

THE FIRST  
MEDITATION,

UPON

PSALM lxxxix. 7. *God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are about him.*

**T**HERE are special seasons; wherein the saints approach near unto God in this life, and wherein the Lord comes near unto them.

It pleaseth the Majesty of heaven, sometimes to admit poor worms of the earth to such sensible and sweet perceptions of himself, as are found above all expression, and seem to be a transient glance upon that glory, which glorified eyes more steadily behold above: 'Believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory;' or, \*glorified joy; as it is, 1 Pet. i. 8. And yet how sweet and excellent soever these foretastes of heaven are, heaven itself will be an unspeakable surprize to the saints, when they shall come thither.

Now among all those ordinances, wherein the blessed God manifests himself to the children of men, none are found to set forth more of the joy of his presence, than that of the Lord's Supper: at that blessed table, are such sensible embraces betwixt Christ and believers, as do afford delight and solace, beyond the joy of the whole earth.

And where such special manifestations of God are, suitable dispositions and preparations should be found on our part, to meet the Lord.

And, certainly, we shall find reason enough for it, if we will consider the importance of this scripture before us; 'God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are round about him.' Wherein we have, 1. The object: 2. The subject: 3. The mode of divine worship.

*First*, The object of worship, God; God is to be feared. In all divine worship, men and angels have to do with God. "All things (saith the apostle) are open and naked to the eyes of him with whom we have to do," Heb. iv. 14. With whom we have speech, or business; so it may be understood. When we worship, we draw nigh to God; and that about the greatest concerns, and weightiest business in the world.

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\* *Δγαλλιασε γαρα ανεκλαητω και διδασμενη. Innerrabili, & glorificate.*  
Montanus.

*Secondly*, The subject, or the person that approaches unto God in his worship; "His saints, and all that are about him." By saints, many interpreters do (in this place) understand the angels, called saints, from the purity and holiness of their nature; and so make the next clause exegetical of this. Those that before were called saints in respect of their nature, are, in the next words said to be such as are round about him, his satellites, attendants, or those that stand as servants about him, to do his pleasure; where they are described by their office. Both these seem to be grounded upon the precedent verses: "Who in heaven can be compared to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty," (or of God, so the angels are called, Job i. 6.) "can be likened to the Lord?" And though it be true, that the angels worship, and serve the Lord with the greatest reverence and dread (for these are his nigh ones, or such as are round about him;) yet there is no necessity to limit this scripture so narrowly, by excluding the people of God on earth; they also are his saints, and more frequently so stiled, though they be saints of a lower class and order: and they also are round about him as well as the angels; and when they worship him, he is in the midst of them, Mat. xviii. 20. And the place where they assemble to worship, is called the place of his feet, Isa. lx. 13. But if we find not the saints on earth in the direct and immediate sense of this text, yet we must needs meet them in the rebound and consequence. For if creatures so much above us, as the angels, do perform their service, and pay their homage to the highest Majesty with so much fear and reverence; shall not inferior creatures, the poor worms of the earth, tremble at his presence? And this brings us to the third thing; namely,

*Thirdly*, The mode, or manner, in which the worship of God is to be performed; viz. with great fear and reverence: "God is greatly to be feared." Piscator translates it, *Vehementer formidandus*, to be vehemently feared; and opposes it to that formal, careless, trifling, vain spirit, which too often is found in those that approach the Lord in the duties of his worship. The observation from hence will be this:

Observation. *That the greatest composedness and seriousness of spirit is due to God, from all those that draw nigh unto him in his worship.*

And this is no more than what the Lord expressly requires at our hands; Lev. x. 3. "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh unto me." So 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."

And as this disposition and temper of spirit is due to every act and part of God's worship; so (to accommodate this general to our particular occasion) it is especially due to this great and solemn ordinance of the Lord's supper.

It is the observation of the Casuists, that *sacramentum et mortis arti-*

*culus aequiparanter* : The sacrament of the Lord's supper, and the very point of death, require equal seriousness : a man's spirit should be as deeply solemn and composed at the Lord's table, as upon a death-bed. We should go to that ordinance, as if we were then going into another world.

The primitive Christians used to sit up whole nights in meditation and prayer, before their participation of the Lord's supper; and these nights were called *Vigiliae*, their *watches*. Such was the reverence the saints had for this ordinance (which they usually called *mysterium tremendum*, a tremendous mystery,) that they would not give "sleep to their eyes, or slumber to their eye-lids," when so great and solemn a day drew near. *Chrysost. lib. 3. de sacerdot.*

And that all this solemn preparation is no more than needs, will convincingly appear to us, upon the following grounds and reasons.

*Reason 1.* From the solemn nature and ends of this ordinance. For what is the express design and use of it, but a lively representation of the Lord's death? 1 Cor. xi. 26. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." Jesus Christ is therein set forth crucified before us; and not to make a bare representation of it to us, as a thing wherein we have no personal interest or concernment, but to represent his death lively, and seal our title to it firmly: "This is my body which is broken for you," verse 24.

Now, which of these is to be attended with a dead, careless, and slight spirit? Is it the representation of Christ's death? God forbid! Oh! if there be any subject of meditation in the world, able to drink up the very spirit of a man, this is it!

The sun fainted, the heavens mourned in black, the very rocks rent in pieces, when this tragedy was acted; and shall our hearts be more senseless and obdurate than they, at the representation of it? But, lo! here is more than a representation: Christ is set forth in this ordinance, as crucified for you; as suffering, and enduring all this, in your room and stead. Now,

Suppose, reader, thyself to be justly condemned to the torture of the rack, or strappado; and that thy father, brother, or dearest friend, preferring thy life to his own, would become thy *ANTIPSYXOS*, *ransomers*, by undergoing the torment for thee; and all that is left for thee to suffer, were only by way of sympathy with him: suppose now thyself standing by that engine of torture, and beholding the members of thy dear friend distorted, and all out of joint; hearing his doleful groans, extorted by the extremity of anguish; and under all these torments, still maintaining a constant love to thee; not once repenting his torments for thee; couldst thou stand there with dry eyes? Could thy heart be unaffected, and stupid at such a sight? Write him rather a beast, a stone, than a man, that could do so.

But this is not all; the believer's interest in Christ is sealed, as well as the sufferings of Christ represented, in this ordinance.

And is a sealed interest in Christ so cheap or common a thing, as that it should not engage, yea, swallow up all the powers of thy soul? Oh! what is this? what is this?

The seal of God, set to the soul of a poor sinner, to confirm and ratify its title to the person of Christ, and the inestimable treasures of his blood. Surely, as the sealing up of a man to damnation, is the sum of all misery; and that poor creature that is so sealed, hath cause enough to mourn and wail to eternity; so the sealing up of a soul to salvation, is the sum of all mercy, and happiness; and the soul that is so sealed, hath cause enough to lie at the feet of God, overwhelmed with the sense of so invaluable a mercy.

*Reason 2.* As the nature and ends of this ordinance call for the greatest composedness of spirit; so the danger of unworthy receiving, should work our hearts to the most serious frame: for if a man be here without his wedding garment, if he eat and drink unworthily it is at the greatest peril of his soul that he doth so; 1 Cor. 11. 27. "Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

To profane and undervalue that body and blood of the Lord, is a sin above measure sinful; and the punishments of such sins, will be the most dreadful: for still the more excellent the blessings are that come by any ordinance, the more dreadful the curses are that avenge the abuse of such mercies. How soon may a man draw fearful guilt upon his soul, and dreadful judgments upon his body, by an heedless management of such sacred mysteries? "For this cause many are weak and "sickly among you, and many sleep;" verse 30.

It is a most weighty *note*, that a \* worthy pen sets upon this scripture: 'They discerned not the body of his Son Jesus Christ, in his ordinances; but instead of that holy, reverend, and deep-dyed behaviour, which was due to it, both from their inner and outward man, as being a creature of the highest and deepest sanctification, that ever God sanctified; sanctified not only to a more excellent and glorious condition; but also to many ends and purposes, of far higher and dearer concernment, both for the glory of God, and benefit of men themselves, than all other creatures whatsoever, whether in heaven or earth: They handled, and dealt by it in both kinds, as if it had been a common unsanctified thing: Thus they discerned not the Lord's body.'

And as they discerned not his body, so neither did God (in some sense) discern theirs: but in those sore strokes and heavy judgments which he inflicted on them, had them in no other regard or consideration, than as if they had been the bodies of his enemies, the bodies of wicked and sinful men; thus drawing the model and platform of their punishment (as usually he doth) from the structure and proportion of their sin.

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\* Mr. Thomas Goodwin's epistle to Mr. Fenner's sermons.

Thus the just and righteous God builds up the breaches that we make upon the honour belonging to the body of his Son, with the ruins of that honour which he had given unto ours, in health, strength, life, and many other outward comforts and supports.

O then what need is there of a most awful and composed spirit, when we approach the Lord in this ordinance ?

*Reason 3.* As the danger of unworthy receiving should compose us to the greatest seriousness, so the remembrance of that frame and temper Christ's Spirit was in, when he actually suffered those things for us, should compose our spirits, into a frame more suitable and agreeable to his. When we see his death, as it were acted over again before our eyes, was his heart roving and wandering in that day ? Did he not regard and mind the work he was going about ? Was his heart, like thine, stupid, and unaffected with these things ? Look but upon that text, Luke xxii. 44. and you shall see whether it were so, or not. It is said (when this tragedy drew nigh, and his enemies were ready to seize him in the garden) That being 'in an agony, he prayed more earnestly ; and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground.' And Mat. xxvi. 38. he saith, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' His *soul* was full of sorrow : And is thine full of stupidity ? God forbid !

If thy heart be cold, Christ's was hot : If thou canst not shed a tear, he poured out clods of blood from every part. O, how unsuitable is a dry eye, and hard heart, to such an ordinance as this !

*Reason 4.* As the frame Christ's Spirit was in at his death, should command the most solemn frame upon our spirits, at the recognizing of it ; so the things here represented, require, and call for the highest exercise of every grace of the Spirit in our souls : For we come not thither as idle spectators, but as active instruments, to glorify God, by exercising every grace upon Christ, as crucified for us. Behold here are, among the rest,

*First,* The proper object of faith.

*Secondly,* The flowing spring of repentance.

*Thirdly,* The powerful attractive of love.

*First,* The proper object of faith is here. This ordinance, as a glass, represents to thine eye that glorious Person, of whom the Father said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,' Mat. xvii. 5. Of whom he said, 'I have laid help upon one that is mighty.' This was he that was made sin for us, who had no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 21. Who trode the wine-press alone, and is here to be seen in his red garments. Every drop of his precious blood hath a tongue, calling for faith to behold it, poured forth as a sacrifice to God for sin. 'This (saith he) is the cup of the New Testament in my blood, which was shed for many, for the remission of sins.'

And what footing could thy faith find for pardon and salvation any

where else? It is Christ crucified that faith clasps, as the last and only hope and refuge of a poor sinner: Here all believers drop anchor. This is that blessed object, on whom they take the dead gripe, or last grasp, when their eye-strings are breaking. When you see the blood of Christ flowing forth, how can faith be silent in thy soul? When he bids thee, as it were, to put thy finger into his side, shews thee his hands and his feet there; it will cry out in thy soul, *My Lord! and my God!*

*Secondly*, The flowing spring of repentance is here. If there be any fire that can melt, or hammer that can break a hard heart, here it is; Zech. xii. 10. "They shall look upon me, whom they have pierced and mourn." Nothing lays a gracious soul lower in itself, than to see how low Christ was laid in his humiliation for it.

Here the evil of sin is also represented in the clearest glass, than ever the eye of man saw it in. The sufferings of the Son of God discover the evil of sin, more than the everlasting torments of the damned can do. So that, if there be but one drop of spiritual sorrow in the heart of a Christian; here, methinks, it should be seen dropping from the eye of faith.

*Thirdly*, The most attractive object of love is here. Put all created beauties, excellencies, and perfections together; and what are they but blackness and deformity, compared with the lovely Jesus? *My beloved* (saith the enamoured spouse) *is white and ruddy*, Cant. vi. 10. Behold him at the table, in his perfect innocence, and unparalleled sufferings! This is he who was rich, but for our sakes became poor; that we, through his poverty might be rich,' 2 Cor. viii. 9. This is he that parted with his honour first, and his life next; yea, he parted with his honour in his incarnation, that he might be capable to part with his life for our redemption.

Behold here the degrees of his sufferings, and by them measure the degrees of his love. Behold in his death, as in the deluge, all the fountains beneath, and the windows of heaven above, opened; the wrath of God, the cruelty of men, the fury of hell, breaking in together upon him, and his soul surrounded with sorrow; and how can this be represented, and thy soul not astonished at this amazing, matchless love of Christ? Surely one flame doth not more naturally produce another, than the love of Christ, thus represented to a gracious soul, doth produce love to Christ, and that in the most intense degree.

*Use 1.* How naturally doth this doctrine shame and humble the best hearts, for their sinful discomposures, vanity, and deadness; for the rovings and wanderings of their hearts, even when they come near the Lord in such a solemn ordinance as this is?

The holiest man upon earth may lay his hand upon his breast, and say, 'Lord, how unsuitable is this heart of mine, to such an object of faith, as is here presented to me? Doth such a temper of spirit suit thine awful presence? Should the represented agonies and sufferings

of Christ for me, be beheld with a spirit no more concerned, pierced, and wounded for sin? O how can I look upon him whom I have pierced, and not mourn, and be in bitterness for him, as for an only son, a first-born! O the stupifying and benumbing power of sin! O the efficacy of unbelief!

It was charged upon the Israelites, as the great aggravation of their sin, that they “provoked God at the sea, even at the red sea,” Psal. cvi. 7. the place where their miraculous salvation was wrought. But, Lord Jesus! my hard heart provokes thee in an higher degree, even at the *red sea* of thy precious invaluable blood, by which my eternal salvation was wrought. O my God! what a heart have I! Did the blood of Christ run out so freely and abundantly for me? and cannot I shed one tear for my sins, that pierced him! O let me never be friends with my own heart, till it love Christ better, and hate sin more.

*Use 2.* This scripture hath also an awakening voice, to all that come nigh to God in any of his ordinances, especially in this ordinance. O Christians! bethink yourselves where you are, and what you are doing: Know you not, that the King comes in to see the guests? Yea, you do know, that God is in this place; an awful Majesty beholds you! ‘All the churches shall know, that I am he that searcheth the heart and the reins, and will give to every one as his work shall be,’ Rev. ii. 23.

Thy business, Christian, is not with men, but with God; and the solemnest business that ever thy thoughts were conversant about. Thou art here to recognize the sufferings of thy Redeemer; to take the seals and pledges of thy salvation from the hand of his Spirit: Imagine the same thing, which is now to be done spiritually, and by the ministry of faith, were but to be performed visibly and audibly, by the ministry of thy senses.

Suppose Jesus Christ did personally shew himself at this table, and were pleased to make himself known in the breaking of bread, as once he did to the disciples. Suppose thou sawest him appear at this table as he doth now appear in heaven, *as a Lamb that had been slain*: Imagine thou heardst him say, ‘Believer, this precious blood of mine was shed for thee: There be millions of men and women in the world, naturally as good as thee, that shall have no interest in it, or benefit by it: But for thee, it was shed, and for the remission of thy sins; my blood was the only thing in the world that was equal to the desert of thy sins, and it hath made full satisfaction to God for them all: Thy sins, which are many, are therefore forgiven thee: My blood hath purchased the eternal inheritance of glory for thee; and this day I am come to deliver the seals and pledges thereof into thine hand. Take then the seals of eternal salvation this day, take thine own Christ with all that he is, and hath; in thine arms. Whatever I have suffered, done, or procured for any of my saints; I have suffered, done, and procured the same for thee.’

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,