

**THE RIGHT RECEIVING.**

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### NOTE.

This sermon of 'Right Receiving,' from 1 Corinthians xi. 28, 29, forms No. 19 of the first edition of a folio volume, entitled 'The Saint's Cordials.' The separate title-page is given below. \* This sermon was excluded from the subsequent editions of 1637 and 1658. Probably the original edition of the 'Cordials' was surreptitiously published from 'imperfect notes;' but it seems to have been revised by the author, with the result shewn in the various readings of the after editions, many of which in other of the sermons are large and important, and all interesting as shewing Sibbes' care. 'Right Receiving' was, no doubt, along with others, withheld from the editions of 1637 and 1658 because of the looseness and unsatisfactoriness of the report of it. Of the 'Cordials,' more than of any other of his works, Sibbes' might well make the complaint in his 'Epistle' to the 'Bruised Reed.' Cf. Note *in loc.* As 'Right Receiving' is the first contribution from the 'Cordials' to the works of Sibbes in our edition, I subjoin the full title-page of the volume in its three editions, which will facilitate after references. † ‡ §. Throughout, in reprinting 'The Saint's Cordials,' I take for text the edition published during Sibbes' own life—1629—adding the 'various readings' of 1637 and 1658.—G.]

\* THE RIGHT RECEIVING. In One Sermon. Which shews, wherein unworthy receiving consists. What it is to eate Judgement to ones selfe. The properties wherein we are to examine our selves. Divers sacramentall actions in receiving. The examination of the Heart and Affections. And what is to be done for triall of our estates in the matter of Sanctification, &c. [A wood-cut here of a 'burning candle' in an old-fashioned 'candlestick,' with the motto, 'Praelucendo Pereo.'] Vprightness Hath Boldnes. John 6. 54, 55. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternall life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. London, Printed in the yeare 1629.

† THE SAINTS CORDIALS. As they were delivered in svndry Sermons upon speciall Occasions, in the Citie of London, and else-where. Published for the Churches good. [Woodcut as in \*.] Vprightness Hath Boldnes. Isa. 40. 1, 2. Comfort yee, comfort yee my people, saith our God: Speake yee comfortably to Hierusa'em, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquitie is pardoned; for shee hath received of the Lords hand double for all her sins. London, Printed for Robert Dawlman dwelling at the Brazen-Serpent in Pauls Church-yard. [No date, but the separate Sermons within the Volume are dated 1629.]

‡ THE SAINTS CORDIALLS; delivered in svndry Sermons at Graies-Inne, and in the Citie of London. Whereunto is now added, The Saints Safety in Evill Times, Preached in Cambridge upon speciall occasions. By Richard Sibbs D.D. Late Master of Katherine-Hall in Cambridge, and Preacher at Grayes-Inne. [Woodcut here of Time with a scythe, and the motto 'Virtus retvndit sola aciem hanc.'] My strength and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever, Psal. 73. 26. London, Printed by M. F. for Henry Overton, and are to be sold at the entring in of Popes Head Alley out of Lumbard street. 1637.

§ THE SAINTS CORDIALLS, Wherein We have particularly handled, The Saints safety and hiding-place, The Saints Assurance, Christs sufferings for mans sin, The Saints Refreshing, Salvation applyed, The Churches Visitation, Christ is best, The Life of Faith, The Art of self-judging and humbling, The difficulty of Salvation, The danger of back-sliding, The ungodlies misery, With other material things. Delivered in svndry Sermons, at Graies-Inne, in the City of London, and at Cambridge. By Richard Sibbs, D.D. Late Master of Katherine-Hall in Cambridge, and Preacher at Grayes-Inne. Psal. 73. 26. My strength and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. London, Printed by M. S. for Henry Cripps, and are to be sold at the entring in of Popes-Head-Alley, out of Lumbard-street, 1658.

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*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 to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*—1 Cor. XI. 28, 29.

In the former words the apostle had propounded to the Corinthians the first institution of the Lord's Supper, declaring the causes why our blessed Saviour appointed these ordinances, the especial end whereof was the remembrance of the Lord's death until he came; and not only a bare remembrance thereof, but likewise the communion of the virtues of that death—for the comfort of all Christians—until his coming. And from the same the apostle in the verse going before draweth his conclusion: that seeing this holy supper is instituted by our blessed Saviour for such an end as this, so excellent, to be a lively representation of the crucifying of the Son of God, of the breaking of his body, and the pouring forth of his blood for our salvation; therefore he inferreth that all men should come with a reverend\* regard thereunto, not as to a common table. Seeing the matter is thus, saith the apostle, that this is not an ordinary supper, it behoveth us not to come thither as unto an ordinary feast. We may not make any small difference betwixt this and our common banquets; but if a man cometh unworthily, that is, unbeseemingly, such a man as this, instead of comfort, reapeth unto himself judgment. If we come hand over head, without preparation; if we so eat, we shall be 'guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.' It sheweth that we make no reverend\* account of it when we will come so unreverently unto the same, making no difference betwixt this heavenly manna and our ordinary food; and therefore, eating unworthily,—coming to partake of the body and blood here set, without due preparation,—shall be culpable of judgment.

*Quest.* But here some will say, How doth a man come unto the Lord's table unworthily? Is any man worthy? Seeing under these veils is signified, and, more than that, exhibited unto us, the body and blood of Christ Jesus, is any man worthy? It was a great thing, that the ancient people of the Jews were fed with manna. John vi. 31, 'They ate manna in the wilderness, he gave them bread from heaven to eat, and yet they died. But he that eateth the flesh of the Son of man, and drinketh his blood, hath eternal life.' Now, howsoever it be true that the body of Christ is in heaven and we upon earth, yet here is the conveyance, whereby we have interest in his body and blood; here is the seal of the great indenture.

\* Qu. 'reverent'?—ED.

God giveth us not only the great draught, which we are in possession of; not only his word, that we have an interest in his Son; but also unto his deed made unto us in his word he giveth a more propriety,\* even these holy sacraments, wherein† he clappeth this broad seal, thus tendered unto us.

*Ans.* I answer, then, that no man is worthy to be a guest; but worthiness here is taken in another sense. A man is not said to be worthy in regard of any worthiness in himself, but in respect of his affection and preparation, and in regard of his fit and seemly receiving. As we use to say, the king received worthy entertainment in such a gentleman's house, not for that he was worthy to receive him, but because he omitted no compliments and service in his power fit to entertain him: even so I say, we are not worthy of Christ, that he should enter into our houses, that he should come under our roof. But, notwithstanding, we are said to be worthy when we do all things which are in our power, fit for the entertainment of him. If we come not in pride and in our rags, but with repentance, joy, comfort, and humility, then are we worthy.

This therefore being the ground of the exhortation, let us come to the words, 'Let a man therefore examine himself.' He that eateth unworthily procureth great hurt unto himself, therefore examine yourselves; as if he should say, Wouldst thou know how to come worthily? Examine thine own heart, and see whether all things are well within; whether thou mayest put God's seal to the grace that thou findest in thyself.

I will open it as plain as I can, 'Let a man therefore examine himself,' &c. The question is here, How a man cometh to the Lord's table worthily? The apostle saith he cometh worthily if he examineth himself; whence, in the first place, we observe this doctrine, *that the Lord hath appointed the sacrament of the supper, not as the sacrament of baptism, once to be administered, and never after, but he hath appointed it to be received often.*

The reason is apparent: it is sufficient for a man once to be born. Now baptism is the sacrament of our spiritual regeneration; therefore but once to be administered. But it is not sufficient for a man to make one dinner and no more, but we must daily eat and get strength. Now this sacrament of the supper, signifying not our new birth, but our proceeding, our strength, and obedience, is therefore, as a means to increase strength, often to be received. As he that hath a weak stomach will eat his meat often, and little at once; so we, having found our great want and weakness, must often receive this sacrament. Well! so often as we come, the apostle biddeth us to examine ourselves, if we would be good guests. Examine! Why? Saith the apostle to these Corinthians in another place, 2 Cor. xiii. 5, 'Try yourselves, whether ye be in the faith or not,' &c. Thou comest to have God's seal put unto the communion thou hast with him. Well! then God contenteth not himself with once examination for all; but he calleth Christians unto this duty often. This is worthy to be considered. There are many who in the beginning of their conversion can take some pains to sift and ransack their own hearts, to bring them unto the sight of sin. They can consider the fearful estate of sinners when they go out of the world. It may be also that they find some beginnings of repentance. Now, because this goeth against their hearts, this often examination, they would therefore post off all thus, to their first conversion. Once I have found the grace of repentance; God is unchangeable; whom he loveth once, those he loveth for ever. Now the Lord, knowing it to be dangerous for us to pitch upon this ground, doth therefore call upon us to try our title. There are many

\* That is, 'property.'—G.

† Qu. 'whereon'?—G.

corners in the heart of man ; it is hardly sounded ; it is full of hypocrisy ; and he is wonderful ready to deceive his own heart. In regard whereof, seeing it is so deceitful, we must not content ourselves with once humiliation and repentance, nor suppose every light motion to be God's Spirit, but we must, as often as we eat of this bread and drink of this wine (and as any occasion is given us), try and examine ourselves, and labour to make our election sure. And if we consider the flattering of our own hearts, together with the delusion of Satan, this will be found needful. The greatest hypocrite will have a good conceit of himself, and will be ready to say with the proud Pharisee, 'I thank God I am not as other men are, an adulterer, extortioner,' &c., Luke xviii. 11. Thus he blesseth himself in his heart ; and if then there be but any light motion, any common gift of God's Spirit in his heart, the devil is ready to persuade him that he is in heaven, and that all things are well with him. Now for a man to content himself with being once enlightened (with having once some tokens of God's favour come towards him) it is very dangerous. Consider this. God's children in the beginning of their conversion, their faith is weak,—small as a grain of mustard seed, which, though small, yet in time groweth great,—like the flax not always smoking. The hypocrite will shew a greater measure of profession in the sight of man than a true Christian, insomuch as a man would think he should never come to that perfection which they seem to have attained who perish with their holiness ; for he groweth fast, and is quickly down again ; soon ripe, soon rotten, like unto the corn which groweth upon the house-top ; whereas the child of God goeth on fair and softly, soft and sure, and doth constantly proceed, in renewing the work of faith and repentance.

*Use.* Let this move us unto this duty, *that we often examine ourselves.* because, besides our old debts (those sins we committed before our calling), we multiply new sins, and do every day run upon a new score ; for do we not know that sin is odious unto almighty God ? Why ? Consider it is worse for thee to continue in rebellion against God, than for a stranger who knoweth him not. A man that is dead, what works can be expected from him but dead works ? But the Lord having translated thee from that death, looks to have new fruit ; and for thee to bring forth sour grapes, this should trouble and grieve thee exceedingly. And this is especially to be observed of them who come unto the Lord's table. It becometh them to examine themselves, whereby they may be rightly entertained. It is much to be bewailed that this sacrament is in such small account, that men come unto it they know not how, so unpreparedly, that I am persuaded if they were to sit at the king's table, they would come with more preparation. Haman boasted of Ahasuerus his honour he had done unto him, and what was that ? He accounted it a great honour that he was called to the banquet of a king, Esther v. 9 ; and shall we not account it a greater favour that the King of kings doth invite us to his table ? Shall we come with such unwashed hands hither ? Remember that the ground is holy ; put off thy shoes when thou comest to this sacrament. You shall see therefore how the Lord was angry with his people when they did not respect but disgraced his sacrament, Exod. iv. 24. Moses was sent to redeem the Israelites. He being employed in this service, and being great in the favour of God, it came to pass by the way in the inn, the Lord met him, and would have killed him. A man would think that he with whom God was but even now so familiar had committed some great offence, that God should kill him. And what was it ? But because he did neglect the Lord's sacrament. Ay, though Zipporah called him a bloody husband, because

of the circumcision, yet the Lord would have killed him if he had not done it. And so they that receive unworthily, you may see are guilty, as 2 Chron. xxx. 3, *seq.*: the sacrament there was not wholly omitted; but because they came to it without due preparation, as the Lord required, he smote the people; for a multitude of Ephraim and Manasseh had not cleansed themselves. Yet did they eat the passover, but not as it was written. The Lord also, you see, would have killed Moses, because he administered not circumcision to his son. Many other come unto this sacrament, but they come not according unto God's ordinance.

Well, Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, 'The good Lord be merciful unto them, who prepare their whole heart to seek the Lord God, the God of their fathers, though they be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.' So that here you have a plain token, that God is displeased when a man presumeth to come with unwashen hands. Now, when a good man prayeth for mercy, for whom doth he pray? What! for him who never respecteth God, but will be constant in a wicked course? If all the hands in heaven and earth were lifted up for such a one, all possibly could do him no good. When Hezekiah prayed, the Lord, notwithstanding his ordinance was broken, was moved to be merciful. For whom? for them that had an upright heart; for them who prepared their hearts to seek him. So that here is an evidence, what a fearful thing it is for a man to come to the sacrament without this preparation. And to go no further for proof than where my text is now, ver. 29, 'He that eateth unworthily'—he that will come to this table without preparation, not addressing of his heart to entertain the Lord,—'he eateth judgment to himself.' We see, therefore, what a fearful thing it is. Now that the law, which was prepared and ordained for life, is now become unto us as death, what is the cause of this? The rebellion of thy heart hath turned the course of the law; so that that which was appointed for life is now become death. Ay, but is not this also a heavy thing, that the same is said also of the gospel? that the gospel, which was ordained for life, is now by thy negligence proved to be thy death? It is so: 'He that eateth unworthily, he eateth destruction, he eateth judgment to himself.'

Now, judgment we must not take in the terrible sense, that he that cometh unworthily shall eat judgment presently. But it is taken otherwise. Wilt thou, his enemy, eat unworthily? He will judge thee. If thou beest a child, he will whip thee; if thou beest a wicked man, he will for ever condemn thee; if his servant, he will inflict other outward judgments upon thee. So that I take it in another sense: if the child of God come unworthily, the Lord will make him smart; if the wicked man, who reviles him daily, intrude himself to the Lord's table, he shall eat damnation; so that neither the children of God nor the wicked shall escape judgment: the one shall have sentence of damnation, the other of sharp punishment. That this is the meaning of the apostle, it appeareth by the words following: 'for this cause,' when he had said 'many eat judgment,' he addeth, 'many are sick,' where in particular he setteth down that judgment whereof he spake of before. God's children, if they come without preparation, unreverently, they eat such judgment to themselves; God will send sickness upon them. For this cause it is that many of you are punished with death itself; and it followeth, ver. 31, 'But when we are punished, we are chastened of the Lord.' Why? 'Because we should not be condemned with the world.' You see judgment is opposed to condemnation. God's children eat judgment to themselves to avoid condemnation, which I stand

upon, because many think that if they come unworthily, they shall be damned presently; as I have known some who have abstained seven years, because they were afraid they should eat unworthily. O! then be not damned. The apostle saith 'that we are chastised of the Lord, that we may *not* be condemned.'

For the necessity of this duty then, seeing it is necessary for a man to examine himself, as hath been shewed, it followeth now that we consider

*The properties wherein a man is to examine himself.*

Wherein must he examine himself? I answer, this dependeth upon the knowledge of the institution of the sacrament. Let us then consider for what end it was instituted, and let us see what that is which is done in the sacrament.

The end of a sacrament, Rom. iv. 11—speaking of one sacrament—namely, of circumcision: Abraham received the sign of circumcision, as the seal of the righteousness of that faith which he had when he was uncircumcised. In those words you have a second use for a sacrament set down. It is appointed of God, *first*, to be 'a sign of the righteousness of faith.' A sign to inform the understanding, touching the benefits we have by the communion of Christ. And *secondly*, it is not only the bare sign, as words are, but it is also a seal, that is, a thing appointed of God, to confirm that there is a difference betwixt these two. As for instance: if a man hath the picture of a king, he hath a sign of the king; but if he have a deed, confirmed with a seal from the king, this sheweth that he hath an interest in something which he receiveth from the king. Well then, the sacrament is a sign to inform the understanding of man, touching the benefits we have by Christ, and a seal to assure us of that there signified. The first use of the sacrament is, to open the mysteries of the gospel to all that have understanding; the second is, to seal the comforts which are there signified in the sacrament: for, as in the former use, it is not every one unto whom the gospel giveth knowledge, but to them that believe. So, doth this sacrament seal unto all? No; but to them who besides understanding have grace. So that then here is the point: the sacrament is a sign to declare the mysteries of the gospel unto all that have understanding; secondly, it is a seal to assure some of the comforts of Christ, and not to all, but unto them who have grace.

1. So that I must, *first*, examine myself, *whether that I have understanding*; and *secondly*, whether I have grace, whereby I must make use of it, for I must be knit to it, not by the brain, but by the affection. Otherwise, if I come to it as the Papists, to a dumb show, not bringing an understanding heart of the mysteries thereof, I shall come unworthily. Now for the *first* point. The matter to be considered is, whether thou art an ignorant body? whether thou knowest what is meant by these? That this is needful, it may appear by this: this is the Lord's table, and he inviteth hitherto his friends and acquaintance. And dost thou think that thou, which knowest neither Father, Son, nor Holy Ghost, mayest come? For thee to thrust in amongst his friends and familiars, is not this presumption? Therefore, first ye must examine yourselves. And besides this, they that are ignorant are not only strangers, but also enemies to God; yea, such as against whom the Lord will come, 2 Thess. i. 7, 8, 'in flaming fire, rendering vengeance unto them which know not God, nor obey unto the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Here you see the enemies of Christ, against whom he shall stand, are ranked into two kinds: first, they are such as know him not; secondly, they are such who have knowledge and understanding, but they have not grace, 'they obey not the gospel of Christ Jesus.'

Examine, then, yourselves. Doth the ignorance of God make you to be his enemies? Of this examine thyself; for dost thou think that ever God will endure his enemies shall come unto his table? Let all ignorant persons examine themselves; for howsoever they may come, yet it grieveth the Lord that they come. And this shall be a judgment unto them at the last, that they were so bold to come without examination. I speak not this to discourage a man from coming, for thou shalt pay for it if thou comest not; but know this, if thou come ignorantly, there standeth the angel of the Lord to keep thee, as Adam was, Gen. iii. 24, from this sacrament, or any comfort by it.

2. Another reason why the sacrament was instituted, is it not to strengthen faith? as Rom. v. 4. 'It was the seal of faith.' Well; and can there be faith without knowledge? No; Isa. liii. 11. 'By his knowledge' (speaking of his Son) 'shall my righteous servant justify many.' By faith; and this faith is expressed by knowledge, to shew that where there is no knowledge, there is no faith. The sacrament is instituted for this end. And where there is no faith, there is no worthy receiving of the sacrament. As then thou lovest thine own salvation, inform thyself in this point; please not thyself in thine ignorance. For the informing then of our understanding, two things are here to be considered; *first*, we must not here have any dumb shows, but we must understand that all these things are a gospel, preached unto our eyes. Now, the things presented to our eyes are two:

1. *Outward elements.*
2. *Certain actions done by us.*

For the outward elements, you see there are bread and wine, set apart for an holy use. The bread is broken, and the wine is poured out. All this is done before we partake. When we come to see these things done, we must bring with us looking hearts and affections to see what God hath done for us. The next thing is, we see not only bread and wine set apart, but it is given unto us, taken by us, drunk of us, and nourisheth us. It first shews us that accomplishment of our redemption by the Son of God. Dost thou see thee sanctified to this work? What, then, dost thou think is meant by the breaking? what by the pouring out of the wine? This is my body broken, this is my blood shed for many. It is the man Jesus Christ who is put before your eyes. When you come thither, there is a spectacle of Christ crucified. And it is set apart to shew that, as it was in the paschal lamb, there was a lamb to be taken out of the flock, to be separated from the rest, to shew that it was set apart for some extraordinary work. I say, what doth this shew, but that our high priest, Christ Jesus, was separated from sinners? More; thou seest the bread broken, and the wine poured forth. This should stir thee up to be in the same estate, as if thou wert upon Golgotha, at the place whereupon he was crucified, crying with a loud voice, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me;' as if thou sawest him sweat water and blood. And our affections should be like that of the blessed virgin, to whom the sight of her son in his anguish could not but be a great vexation and grief. Consider that this is a property of God's Spirit, Zech. xii. 10: 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of compassion: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall lament and mourn for him, and be in bitterness,' &c. Such should be thine affections, when thou seest the bread broken and the wine poured forth. Thou must consider the circumstances of Christ's breaking, and his soul poured out for sin; that God had broken him, 'then shall they look upon him whom they have crucified.' It is not sufficient for thee to say that they,



speaking of the Jews, would do thus. We are ready to spit in their faces. Ay, but saith the text, 'they shall look upon him.' It is I that crucified the Lord of glory; it is we that murdered him by our sins. And this should move us in a spiritual compassion, that we have imbrued our hands in his most innocent blood. That this might move the people in the old law, you see there was an innocent beast; but before it was slain, the man that was to offer the sacrifice, was first to put his hand upon the head thereof, to signify that every one of our sins was the cause of this, Lev. i. 4, *et alibi*. This must be our mature consideration. We lay our hands upon the immaculate Lamb; we put our hands upon his head: we have murdered him. Let us then see whether this affecteth us.

You should all say, Is sin so deadly and dangerous as this, that it will seize upon the Son of God himself, rather than sin shall be unpunished? Is my sin a dart shot up into heaven to pull him down from thence? Is my sin such a thing as this? Is it so that it will make the Son of God to lie upon the ground? and have I such a hard heart that it will not make me to weep? These, and such like godly cogitations, we should make when we see the bread and wine broken and poured forth. And let us go further. Do you not esteem of an oath, of an idle word, or such like sin? This is that which made Christ to be crucified, and therefore is not to be dallied withal. There is the first thing to be considered. When thou seest the bread broken and the wine poured forth, it is a calling to mind of the sufferings of the Son of God.

The *second* point. What is meant by these actions performed by us? That is, what Christ did for us. But what is that to thee? All thy comfort standeth in the apprehending it unto thyself. Christ hath prepared a medicine in the apothecaries' shop, ministering no comfort unless we apply it to ourselves. This bread thus broken is given. Here God bringeth his Son bathed in his blood. The Father seeth him in his gore blood, and saith, Take him. What a wonderful comfort is this, that he should come and say, 'Take and eat.' Be it that God once moveth thy heart to receive him, he meaneth as plainly as the minister doth, when he saith, take the bread; he offereth him plainly and freely. This is his offer, and will not this be a great condemnation to the world? So often as it is administered, so often is condemnation read to a wicked man. Doth God offer his Son, and will not thou take him? 1 Cor. ii. 4, *seq.* The apostle there speaketh in the ministry of the gospel, that we are not to think it a mean matter that God sendeth a minister to make an offer of his Son, but we must think that this is done by God himself. The apostle, 2 Cor. v. 20, saith, 'Now then are we ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you,' &c. Oh, say some, if I might hear Christ say thus much, or if I might hear but God say so, I would receive him. The case is alike; we are ambassadors for Christ, we pray you in Christ; as if God were present in person, we say, Receive him, God beseecheth you to be reconciled. It were fit for us to beseech him, but he cometh to our doors and offereth us pardon; and therefore this will be condemnation, that where mercy is brought home, we notwithstanding reject it. Well! besides the offer, there is further the actual delivery of it. Take, eat. They take, eat, and drink. What is represented by this? It representeth a further point, that we are not only in Christ, flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone, but that Christ is actually delivered; that we seize\* upon him. When we see the bread and wine taken, he meaneth that hereby we by faith do accept of Christ, and do lay

\* That is, = 'take possession,' a law term. Cf. note *bb*, Vol III., p. 531.—G.

hold of him. Here is the foundation of our comfort, that a Christian man may say of Christ, that he can be assured of nothing so much which he possesseth for his own, as he may be of him. His cloak upon his back, his house he dwells in, his lands, yea, the blood in his veins, and whatsoever he hath, is not so much his; he cannot be so assured thereof as of Christ. Take him. There is delivery and seizement of Christ—as by the ring of a door—we are interested into heaven, and if he be ours, with him, we have all things.

Nay, I will go further—for the Papists will go thus far—they will say Christ is to be delivered and received; ay, but how? After a gross *caparnaicall*\* opinion, eaten really and bodily with the mouth. But Christ is transferred into me, and I into him, by faith; we are made one with him, flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone; as it is John vi. 54, 'He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.' I would not have him for a while, but for ever. Well, he is planted into thee, and dwelleth in thee; that as meat, by the wonderful work of nature, is turned into ourselves, so is Christ, by the supernatural work of grace, once being entertained, made one with us. We are one body, one flesh. He hath more assured hold of us than we have of him. We know the devil is strong, but he may not pull off a leg or an arm, or any of his members. He is stronger than all. We dwell in him, and he in us, and no man can take us out of his hands. And then that which is next, all comforts shall be ours when we have Christ. We cannot have the benefits of Christ unless we have Christ himself; and therefore, in the Lord's supper, Christ saith not, This is justification, or sanctification, but This is my body, &c. We may not look for the graces of sanctification, justification, or redemption before we have Christ. If we have him, we shall with him have all things else. The apostle, Heb. iii. 1, 14, saith, 'We are made partakers of Christ, if we keep sure unto the end, the beginning wherewith we are upholden.' The apostle useth the term of being partakers of Christ. We are made partakers of Christ if we constantly hold what we have begun unto the end. He saith not only we are made partakers of the benefits of Christ, but also of Christ himself, which is more than all the others. Now for the opening of this: will a man be nourished by bread if it be not eaten? No; but he must first eat and drink. So, faith, it is like unto an eagle that flieth up unto heaven, and there seizeth upon the Son of God; and there having thus seized upon him, then cometh remission of sins, justification, sanctification, and redemption, many blessings, and a floodgate of all graces.

These are the points which we are to consider, they are the signs to which God giveth a voice unto us; as the Lord speaketh unto Moses, Exod. iv. 8, 'So shall it come to pass, that if they will not believe thee, neither obey the voice of the first sign, yet shall they believe for the voice of the second sign.' You see to the sign is given a voice. [You see] that the sacrament, when the bread is broken, and the wine poured out, it is a voice speaking unto thee. Thou must therefore be a man of understanding to discern the same.

The next point; the sacrament is not only a sign to signify that all things are to be had in Christ, for a wicked man may know thus much; but Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal: it is also a seal. We must therefore examine ourselves in our knowledge as whether we have faith and grace, otherwise God sealeth no comfort unto us. But how shall a man know this?

\* Probably refers to John vi. 52, a question put in *Capernaum*.—G.

There is a general life. I will touch it as briefly as I can, and so make an end. The matter to be understood is this, whether we have grace in us, whether living and regenerate. No man spreads his table for dead men. We are dead by nature, and if we find that we are dead, this banquet is not for us. We must then be regenerate. I know many come when they are dead, and therefore they abuse God and their own souls, and they put his seal to a false deed. Well, the apostle's conclusion is, 1 John v. 12, 'He that hath the Son hath life.' But the point of this examination is, namely, how a man may know whether he be dead or living, which must be the point of trial in the next place.

*That matter and examination which concerneth the heart and affections.*

For knowledge, with examination, is not enough to make a man a right receiver; but there must first be understanding, and then grace in the heart. For we must understand thus much of the sacrament of the supper, it never bringeth grace where it findeth none. It confirmeth that good grace which it findeth before. So that, as I have said, it always presupposeth some grace to be in the heart. When we come, we come not to receive life, but to have our strength increased. For if a man were to deal with the king, and would have him to confirm some estate unto him, it were to no end if his title and ground were not good; so, if the ground of our estate fail, if we have not some grace, faith, and the like, the receiving of the sacrament will not give them, they will not make an ill matter good. Therefore we must labour for grace in our hearts if we would have comfort. Upon this we may expect a blessing. I will touch the heads of this briefly, because it is very large. The points wherein a man must examine himself are,

1. *Whether he discerneth of the necessity of this new life: whether he discerneth that without this supply from heaven, without the body of Christ, his estate is most wretched and miserable.*

This is the first thing in our examination, which may be thought a thing needless to examine our conscience upon: that our estate is miserable without Christ. But it is necessary, and that course which God taketh with his children. He first makes them discern in what a miserable estate they are. And it is not every one that can discern this; for it must be the work of God's Spirit to shew a man the death of sin; because every man hath naturally pride in his heart. So the apostle Paul confesseth, Rom. vii. 9, *seq.*, before the Lord had shewed him his misery by the law. Whilst he was left to natural direction, [he] thought himself a man of worth—by his own confession—a great man. Now, therefore, before the Lord would discover unto him the riches of his grace, he applieth the law unto him; the law that told him, 'Thou shalt not lust.' Then he perceiveth his misery, as soon as the commandment came, seeing himself to be full of concupiscence. Then, when the commandment came, sin revived and appeared to be sin, saith the apostle. A man must first, therefore, discern that he is in a miserable estate. Hereupon, John xvi. 8, *seq.*, when the works of God's Spirit are set down, the first is this, 'to convince the world;' when the Spirit shall come and shall convince the world of sin. The ground of our sensible comfort in this action stands in the humiliation of our souls, when a man becometh out of love with his sin; when he, finding the body of sin about him, can say, 'Who shall deliver me from this bondage of corruption?' when this giveth him an edge to come unto Christ, for we must not think that we are thus ready to come, unless we be drawn by some scourge or other. The prodigal son, when he had wasted his goods riotously, if

he might have had husks to keep his life and soul together, he would never have come home. So we, the sons of Adam, might we have but fig-leaves to cover our nakedness, we would never become suitors unto God for pardon. Here, then, examine; dost thou discern that without the receiving of his body and blood thou art like a man kept from meat and drink, and that thou art dead? If thou findest this, there is one step good; but if otherwise thou standest stoutly and thinkest that thou hast no need thereof, thou art an unworthy receiver. These are for matter of grace. The second point wherein a man must examine himself is,

2. *Whether upon the discerning of his wants, upon the discerning of that death which certainly belongeth unto him, he rely upon Christ; whether the Lord worketh upon his heart a true longing for that righteousness without\* himself.*

When the Lord spreads his table to feast his friends, he calleth not them who have no kind of appetite, nor stomach; and therefore thou must examine thyself whether thou hast a stomach, an hungering after Christ Jesus. This is a special point, which certainly if a man find not, he may doubt whether he be sound or not. If a man have his victuals taken from him, he grows hungry and thirsty, is vexed and discontented. How then cometh it to pass that our bodily hunger is so sensible, when yet our soul's hunger is not felt of us? He that is in this estate, a-starving, and feels it, is not that man ready to die? Before we come therefore to the Lord's table, let us labour to get an appetite, for, I say, God thinketh such precious meat as this ill bestowed upon them that have no appetite unto it. We see worthy patterns in the Scriptures. David he says, 'As the hart panteth after the rivers of water, so my soul longeth after the living God,' Ps. xlii. 1. And, beloved, blessed is he that findeth this thirst, blessed are they, they shall be blessed. Contrary to this, whenas children play with their meat, it is time it should be taken from them. Their estate in this case is woful for the present. The *third* point whereupon a man must examine himself is,

3. *Whether these two grounds being laid (that first he discerneth his misery, his death, that he is a dead man without he get Christ; and secondly, that he hungers and thirsts after him), he setteth himself about it.*

For it is not sufficient for a man to hunger, and never go about the work; but as a hungry man is eager to feed, nothing should keep him from it. Here is the point, whether our hunger after righteousness putteth us so on that we will have it whatsoever it costs us. A man that is ready to die for hunger will give all that he hath rather than he will go without meat. Even so the soul, when it is once pinched and hunger-bit, and seeth bread in heaven, it presenteth itself before God, beggeth as for life that God would bestow his Son for cure. So that I may truly say, 'The kingdom of heaven suffers violence,' Mat. xi. 12, and nothing shall withhold the violent from taking it, when they come into the presence of God. The *fourth* point is,

4. *Whether (upon this touch of conscience, upon this earnest hungering and thirsting after righteousness) we presently can set forward without delay, and go to the throne of grace.*

That we consider our case is now like the case of him who had committed man-slaughter amongst the Jews, for whom there was appointed a city of refuge, unto which if he could fly before he was apprehended, he saved his life; if otherwise taken before he came thither, he was to die. Without question that man would make great haste thither. Examine then thyself

\* That is, = outside of, independent.—G,

whether thy hungering after righteousness worketh this effect, that without all delay thou wilt come after Christ Jesus thy refuge and defence. It is not sufficient for thee to say, I know that without Christ I shall die; I will do it to-morrow, when I have done other things, I will purchase his favour. Well; boast not of to-morrow; examine thyself whether thy hunger after righteousness be so great, that it will not suffer thee to rest or sleep till thou hast his favour. He that cometh thus affected, and that will make no delay, but be an earnest suitor unto God for his Son, that he may have Christ—though the request be great, the necessity yet is such a matter that we forget all good manners, and so presently do well; and what do we then? We take unto us words. Then a man cometh before the throne of grace; but standeth he there mute? No certainly. He that is partaker of Christ, and hath grace in his heart, standeth he there mute? No; but he can put up an elegant note in the ears of God, as it is said, Rom. viii. 26, 'We know not how to pray as we ought; what shall we say then?' Why, saith the apostle, 'If you are the sons of grace, the Spirit helpeth your infirmities, and maketh request for you with sighs and groans which cannot be uttered.' There is the point wherein we ought to examine our hearts, whether the Spirit of God hath made such an intercession in us? that is, whether he hath made us able when we come into the presence of God, upon the consideration of his mercy, to send up a volley of sighs unto him? whether we can fill heaven with our groans, and dart them upwards? He that can do this, that when he presents himself before God (that knoweth the heart, who knoweth what is the meaning of his groans, what he would say, and is accepted of him); he that can find in himself the Spirit of prayer, that he can come before him, unwrap and shew his sores; desire the Lord to pity him, and will never give him over till he hath graciously answered, and hath invited him—the Lord loveth such a suitor. Perhaps he will not give him a ready answer and despatch at first, but will have him attend. But if like Israel\* he will still solicit him, till he have got the blessing, if he will take no denial; the Lord hath said, and his word shall stand, 'Take my Son;' this man may have full consolation; this man hath grace. And then followeth,

5. *A setting of the heart upon the promises of God.*

That a man having discerned that God hath so compassed him with favour that he hath seen his misery; that he hath seen a way to get out, and hath found a way to approach unto the throne of God; he presently thereupon cometh unto God, looks whether or not he will hold forth unto him the golden sceptre. He seeth the Lord hath made him to beg Christ earnestly, and that he can confess his sins unto him; then presently there cometh a setting of the heart upon the promises. Hath not God said, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for righteousness: for they shall be satisfied,' Mat. v. 6. He hath given me but a cold answer; but it is true, hath not he said, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will ease you?' Mat. xi. 28. I find but little ease, but I know that I am in his favour. He hath given unto me feet, affection, and an heart to come unto him; and hereupon I will set mine affections. Howsoever he spurneth me, yet I know that he is just, and therefore will not be broken off. I know he is faithful, and therefore will forgive me. And hereupon the Christian setteth himself upon a settled resolution. Having considered the promise of God, he is persuaded 'that neither life nor death, principalities nor powers, things present nor things to come, shall separate him

\* That is, Jacob. Cf. Genesis xxxii. 26, *seq.*—G.

from the love of Christ,' Rom. viii. 35, 38. And that man who is thus persuaded and assured by faith, though not by sense, whom God hath thus far carried, will thus reason the matter with himself. Well, I know that he that hath 'begun this good work will finish it,' Philip. i. 6. And therefore with this conclusion, I will come looking for an increase of grace. Now I see some life, some health, some strength; I will look for an increase of these; more life, more health, and more strength. Therefore I will come unto the Lord's table; this is a worthy receiver. *These concern our justification*, wherein a man must examine himself.

And take this; he that cometh without faith, that man cometh without his wedding garment, whom the master of the feast (when he cometh to take notice of the guests that are come) shall single out from the rest, and say, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into everlasting torments,' Mat. xxii. 13. But a man will say, May not I read good books at home, the Bible or others? Ay, but thou shalt not have such a feast at home. He here provideth a feast; and when the feasters are set, he cometh and seeth them. Thus God is present here in these assemblies, and seeth of what disposition his guests are. Now when a man comes without his wedding garment, that putteth to the seal, but wanteth the writing, will not this make God to single him out? There is a day when he shall be mute. Know therefore, that this table is provided for God's friends, and therefore unless thou by faith canst know that thou art friends with God, thou canst have no comfort; therefore examine thyself, for before that thou findest thy heart settled, before thy sins are forgiven, thou art not fit. A man will say, Alas! I would, if I had it, give all the world for it, but alas! all is in vain; I have often sought for it; often groaned and shed many tears for it before God; and yet things go not as I would. And what then? Shall I abstain? No; if thou discernest that thou art weak, thou must come. This table is provided for them that are weak. And if thy faith be weak, if thou hast but the least grain of faith, thou must come. As the church in the Canticles, when she began to be sick, desired to be stayed with flagons, Cant. ii. 5; so when our souls are ready to faint, we must desire him to come unto us, to comfort us, to stay us. 'The Lord quencheth not the smoking flax, nor breaketh the bruised reed, Mat. xii. 20, but will make it grow to a great tree; only be thou patient, and wait the Lord's leisure. And thus much shall suffice to have spoken of the first point, wherein the affections must be examined; that is, upon the point of justification. We come now to the next point and matter, which is the grace of sanctification.

*We must examine ourselves next in the grace of sanctification.*

And for this, they that come must especially look unto it; for let us ask the question, Why will God provide a table? Why will he feed them? Is it not that they may do him service? Especially then examine thine own heart, whether thou art minded to serve God thyself, or the devil. Is there a man who saith, I will serve mine own turn, by hook or crook. I will get this? Is the table of the Lord, think you, provided for him? to strengthen him to do service against him? Thou that wouldst come unto the table, thou must remember thou art to be one of his family; he will have thee sit down with him. And doth he not then require that thou shouldst do him service? If then thou art ready to serve against him, if thou runnest into the camp of the enemy, to join with Satan against thy Maker, dost thou think that thou art fit to come? Nay, let me speak unto them that are profane, who break his Sabbaths and blaspheme his name. I say, that

man who thus cometh with a covetous heart, if it be with resolution, I will not be broke off from it; take what sin thou wilt, if thou come with a resolution that thou wilt not part from it; when a man shall say, I will follow my course, this is a great sin. And I say that man taketh a cup of poison in his hands; I say, he that cometh with such a heart, proclaimeth war against him and killeth him, as Judas did. The Lord will not be mocked; and know this, that that man shall he be partaker of God's mercy? No; for he that partaketh of God's mercies cannot be profane. And it is as true, that that man who hath not holiness, whose heart is not set to please God, that that man shall never see God. The Papists cannot enforce this doctrine so much as we, because they be ignorant of the power and true life of holiness springing from the true ground thereof.

A wicked man, I say, shall have no benefit in the body and blood of Christ Jesus. This is a fearful saying, you will think. But it is true, that a man intending to live and die in his sin, and will not be broken off, shall have no portion in his body and blood. Was there ever any man who so much magnified the free mercy of God without works as the apostle Paul [did? yet he] saith, 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. If to the flesh, of the flesh he shall reap corruption; if to the Spirit, of the Spirit he shall reap life everlasting,' Gal. vi. 7. Mark, saith the apostle, look you to this, if there be a man who soweth nothing but tares in the seed-time, and yet in the harvest will look for good corn, will we not think him mad? If thou hast sown good corn, thou mayest then expect good fruit; if otherwise, bad; accordingly as thou hast sown thou shalt reap. And will you deceive yourselves, that when you have sown to the flesh, you think to reap of the Spirit? Deceive not yourselves thus. And, Gal. v. 19, *seq.*, now, saith the apostle, 'The works of the flesh are manifest, which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, wantonness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, debate, emulations, wrath, contentions, seditions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, gluttony,' and such like. There is a black guard of them. Well, then, saith the apostle, do you think to reap the harvest of God's children, whilst you sow such fruits? No; I tell you now as before, they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. This shall not be reversed, but shall stand as firm as the law of the Medes and Persians, not to be revoked, Esther i. 19. Such wicked persons, as it is Rev. xxii. 15, shall be thrust out amongst the dogs, 'enchanters, whoremongers, murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth or maketh lies.'

So now to come to the point: he that cometh unto the Lord's table, let him examine his heart, whether or not he be given unto these vices. Some will say, I am no Papist, no idolater; nay, I hate such; I am not envious. But the apostle here speaketh of all such things as are like them. Yea, he speaketh against such things as are accounted but petty matters, as envy, drunkenness. Oh! they say, some have not gentlemen's qualities, which cannot swear. But the apostle's words stand firm, that such shall not see God; their gentlemen-like qualities shall bring their souls to hell. When they have so malicious and quarrelsome spirits, when they have such proud contentious spirits, that men cannot live quietly amongst them, what fruit is this? What doth it argue but certainly this, that there is no grace in them, whenas their hearts are thus set against all men?

But you will say as in justification, so in this matter of sanctification, I thank God, I am not given to these gross Tyburn\* matters, though mine heart telleth me that I have a great sink of corruption in me.

\* That is, Tyburn, or the place of the gallows = great sins.—G.

I will then examine thee how dost thou stand affected towards sin? Hast thou shaken hands with it? hast thou shaken off familiarity with all sin, and not from some only? For so an hypocrite. But see whether there is not some sin remaining which thou wilt and dost make reckoning of. If it be to thee as a right eye, or as a right hand, Mat. v. 30, as our Saviour saith, look unto that especially, which is so dear and profitable that it bringeth in great wealth; see how thou standest affected to that. Art thou content, though it be as profitable as thy right hand, to have it chopped off? If thou findest this resolution to be in thee, thou art in a good estate; thy case is happy. This sheweth that there is good seed in thee. For it is impossible that there should be such a divorce betwixt thee and thy corruption, if grace were not in thy heart. A man then who cometh unto the Lord's table must consider and say, I have been wanting in the service of God; I have not been so careful in keeping of the Sabbath; I have not had that watchfulness over my corruptions. Well; I will now get me new strength; I will go to this table that I may be more strengthened in time to come, to fight afresh; that whereas I was weak and feeble before, I will now get strength. He that cometh with this resolution, if his heart can say, This I aim at, it is wonderful to think what profit the Lord will give unto him. If we say, we come to get strength to fight against Satan, and so forth, we shall prevail and obtain it. Would not a man think his meat ill bestowed on him whom it doth no good, who eateth and drinketh, and yet is never the better, whose meat is never seen by him. Even so he that cometh to the Lord's table, and yet thriveveth not by that heavenly food there eaten, he discrediteth the same. It is with him as it was with the ill-favoured kine, Gen. xli. 1, *seq.*, who albeit they ate up seven others, yet they themselves were still so ill-favoured and lean, that it could not be seen that they had eaten anything. It is so with many poor Christians, who often feast and yet are never the better, remaining as lean as ever.

We must therefore have a care in this case that we discredit not those heavenly commons,\* but we must find our strength increased. If before we could be able to beat down one sin, we must now be able to beat down three. Jonathan in the first of Samuel, when Saul was in the pursuit of his enemies, charging that they should taste no food till they had gotten the victory, hereupon saith he, 'My father hath troubled the people, because he hath forbidden them to eat, whereby their strength faileth,' 1 Sam. xiv. 19. So when God cometh to feed us, let us find strength, let us see, are not our eyes enlightened as were Jonathan's, being cleared after he had tasted a little honey? Have we not better hearts than before? Shall we not make a greater slaughter of our enemies than before? If we find this, what a hand shall we get over our enemies? Let us therefore eat, and so eat, that we labour to go 'forty days in the strength of this meat,' 1 Kings xix. 8, until we come to the full and final possession of Horeb, the mount of God; and so shall the Lord take delight to refresh us. We shall get new hearts, new courage, and we shall more and more tread down Satan under our feet; and, as the apostle speaketh, 'The God of peace shall at length tread him finally under our feet,' Rom. xvi. 20; when we shall have the blessed fruition of our dear Saviour, and the eternity of those unspeakable joys, to reign with him for ever. Which God grant, and that for Christ Jesus' sake! Amen.

\* That is, 'meals.'—G.