

And lastly, A spiritually beholding of Christ by faith, is the means to change us into the image and likeness of Christ. Beholding the death of Christ by faith as represented to us in this ordinance, is the means to change us into his image and likeness, and make us conformable unto his death, in the death of sin in us.

(1.) Take this instruction from the ordinance, as you believe in Christ, as you love him, as you desire to remember him, sin ought to be mortified, that we may be conformed unto him in his death.

(2.) That we do every one of us bring our souls under an engagement so to do, which is required of us in the very nature of the duty.

(3.) That we labour by faith so to behold a dying Christ, that strength may thence issue forth for the death of sin in our souls.

DISCOURSE XIII.*

I HAVE generally on this occasion fixed on something particular that may draw forth and guide present meditation; but I shall at present enter on what may be farther carried on, and speak a little to you about the nature and use of the ordinance itself, in which it may be, some of us (for there are of all degrees and sizes of knowledge in the church) may not be so well instructed. God has taught us, that the using of an ordinance will not be of advantage to us, unless we understand the institution, and the nature and the ends of it. It was so under the Old Testament, when their worship was more carnal, yet God would have them to know the nature and the reason of that great ordinance of the passover, as you may see in Exod. xii. 24—27. ‘And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the Lord will give you according as he has promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s passover,’ &c. Carry along with you the insti-

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tution; it is the ordinance of God, 'you shall keep this service:' then you must have the meaning of it, which is this, 'It is the Lord's passover;' and the occasion of the institution was this, 'The Lord passed over our houses when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered us out of Egypt.' There is a great mystery in that word, 'It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover:' their deliverance was by the blood of a sacrifice; it was a sacrifice which made them look to the great sacrifice, 'Christ our passover, who was sacrificed for us.' And there is a mystical instruction, 'It is the Lord's passover,' says he; it is a pledge and sign of the Lord's passing over and sparing the Israelites, for it was not itself the Lord's passover. Christ says, 'This is my body,' that is, a pledge and token of it. Under the old testament God would not have his people to observe this great service and ordinance, but they should know the reason of it, and the end and rise of it, that it might be a service of faith.

All these things are clearly comprised in reference unto this ordinance of the Lord's supper in those words of the apostle,

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.—1 COR. xi. 23—26.

You have both the institution and the nature, the use and ends of this ordinance in these words; and I shall speak so briefly to them, and under such short heads, as those who are young and less experienced may do well to retain.

First, There is the institution of it; 'I received it,' said he, 'from the Lord;' and he received it on this account, that the Lord appointed it; and if you would come in faith unto this ordinance, you are to consider two things in this institution.

1. The authority of Christ. It was the Lord: the Lord, the head and king of the church; our Lord, our lawgiver, our ruler, he has appointed this service; and if you would have your performance of it an act of obedience, acceptable

to God, you must get your conscience influenced with the authority of Christ, that we can give this reason in the presence of God, why we come together to perform this service, It is because Jesus Christ our Lord has appointed it; he hath required it of us: and what is done in obedience to his command, that is a part of our reasonable service, and therein we are accepted with God.

2. In the institution of it there is also his love, which is manifested in the time of its appointment; 'the Lord Jesus in that same night in which he was betrayed.' One would think that our Lord Jesus Christ, who knew all the troubles, the distresses, the anguish, the sufferings, the derelictions of God, which were coming upon him, and into which he was just now entering, would have had something else to think of besides this provision for his church. But his heart was filled with love to his people; and that love which carried him to all that darkness and difficulty that he was to go through, that love at the same time did move him to institute this ordinance for the benefit and advantage of his church. And this I shall only say, that that heart which is made spiritually sensible of the love of Jesus Christ in the institution of this ordinance, and in what this ordinance doth represent, is truly prepared for communion with Christ in this ordinance. O let us all labour for this in particular, if possible, that through the power of the Spirit of God we may have some impressions of the love of Christ on our hearts! Brethren, if we have not brought it with us, if we do not yet find it in us, I pray let us be careful to endeavour, that we do not go away without it. Thus you have what is to be observed in the institution itself, the authority and the love of Christ.

Secondly, I shall speak to the use and ends of this ordinance, and they are three: 1. Recognition; 2. Exhibition; 3. Profession.

1. Recognition, that is, the solemn calling over and remembrance of what is intended in this ordinance.

There is an habitual remembrance of Christ, what all believers ought continually to carry about them: and here lies the difference between those that are spiritual, and those that are carnal; they all agree that Christians ought to have a continual remembrance of Christ; but what way shall we

obtain it? Why, set up images and pictures of him in every corner of the house and chapel, that is to bring Christ to remembrance; that way carnal men take for this purpose. But the way believers have to bring Christ to remembrance is by the Spirit of Christ working through the word. We have no image of Christ but the word; and the Spirit represents Christ to us thereby, wherein he is evidently crucified before our eyes. But this recognition I speak of, is a solemn remembrance in the way of an ordinance, wherein unto the internal actings of our minds there is added the external representation of the signs that God has appointed, 'Do this in remembrance of me.' It is twice mentioned in ver. 24, 25.

Concerning this remembrance we may consider two things: (1.) What is the object of this remembrance, or recognition; and, (2.) What is the act of it. What we are to remember, and what is that act of remembrance that is acceptable to God in this ordinance.

(1.) What is the object of this remembrance. The object of this remembrance principally is Christ: but it is not Christ absolutely considered; it is Christ in those circumstances wherein he then was: 'Do it in remembrance of me,' saith he, as I am sent of God, designed to be a sacrifice for the sins of the elect, and as I am now going to die for that end and purpose; to do it so in remembrance of me. Wherefore there are these four things that we are to remember of Christ as proposed in those circumstances wherein he will be remembered. And I will be careful not to mention any thing but what the meanest of us may bring into present exercise at the ordinance.

[1.] Remember the grace and love of God, even the Father, in sending Christ, in setting him forth and proposing him to us. This is every where mentioned in Scripture. We are minded of this in Scripture whenever we are called to thoughts of the death of Christ. John iii. 16. 'God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son.' Rom. iii. 25. 'God set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.' Rom. v. 8. 'God commendeth his love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.' Remember, I pray you, the unspeakable grace and love of God in sending, giving, and setting forth Jesus Christ to be the propitiation.

Now how does this ordinance guide us in calling this love and grace of God to remembrance? Why in this, in that it is in the way of a furnished table provided for us. So God has expressed his love in this matter. Isa. xxv. 6. 'In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.' The preparation of the table here is to mind us to call to remembrance the love and grace of God, in sending and exhibiting his Son Jesus Christ to be a ransom and propitiation for us. That is the first thing.

[2.] Remember in particular the love of Jesus Christ, as God-man, in giving himself for us. This love is frequently proposed to us with what he did for us; and it is represented peculiarly in this ordinance. 'Who loved me, and gave himself for me,' says the apostle. Faith will never be able to live upon the last expression, 'gave himself for me,' unless it can rise up to the first, 'who loved me.' Rev. i. 5, 6. 'Who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,' &c.

I think we are all satisfied in this, that in calling Christ to remembrance we should in an especial manner call the love of Christ to remembrance. And that soul in whom God shall work a sense of the love of Christ in any measure (for it is past comprehension, and our minds and souls are apt to lose themselves in it, when we attempt to fix our thoughts upon it), that he who is God-man should do thus for us, it is too great for any thing but faith, which can rest in that which it can no way comprehend, if it go to try the depth, and breadth, and length of it, to fathom its dimensions, and consider it with reason; for it is past all understanding; but faith can rest in what it cannot comprehend. So should we remember the love of Christ, of him who is God-man, who gave himself for us, and will be remembered in this ordinance.

[3.] We shall not manage our spirits aright as to this first part of the duty, the end of the ordinance in recognition, unless we call over and remember what was the ground upon which the profit and benefit of the sufferings of Christ doth redound to us.

Let us remember, that this is no other but that eternal covenant and compact that was between the Father and the Son, that Christ should undertake for sinners, and that what

he did in that undertaking should be done on their behalf, should be reckoned to them and accounted as theirs. So our Saviour speaks, Psal. xl. 6, 7. 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: mine eyes hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me,' &c.

Christ does that in our behalf which sacrifice and burnt-offerings could not perform. We have this covenant declared at large, Isa. liii. 10, 11. 'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed,' &c. Pray, brethren, be wise and understanding in this matter, and not children in calling over and remembering Christ in this ordinance. Remember the counsel of peace that was between them both, when it was agreed on the part of Christ to undertake and answer for what we had done; and upon the part of God the Father, that upon his so doing, righteousness, life, and salvation should be given to sinners.

[4.] Remember the sufferings of Christ. This is a main thing. Now the sufferings of Christ may be considered three ways: 1st. The sufferings in his soul. 2dly. The sufferings in his body. 3dly. The sufferings of his person in the dissolution of his human nature, soul and body, by death itself.

1st. Remember the sufferings in his soul: and they were of two sorts, (1st.) Privative; his sufferings in the desertion and dereliction of God his Father; and, (2dly.) Positive; in the emission of the sense of God's wrath, and the curse of the law on his soul.

(1st.) The head of Christ's sufferings was in the divine desertion, whence he cried out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' It is certain, Christ was forsaken of God; he had not else so complained; forsaken of God in his soul; how? the divine nature in the second Person did not forsake the human; nor did the divine nature in the third Person forsake the human, as to the whole work of sanctification and holiness, but kept alive in Christ all grace whatsoever, all grace in that fulness whereof he had ever been partaker. But the desertion was as to all influence of comfort and all evidence of love from God the Father, who is the fountain of love and comfort administered by the Holy Ghost. Hence

some of our divines have not spared to say, that Christ did despair in that great cry, 'My God, my God,' &c. Now despair signifies two things; A total want of the evidence of faith, as to acceptance with God; and a resolution in the soul to seek no farther after it, and not to wait for it from that fountain. In the first way Christ did despair; that is, penal only; in the latter, he did not, that is, sinful also. There was a total interception of all evidence of love from God, but not a ceasing in him to wait upon God for the manifestation of that love in his appointed time. Remember, Christ was thus forsaken that his people might never be forsaken.

(2dly.) There were sufferings positive in his soul when he was made sin and a curse for us, and had a sense of the wrath and anger of God on his soul. This brought those expressions concerning him, and from him; 'He began to be sore amazed, and said, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even to death. He was in an agony.' I desire no more for my soul everlastingly to confute that blasphemy, that Christ died only as a martyr to confirm the truth he had preached, but the consideration of this one thing. For courage, resolution, and cheerfulness, are the principal virtues and graces in him who dies only as a martyr; but for him who had the weight of the wrath of God and the curse of the law upon his soul, it became him to be in an agony, to sweat great drops of blood, to cry out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' which, had he been called to for nothing else but barely to confirm the truth he had preached, he would have done without much trouble or shaking of mind.

I shall not now speak of the sufferings in his body, which I am afraid we do not consider enough. Some poor souls are apt to consider nothing but the sufferings of his body, and some do not enough consider them. We may call this over some other time, as also the sufferings of his person in the dissolution of his human nature, by a separation of the soul from the body, which was also comprised in the curse.

'Do this in remembrance of me.' What are we to remember? These are things of no great research; they are not hard and difficult, but such as we all may come up to the practice of in the administration of this very ordinance. Remember the unspeakable grace and love of God in setting

forth Christ to be a propitiation. Remember the love of Christ who gave himself for us, notwithstanding he knew all that would befall him on our account : remember the compact and agreement between the Father and the Son, that what was due to us he should undergo, and the benefit of what he did should redound to us : remember the greatness of the work he undertook for these ends ; in the sufferings of his whole person, when he would redeem his church with his own blood.

(2.) One word for the act of remembrance, and I have done. How shall we remember ? Remembrance in itself is a solemn calling over of what is true and past ; and there are two things required in our remembrance ; the first is faith ; and the second is thankfulness.

[1.] Faith ; so to call it over as to believe it. But who does not believe it ? Why, truly, brethren, many believe the story of it, or the fact, who do not believe it to that advantage for themselves, as they ought to do. In a word, we are so to believe it, as to put our trust for life and salvation in these things that we call to remembrance. Trust and confidence belong to the essence of saving faith. So remember these things as to place your trust in them. Shall I gather up your workings of faith into one expression ? the apostle calls it, Rom. v. 11. ‘ the receiving the atonement.’ If God help us afresh to receive the atonement at this time, we have discharged our duty in this ordinance ; for here is the atonement proposed from the love of God, and from the love of Christ by virtue of the compact between the Father and the Son, through the sufferings and sacrifice of Christ in his whole person, soul and body. Here is an atonement with God proposed unto us ; the working of our faith is to receive it, or to believe it so as to approve of it as an excellent way, full of wisdom, goodness, holiness, to embrace it and trust in it.

[2.] Remember that among the offerings of old which were appointed to shadow out the death of Christ, there was a thank-offering ; for there was a burning of the fat upon the altar of thank-offering, to signify there was thankfulness to God always as part of the remembrance of the sacrifice that Christ made for us. Receive the atonement, and be thankful,

The Lord lead us into the practice of these things.