with delight and gladness, the reins are said to rejoice; Prov. xxiii. 16. "Yea,

my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right :” *Totus lætitia dissiliam* ; “ I shall even leap for joy.” So then, when the prophet saith, “ God is far from the reins of the hypocrite,” the meaning is, he feels not the heart-affecting influence and power of religion upon his heart and affections, as God’s people do. And hence the note will be,

Doct. *That God comes nearer to the hearts and reins of his people in their duties, than he doth to any hypocritical, or formal professor.*

By God’s nearness, we understand not his omnipresence (that neither comes nor goes) nor his love to his people (that abides ;) but the sensible, sweet manifestations and outlets of it to their souls. So in Psal. cxlv. 18. “ The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon him, unto all that call upon him in truth.”

Note, the restriction and limitation of this glorious privilege ; it is the peculiar enjoyment of sincere and upright-hearted worshippers. Others may have communion with duties, but not with God in them.

But that God comes nigh, very nigh, to upright hearts in their duties, is a truth as sensibly manifest to spiritual persons, as that they are nigh the fire, when they feel the comfortable heat of it refreshing them in a cold season, when they are almost starved and benumbed with cold. Three things make this evident.

*First*, Sincere souls are sensible of God’s accesses to them in their duties, they feel his approaches to their spirits ; Lam. iii. 57. “ Thou drawest near in the day that I called upon thee ; thou saidst, Fear not.” And what a surprize was that to the church ; Cant. ii. 8. “ It is the voice of my beloved ; behold, he cometh,” &c. Certainly there is a felt presence of God, which no words can make another to understand ; they feel that fountain flowing abundantly into the dry pits, the heart fills apace, the empty thoughts swell with a fulness of spiritual things, which strive for vent.

*Secondly*, They are sensible of God’s recesses, and withdrawment from their spirits ; they feel how the ebb follows the flood, and how the waters abate. So you find it in Cant. v. 6. “ I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone ; my soul failed when he spake : I sought him, but I could not find him : I called, but he gave me no answer.” The Hebrew is very pathetic ; *He was gone, he was gone.* A sad change of the frame of her heart quickly followed.

*Thirdly*, The Lord’s nearness to the hearts and reins of his people in their duties, is evident to them from the effects that it leaves upon their spirits. For look as it is with the earth and plants, with respect to the approach or remove of the sun in the spring and autumn ; so it is here as Christ speaks, Luke xxi. 29. “ When ye see the fig-tree, and all the trees, shoot forth, ye know that summer is nigh at hand.” An approaching sun renews the face of the earth, and makes nature

smile. The trees bud and blossom, the fishes rise, the birds sing; it is a kind of resurrection to nature from the dead. So it is when the Lord comes near the hearts and reins of men in duty: For then they find that,

*First*, A real taste of the joy of the Lord is here given unto men, the fulness whereof is in heaven, \* hence called, 2 Cor. i. 22. "The earnest of his Spirit." And 1 Pet. i. 8. *Glorified joy*, or a short salvation. Oh! what is this! what is this! Certainly it is something that hath no affinity with flesh, or gross corporeal pleasures; but it is of another nature, something which transcends all that ever was felt or tasted in this world, since we were first conversant among sensible objects.

*Secondly*, A mighty strength and power coming into their souls, and actuating all its faculties and graces. When God comes near, new powers enter the soul; the feeble is as David, Ps. cxxxviii. 3. "In the day that I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." Cant. i. 12. "Whilst the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard," &c. Hope was low, and faith was weak, little strength in any grace, except desires; but when the Lord comes, strength comes with him. Then as it is, Neh. viii. 10. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." O the vigorous sallies of the heart to God! Psal. lxxiii. 8. "O the strength of love!" Cant. viii. 6. Duties are other manner of things than they were wont to be. "Did not our hearts burn within us!" Luke xxiv. 32.

*Thirdly*, A remarkable transformation and change of spirit follows it.

These things are found to be marvellously assimilating. The sights of God, the felt presence of God, is as fire, which quickly assimilates what is put into it to its own likeness. So 2 Cor. iii. 18. They are said to be "changed from glory to glory." It always leaves the mind more refined and abstracted from gross material things, and changed into the same image. They have a similitude of God upon them, who have God near unto their hearts and reins.

*Fourthly*, A vigorous working of the heart heaven-ward; a mounting of the soul upward. Now the soul shews that it hath not forgot its way home again. It is with such a soul as sensibly embraces Christ in the arms of faith, as it was with Simon, when he took him bodily into his arms. "Now (saith he) let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." O it would have the wings of a dove, to fly away from this polluted world, this unquiet world, and be at rest.

*Infer. 1. Then certainly there is an heaven, and a state of glory for the saints.* Heaven is no dream or night vision: It is sensibly tasted and felt by thousands of witnesses in this world; they are sure it is no mistake. God is with them of a truth, in the way of their duties: They

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• Dr. Preston, when dying, said, I shall change my place, not my company.

do not only read of a glorified eye, but they have something of it, or like it in this world: "The pure in heart do here see God," Mat. v. 8. The saints have not only a witness without them in the word that there is a state of glory prepared for believers, but they have a witness in themselves. These are not the testimonies of crazed brains, but of the wisest and most serious of men; not a few, but a multitude of them; not conjecturally delivered, but upon taste, feeling, and trial. O blessed be God for such sensible confirmations, such sweet prelibations!

*Infer. 2.* But, oh! what is heaven? And what that state of glory reserved for the saints? Doth a glimpse of God's presence in a duty, go down to the heart and reins? O how unutterable then must that be which is seen and felt above, where God comes as near to man as can be! Rev. xxii. 3, 4. "The throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face." And 1 Thess. iv. 17. "And so we shall be ever with the Lord." O what is that! "Ever with the Lord?" Christians, what you feel and taste here by faith, is part of heaven's glory; but yet heaven will be an unspeakable surprisal to you, when you come thither for all that! "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," 1 John iii. 1, 2.

*Infer. 3.* See hence the necessity of casting these very bodies into a new mold by their resurrection from the dead, according to that, 1 Cor. xv. 41. "It is sown in weakness but raised in power." How else could it be a co-partner with soul in the ineffable joys of that presence above?

The state of this mortality cannot bear the fulness of that joy. Hold, Lord, stay thy hand, said a choice Christian once, thy creature is but a clay vessel, and can hold no more. If a transient glimpse of God here, be felt in the very reins, if it so work upon the very body by sympathy with the soul, O what vigorous spiritual bodies, doth the state of glory require! and such shall they be; Phil. iii. 12. "Like unto Christ's glorious body."

*Infer. 4.* Is God so near to his people above all others in the world? How good is it to be near to them that are so near to God? O, it would do a man's heart good to be near that person who hath lately had God near to his soul! Well might David say, Psalm xvi. 3. "All my delight is in the saints, and in the excellent of the earth." And again, Psal. cxix. 63. "I am a companion of all such as fear thee." O this is the beauty of Christian fellowship, this is the glory of that society! not the communication of their gifts, but the savour of God on their spirits. If any thing be alluring in this world, this is; 1 John i. 3. "That ye may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus." It is said, Zech. viii. 23. of the Jews, the time shall come, when there shall be such a presence of God among that people, that "ten men out of all languages shall take hold of the skirts of him that is a Jew;

saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

Christians, if there were more of God upon you, and in you, others would not be tempted to leave your society, and fall in with the men of the world; they would say, we will go with you, for God is with you.

*Infer. 5.* If God be so near to the heart and reins of his people in their duties, O how assiduous should they be in their duties? "It is good for me to draw nigh to God," Psalm lxxii. 28. Good indeed; the world cannot reward the expence of time at this rate, with all its glory; James iv. 8. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you: thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness; those that remember thee in thy ways," Isa. lxiv. 5.

*Obj.* It would be an encouragement indeed, If I might thus meet God in the way of duty; but that is but seldom I can so meet God there, in sensible powerful outlets of his grace and love! I am most dead and cold there: I feel not communion with God going down to my heart and reins.

*Sol. First,* You draw nigh to God; but is it in truth, or in mere formality God is only nigh to such as call upon him in truth, Psalm cxlv. 18.

*Secondly,* If your hearts be sincere, yet are they not sluggish? Do you stir up yourselves to take hold of God? Many there be that do not; Isa. lxiv. 7. and Cant. v. 3, 5.

*Thirdly,* Have you not grieved the Spirit of God, and caused him to withdraw from you. O remember what pride and vanity hath been in you, after former manifestations; Ephes. iv. 40.

*Fourthly,* Nevertheless wait for God in his ways; his coming upon our souls is oftentimes, yea, mostly a surprizal to us; Cant. vi. 12. "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me as the chariots of Amminadib."

*Infer. 6.* What steady Christians should all real Christians be? For lo, what a seal and witness hath religion in the breast of every sincere professor of it? True Christians do not only hear by report, or learn by books, the reality of it; but feel by experience, and have a sensible proof of it in their very hearts and reins; their reins instruct them, as it is Psal. xvi. 7. They learn by spiritual sense and feeling, than which nothing can give greater confirmation in the ways of God.

There are two sorts of knowledge among men; one traditional, the other experimental: this last the apostle calls a "knowing in ourselves;" Heb. x. 34. and opposes it to that traditional knowledge which may be said to be without ourselves, because borrowed from other men.

Now this experience we have of the power of religion in our souls, is that only which fixes a man's spirit in the ways of godliness. It made the Hebrews take joyfully the spoiling of their goods; no arguments or temptations can wrest truth out of the hand of experience,

*Non est disputandum de gustu.* For want of this, many professors turn aside from truth in the hour of trial. O brethren! labour to feel the influences of religion upon your very hearts and reins! this will settle you better than all the arguments in the world can do; by this, the ways of God are more endeared to men, than by any other way in the world. When your hearts have once felt it, you will never forsake it.

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THE THIRD

MEDITATION,

UPON ROM. vii. 21.

*I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me.*

**T**HIS chapter is the very anatomy of a Christian's heart, and gives an account of the most secret frames, and inward workings of it, both as to graces and corruptions: and this verse is a compendium of both: for the words are a mournful complaint, uttered with a deep sense of an inward pressure, by reason of sin; wherein we are to consider three things:

1. The person complaining.
2. The matter of complaint.
3. The discovery of that matter.

*First*, The person complaining: I find, I Paul, though I come not behind the chiefest of all the apostles, though I have been wrapt into the third heaven, and heard things unutterable; yet I, for all that, find in me a law. Never was any mere man more deeply sanctified; never any lived at an higher rate of communion with God; never any did Christ more service in this world; and yet he found a law of sin in himself.

*Secondly*, The matter of the complaint, which consists in a double evil he groaned under; viz. 1. The presence of sin at all times. 2. The operation of sin, especially at some times.

*First*, The presence of sin at all times: *Evil* (saith he) *is present with me*, it follows me as my shadow doth. By evil we must understand no other evil but sin, the evil of evils; which, in respect of power and efficacy, he also calls a law; because as laws, by reason of their annexed rewards and punishments, have a mighty power and