

The Lord's Supper and the Lord's Day, explained by Matthew Henry

From Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*¹

Matthew Henry (1662-1714) was a Nonconformist (Presbyterian) minister in England, best known for his six-volume Biblical commentary Exposition of the Old and New Testaments.

Here are his comments in regard to the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Day. He argues that communion observance, at least weekly on the Lord's Day, best reflects the Biblical model.

Remember that Jesus commanded His Church in the Great Commission, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-2). The Church is to disciple the nations, baptize those who profess faith in Christ, and teach them to observe and obey all things that Christ commanded.

After baptism, the second sacrament (holy sign and seal) of God's covenant with His people is the Lord's Supper. Christ told us to "do this in remembrance of Him." He didn't command altar calls, holy days, holy weeks, holy seasons, or holy years. He commanded us to observe *the Lord's Supper* in remembrance of Him. Holy communion is the gospel presentation that Christ has ordained for us to remember His crucifixion, death, and resurrection, and in it He assures us that He will come again! The Lord's Supper should accompany the preaching and teaching of the Word of God on the Lord's Day—the first day of the week, the day that God has set apart as holy, the special day each week when His people are called to worship Him and rest in Him.

In 1 Corinthians 11, the apostle Paul said, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." (23-26)

Now let us consider Matthew Henry's comments in regard to the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Day:

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE DISCIPLES

Acts 2:42-47: "42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. 44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need. 46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 Praising

¹ Electronically retrieved 12/30/2021 at <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/henry/mhc.i.html> . Emphasis added and comments added in bold.

God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

We often speak of the primitive church, and appeal to it, and to the history of it; **in these verses we have the history of the truly primitive church**, of the *first days* of it, its state of infancy indeed, but, like that, the state of its greatest *innocence*.

I. They kept close to holy ordinances, and abounded in all instances of piety and devotion, for Christianity, admitted in the power of it, will dispose the soul to communion with God in all those ways wherein he has appointed us to meet him and promised to meet us.

1. They were diligent and constant in their attendance upon the preaching of the word.

They *continued in the apostles' doctrine*, and never disowned nor deserted it; or, as it may be read, **they continued constant to the apostles' teaching or instruction**; by *baptism* they were disciplined to be taught, and they were willing to be taught. Note, Those who have given up their names to Christ must make conscience of hearing his word; for thereby we give honour to him, and build up ourselves in our most holy faith.

2. They kept up the communion of saints. They continued *in fellowship* (v. 42), and *continued daily with one accord in the temple*, v. 46. They not only had a mutual affection to each other, but a great deal of mutual conversation with each other; they were much together. When they withdrew from *the untoward* generation, they did not turn hermits, but were very intimate with one another, and took all occasions to meet; wherever you saw one disciple, you would see more, like *birds of a feather*. See how these Christians love one another. They were concerned for one another, sympathized with one another, and heartily espoused one another's interests. They had fellowship with one another in religious worship. They met *in the temple*: there was their rendezvous; for joint fellowship with God is the best fellowship we can have with one another, 1 John 1:3. Observe,

(1.) They were daily in the temple, not only on the days of the sabbaths and solemn feasts, but on other days, every day. **Worshipping God is to be our daily work**, and, where there is opportunity, the oftener it is done publicly the better. God loves the gates of Zion, and so must we.

(2.) They were *with one accord*; not only no discord nor strife, but a great deal of holy love among them; and they heartily joined in their public services. Though they met with the Jews in the courts of the temple, yet the Christians kept together by themselves, and were unanimous in their separate devotions.

3. They frequently joined in the ordinance of the Lord's supper. They continued *in the breaking of bread*, in celebrating that memorial of their Master's death, as those that were not ashamed to own their relation to, and their dependence upon, Christ and him crucified. They could not forget the death of Christ, yet they kept up this memorial of it, and made it their constant practice, because it was an institution of Christ, to be transmitted to the succeeding ages of the church. They broke bread *from house to house*; *κατ' οἴκον* — *house by house*; they did not think fit to celebrate the eucharist [Lord's Supper] in the temple, for that was peculiar to the Christian institutes, and therefore **they administered that ordinance in private houses, choosing such houses of the converted Christians as were convenient, to which the neighbours resorted; and they went from one to another of these little synagogues or domestic chapels, houses that had churches in them, and there celebrated the eucharist [Lord's Supper] with those that usually met there to worship God.**

4. They continued *in prayers*. After the Spirit was poured out, as well as before, while they were waiting for him, they continued instant in prayer; for prayer will never be superseded till it comes to be swallowed up in everlasting praise. *Breaking of bread* comes in between the *work* and *prayer*, for it has reference to both, and is a help to both. **The Lord's supper is a sermon to the eye, and a confirmation of God's word to us;** and it is an encouragement to our prayers, and a solemn expression of the ascent of our souls to God.

5. They abounded in thanksgiving; were continually *praising God*, v. 47. This should have a part in every prayer, and not be crowded into a corner. Those that have received the gift of the Holy Ghost will be much in praise.

---Charity, not socialism or communism---

II. They were loving one to another, and very kind; their charity was as eminent as their piety, and their joining together in holy ordinances knit their hearts to each other, and very much endeared them to one another.

1. They had frequent meetings for Christian converse (v. 44): *All that believed were together*; not all those thousands in one place (this was impracticable); but, as Dr. Lightfoot explains it, they kept together in several companies or congregations, according as their languages, nations, or other associations, brought them and kept them together. And thus joining together, because it was apart from those that believed not, and because it was in the same profession and practice of the duties of religion, they are said to be together, *επι το αυτο*. They associated together, and so both expressed and increased their mutual love.

2. They had *all things common*; perhaps they had common tables (as the Spartans of old), for familiarity, temperance and freedom of conversation; they *ate together*, that those who had much might have the less, and so be kept from the temptations of abundance; and they who had little might have the more, and so be kept from the temptations of want and poverty. Or, There was such a concern for one another, and such a readiness to help one another as there was occasion, that it might be said, They had *all things common*, according to the law of friendship; one wanted not what another had; for he might have it for the asking.

3. They were very cheerful, and very generous in the use of what they had. Besides the religion that was in their sacred feasts (their *breaking bread from house to house*) a great deal of it appeared in their common meals; they did *eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart*. They brought the comforts of *God's table* along with them to *their own*, which had two good effects upon them: —

(1.) It made them very pleasant, and enlarged their hearts with holy joy; they did eat their bread with joy, and *drank their wine with a merry heart*, as knowing that *God now accepted their works*. None have such cause to be cheerful as good Christians have; it is a pity but that they should always have hearts to be so.

(2.) It made them very liberal to their poor brethren, and enlarged their hearts in charity. They did *eat their meat with singleness of heart*, *εν απηλοτετι καρδιασ* — *with liberality of heart*; so some: they did not eat their morsels alone, but bade the poor welcome to their table, not grudgingly, but with all the hearty freedom imaginable. Note, It becomes Christians to be open-hearted and open-handed, and in every good work to sow plentifully, as those on whom God hath sown plentifully, and who hope to reap so.

4. They raised a fund for charity (v. 45): They *sold their possessions and goods*; some sold their lands and houses, others their stocks and the furniture of their houses, and *parted* the money to their brethren, *as every man had need*. This was to destroy, not property (as Mr. Baxter says), but selfishness. Herein, probably, they had an eye to the command which Christ gave to the rich man, as a test of his sincerity, *Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor*. Not that this was intended for an example to be a constant binding rule, as if all Christians in all places and ages were bound to sell their estates, and give away the money in charity. For St. Paul's epistles, after this, often speak of the distinction of rich and poor, and Christ hath said that *the poor we always have with us*, and shall have, and the rich must be always doing them good out of the rents, issues, and profits, of their estates, which they disable themselves to do, if they sell them, and give all away at once. But here the case was extraordinary

(1.) They were under no obligation of a divine command to do this, as appears by what Peter said to Ananias (Acts 5:4): *Was it not in thine own power?* But it was a very commendable instance of their raisedness above the world, their contempt of it, their assurance of another world, their love to their brethren, their compassion to the poor, and their great zeal for the encouraging of Christianity, and the nursing of it in its infancy. The apostles left all to follow Christ, and were to give themselves wholly to the word and prayer, and something must be done for their maintenance; so that this extraordinary liberality was like that of Israel in the wilderness towards the building of the tabernacle, which needed to be restrained, Exodus 36:5, 6. Our rule is, to give according as God has blessed us; yet, in such an extraordinary case as this, those are to be praised who give *beyond their power*, 2 Corinthians 8:3.

(2.) They were Jews that did this, and those who believed Christ must believe that the Jewish nation would shortly be destroyed, and an end put to the possession of estates and goods in it, and, in the belief of this, they sold them for the present service of Christ and his church.

III. God owned them, and gave them signal tokens of his presence with them (v. 43): *Many wonders and signs were done by the apostles* of divers sorts, which confirmed their doctrine, and incontestably proved that it was from God. Those that could work miracles could have maintained themselves and the poor that were among them miraculously, as Christ fed thousands with a little food; but it was as much for the glory of God that it should be done by a miracle of grace (inclining people to sell their estates, to do it) as if it had been done by a miracle in nature. But the Lord's giving them power to work miracles was not all he did for them; he *added to the church daily*. The word in their mouths *did wonders*, and God blessed their endeavours for the increase of the number of believers. Note, It is God's work to add souls to the church; and it is a great comfort both to ministers and Christians to see it.

IV. The people were influenced by it; those that were without, the standers by, that were spectators.

1. They *feared them*, and had a veneration for them (v. 43): *Fear came upon every soul*, that is, upon very many who saw the *wonders and signs* done by the apostles, and were afraid lest their not being respected as they should be would bring desolation upon their nation. The common people stood in awe of them, as Herod feared John. Though they had nothing of external pomp to command external respect, as the *scribes' long robes* gained them the *greetings in the market-places*, yet they had abundance of spiritual gifts that were truly honourable, which possessed men with an inward reverence for them. Fear came upon *every soul*; the *souls* of people were strangely influenced by their awful preaching and living.

2. They *favoured them*. Though we have reason to think there were those that despised them and hated them (we are sure the Pharisees and chief priests did), yet far the greater part of the common people had a kindness for them — they *had favour with all the people*. Christ was so violently run upon and run down by a *packed mob*, which cried, *Crucify him, crucify him*, that one would think his doctrine and followers were never likely to have an interest in the common people any more. And yet here we find them *in favour with them all*, by which it appears that their prosecuting Christ was a sort of force put upon them by the artifices of the priests; now they returned to their wits, to their right mind. Note, Undissembled piety and charity will command respect; and cheerfulness in serving God will recommend religion to those that are without. Some read it, *They had charity to all the people* — *χρηρην εχουντες προς ηολου τον λαου*, they did not confine their charity to those of their own community, but it was *catholic* and *extensive*; and this recommended them very much.

3. They *fell over* to them. Some or other were daily coming in, though not so many as the first day; and they were such as *should be saved*. Note, Those that God has designed for eternal salvation shall one time or other be effectually brought to Christ: and those that are brought to Christ are *added to the church* in a holy covenant by baptism, and in holy communion by other ordinances.

PAUL PREACHES AT TROAS

Acts 20:7: “And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”

We have here an account of what passed at Troas the last of the seven days that Paul staid there.

I. There was a solemn religious assembly of the Christians that were there, according to their constant custom, and the custom of all the churches.

1. *The disciples came together*, v. 7. Though they read, and meditated, and prayed, and sung psalms, apart, and thereby kept up their communion with God, yet that was not enough; they must come together to worship God in concert, and so keep up their communion with one another, by mutual countenance and assistance, and testify their spiritual communion with all good Christians. There ought to be stated times for the disciples of Christ to come together; though they cannot all come together in one place, yet as many as can.

2. **They came together upon the first day of the week, which they called the Lord's day (Revelation 1:10), the Christian sabbath, celebrated to the honour of Christ and the Holy Spirit, in remembrance of the resurrection of Christ, and the pouring out of the Spirit, both on the first day of the week.** This is here said to be the day when the disciples came together, that is, when it was their practice to come together in all the churches.

Note, The first day of the week is to be religiously observed by all the disciples of Christ; and it is a sign between Christ and them, for by this it is known that they are his disciples; and it is to be observed in solemn assemblies, which are, as it were, the courts held in the name of our Lord Jesus, and to his honour, by his ministers, the stewards of his courts, to which all that hold from and under him owe suit and service, and at which they are to make their appearance, as tenants at their Lord's courts, and the first day of the week is appointed to be the court-day.

3. *They were gathered together in an upper chamber* (v. 8); they had no temple nor synagogue to meet in, no capacious stately chapel, but met in a private house, in a garret. As they were few, and did not need, so they were poor, and could not build, a large meeting-place; yet they came together, in that despicable inconvenient place. It will be no excuse for our absenting ourselves from religious assemblies that the place of them is not so decent nor so commodious as we would have it to be.

4. **They came together to break bread, that is, to celebrate the ordinance of the Lord's supper, that one instituted sign of breaking the bread being put for all the rest.** *The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ*, 1 Corinthians 10:16. In the breaking of the bread, not only the breaking of Christ's body for us, to be a sacrifice for our sins, is commemorated, but the breaking of Christ's body to us, to be food and a feast for our souls, is signified.

In the primitive times it was the custom of many churches to receive the Lord's supper every Lord's day, celebrating the memorial of Christ's death in the former [the Lord's supper], with that of his resurrection in the latter [the Lord's Day]; and both in concert, in a solemn assembly, to testify their joint concurrence in the same faith and worship.

1 Corinthians 10:16-17: "16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? 17 For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."

II. He lays down his argument from the Lord's supper: *The cup which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* Is not this sacred rite an instrument of communion with God? Do we not therein profess to be in friendship, and to have fellowship, with him? Is it not a token whereby we professedly hold communion with Christ, whose body was broken, and blood shed, to procure remission of our sins, and the favour of God? And can we be in alliance with Christ, or friendship with God, without being devoted to him?

In short, the Lord's supper is a feast on the sacrificed body and blood of our Lord, *epulum ex oblatis*. And to eat of the feast is to partake of the sacrifice, and so to be his guests to whom the sacrifice was offered, and this in token of friendship with him. Thus to partake of the Lord's table is to profess ourselves his guests and covenant people. This is the very purpose and intention of this symbolical eating and drinking; it is holding communion with God, and partaking of those privileges, and professing ourselves under those obligations, which result from the death and sacrifice of Christ; and this in conjunction with all true Christians, with whom we have communion also in this ordinance.

Because the bread is one, we, being many, are one body, for we are made partakers of one bread, or loaf (v. 17), which I think is thus more truly rendered: "By partaking of one broken loaf, the emblem of our Saviour's broken body, who is the only true bread that came down from heaven, we coalesce into one body, become members of him and one another." Those who truly partake by faith have this communion with Christ, and one another; and those who eat the outward elements make profession of having this communion, of belonging to God and the blessed fraternity of his people and worshippers. This is the true meaning of this holy rite.

PROFANATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

1 Corinthians 11:17-22: “17 Now in this that I declare *unto you* I praise *you* not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. 18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. 19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. 20 When ye come together therefore into one place, *this* is not to eat the Lord's supper. 21 For in eating every one taketh before *other* his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. 22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise *you* not.”

In this passage the apostle sharply rebukes them for much greater disorders than the former, in their partaking of the Lord's supper, which was commonly done in the first ages, as the ancients tell us, with a lovefeast annexed, which gave occasion to the scandalous disorders which the apostle here reprehends, concerning which observe,

I. The manner in which he introduces his charge: “*Now in this that I declare to you I praise you not, v. 17.* I cannot commend, but must blame and condemn you.” It is plain, from the beginning of the chapter, that he was willing and pleased to commend as far as he could. But such scandalous disorders, in so sacred an institution, as they were guilty of, called for a sharp reprehension. They quite turned the institution against itself. It was intended to make them better, to promote their spiritual interests; but it really made them worse. *They came together, not for the better, but for the worse.* Note, The ordinances of Christ, if they do not make us better, will be very apt to make us worse; if they do not do our souls good, they do us harm; if they do not melt and mend, they will harden. Corruptions will be confirmed in us, if the proper means do not work a cure of them.

II. He enters upon his charge against them in more particulars than one.

1. He tells them that, upon coming together, they fell into *divisions, schisms — schismata*. Instead of concurring unanimously in celebrating the ordinance, they fell a quarrelling with one another. Note, There may be schism where there is no separation of communion. Persons may come together in the same church, and sit down at the same table of the Lord, and yet be schismatics. Uncharitableness, alienation of affection, especially if it grows up to discord, and feuds, and contentions, constitute schism. Christians may separate from each other's communion, and yet be uncharitable one towards another; they may continue in the same communion, and yet be uncharitable. This latter is schism, rather than the former. The apostle had heard a report of the Corinthians' divisions, and he tells them he had too much reason to believe it. For, adds he, there must be heresies also; not only quarrels, but factions, and perhaps such corrupt opinions as strike at the foundation of Christianity, and all sound religion.

Note, No marvel there should be breaches of Christian love in the churches, when such offences will come as shall make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Such offences must come. Note that men are necessitated to be guilty of them; but the event is certain, and God permits them, that those who are approved (such honest hearts as will bear the trial) may be set to view, and appear faithful by their constant adherence to the truths and ways of God, notwithstanding the temptations of seducers. Note, The wisdom of God can make the wickedness and errors of others a foil to the piety and integrity of the saints.

2. He charges them not only with discord and division, but with scandalous disorder: *For in eating every one taketh before the other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken, v. 21.* Heathens used to drink plentifully at their feasts upon their sacrifices. Many of

the wealthier Corinthians seem to have taken the same liberty at the Lord's table, or at least at their *Agapai*, or *love-feasts*, that were annexed to the supper. They would not stay for one another; the rich despised the poor, and ate and drank up the provisions they themselves brought, before the poor were allowed to partake; and thus some wanted, while others had more than enough. This was profaning a sacred institution, and corrupting a divine ordinance, to the last degree. What was appointed to feed the soul was employed to feed their lusts and passions. What should have been a bond of mutual amity and affection was made an instrument of discord and disunion. The poor were deprived of the food prepared for them, and the rich turned a feast of charity into a debauch. This was scandalous irregularity.

III. The apostle lays the blame of this conduct closely on them, **1**. By telling them that their conduct perfectly destroyed the purpose and use of such an institution: *This is not to eat the Lord's supper*, v. 20. It was coming to the Lord's table, and not coming. They might as well have staid away. Thus to eat the outward elements was not to eat Christ's body. Note, There is a careless and irregular eating of the Lord's supper which is as none at all; it will turn to no account, but to increase guilt. Such an eating was that of the Corinthians; their practices were a direct contradiction to the purposes of this sacred institution.

2. Their conduct carried in it a contempt of God's house, or of the church, v. 22. If they had a mind to feast, they might do it at home in their own houses; but to come to the Lord's table, and cabal and quarrel, and keep the poor from their share of the provision there made for them as well as rich, was such an abuse of the ordinance, and such a contempt of the poorer members of the church more especially, as merited a very sharp rebuke. Such a behaviour tended much to the shame and discouragement of the poor, whose souls were as dear to Christ, and cost him as much, as those of the rich.

Note, Common meals may be managed after a common manner, but religious feasts should be attended religiously. Note, also, It is a heinous evil, and severely to be censured, for Christians to treat their fellow-christians with contempt and insolence, but especially at the Lord's table. This is doing what they can to pour contempt on divine ordinances. And we should look carefully to it that nothing in our behaviour at the Lord's table have the appearance of contemning so sacred an institution.

DESIGN OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

1 Corinthians 11:23-24: "23 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: 24 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."

To rectify these gross corruptions and irregularities, the apostle sets the sacred institution here to view. This should be the rule in the reformation of all abuses.

I. He tells us how he came by the knowledge of it. He was not among the apostles at the first institution; but *he had received from the Lord what he delivered to them*, v. 23. He had the knowledge of this matter by revelation from Christ: and what he had received he communicated, without varying from the truth a tittle, without adding or diminishing.

II. He gives us a more particular account of the institution than we meet with elsewhere. We have here an account,

1. Of the author — our Lord Jesus Christ. The king of the church only has power to institute sacraments.

2. The time of the institution: *It was the very night wherein he was betrayed*; just as he was entering on his sufferings which are therein to be commemorated.

3. The institution itself. Our Saviour took bread, and when he had given thanks, or *blessed* (as it is in Matthew 26:26), *he broke, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. And in like manner he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of me, v. 24, 25.* Here observe,

(1.) The materials of this sacrament; both,

[1.] As to the visible signs; these are bread and the cup, the former of which is called bread many times over in this passage, even after what the papists call consecration. What is eaten is called bread, though it be at the same time said to be *the body of the Lord*, **a plain argument that the apostle knew nothing of their monstrous and absurd doctrine of transubstantiation.** The latter is as plainly a part of this institution as words can make it. St. Matthew tells us, our Lord bade them all drink of it (Matthew 26:27), as if he would, by this expression, lay in **a caveat against the papists' depriving the laity of the cup.** Bread and the cup are both made use of, because it is a holy feast.

It is not necessary to use wine.

Nor is it here, or any where, made necessary, that any particular liquor should be in the cup. In one evangelist, indeed, it is plain that wine was the liquor used by our Saviour, though it was, perhaps, mingled with water, according to the Jewish custom; vide Lightfoot on Matthew 26. But this by no means renders it unlawful to have a sacrament where persons cannot come at wine.

In every place of scripture in which we have an account of this part of the institution it is always expressed by a figure. **The cup is put for what was in it, without once specifying what the liquor was, in the words of the institution.**

[2.] The things signified by these outward signs; they are Christ's body and blood, his body broken, his blood shed, together with all the benefits which flow from his death and sacrifice: *it is the New Testament in his blood.* His blood is the seal and sanction of all the privileges of the new covenant; and worthy receivers take it as such, at this holy ordinance. They have the New Testament, and their own title to all the blessings of the new covenant, confirmed to them by his blood.

(2.) We have here the sacramental actions, the manner in which the materials of the sacrament are to be used.

[1.] Our Saviour's actions, which are taking the bread and cup, giving thanks, breaking the bread, and giving about both the one and the other.

[2.] The actions of the communicants, which were to take the bread and eat, to take the cup and drink, and both in remembrance of Christ. But the external acts are not the whole nor the principal part of what is to be done at this holy ordinance; each of them has a significancy. Our Saviour, having undertaken to make an offering of himself to God, and procure, by his death,

the remission of sins, with all other gospel benefits, for true believers, did, at the institution, deliver his body and blood, with all the benefits procured by his death, to his disciples, and continues to do the same every time the ordinance is administered to the true believers. This is here exhibited, or set forth, as the food of souls. And as food, though ever so wholesome or rich, will yield no nourishment without being eaten, here the communicants are to take and eat, or to receive Christ and feed upon him, his grace and benefits, and by faith convert them into nourishment to their souls. They are to take him as their Lord and life, yield themselves up to him, and live upon him. *He is our life*, Colossians 3:4.

(3.) We have here an account of **the ends of this institution**.

[1.] It was appointed to be done *in remembrance of Christ*, to keep fresh in our minds an ancient favour, his dying for us, as well as to remember an absent friend, even Christ interceding for us, in virtue of his death, at God's right hand. The best of friends, and the greatest acts of kindness, are here to be remembered, with the exercise of suitable affections and graces. The motto on this ordinance, and the very meaning of it, is, ***When this you see, remember me.***

[2.] It was to show forth Christ's death, to declare and publish it. It is not barely in remembrance of Christ, of what he has done and suffered, that this ordinance was instituted; but **to commemorate, to celebrate, his glorious condescension and grace in our redemption.** We declare his death to be our life, the spring of all our comforts and hopes. And we glory in such a declaration; we show forth his death, and spread it before God, as our accepted sacrifice and ransom. We set it in view of our own faith, for our own comfort and quickening; and we own before the world, by this very service, that we are the disciples of Christ, who trust in him alone for salvation and acceptance with God.

(4.) It is moreover hinted here, concerning this ordinance,

[1.] That it should be frequent: *As often as you eat this bread*, etc. Our bodily meals return often; we cannot maintain life and health without this. And it is fit that this spiritual diet should be taken often too! **The ancient churches celebrated this ordinance every Lord's day, if not every day when they assembled for worship.**

[2.] That it must be perpetual. It is to be celebrated *till the Lord shall come*; till he shall come the second time, without sin, for the salvation of those that believe, and to judge the world. This is our warrant for keeping this feast. It was our Lord's will that we should thus celebrate the memorials of his death and passion, till he come in his own glory, and the Father's glory, with his holy angels, and put an end to the present state of things, and his own mediatorial administration, by passing the final sentence. Note, The Lord's supper is not a temporary, but a standing and perpetual ordinance.

III. He lays before the Corinthians the danger of receiving unworthily, of prostituting this institution as they did, and using it to the purposes of feasting and faction, with intentions opposite to its design, or a temper of mind altogether unsuitable to it; or keeping up the covenant with sin and death, while they are there professedly renewing and confirming their covenant with God.

1. It is great guilt which such contract. They shall *be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord* (v. 27), of violating this sacred institution, of despising his body and blood. They act as if they

counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they are sanctified, an unholy thing, Hebrews 10:29. They profane the institution, and in a manner crucify their Saviour over again. Instead of being cleansed by his blood, they are guilty of his blood.

2. It is a great hazard which they run: *They eat and drink judgment to themselves*, v. 29. They provoke God, and are likely to bring down punishment on themselves. No doubt but they incur great guilt, and so render themselves liable to damnation, to spiritual judgments and eternal misery. Every sin is in its own nature damning; and therefore surely so heinous a sin as profaning such a holy ordinance is so. And it is profaned in the grossest sense by such irreverence and rudeness as the Corinthians were guilty of.

But fearful believers should not be discouraged from attending at this holy ordinance by the sound of these words, as if they bound upon themselves the sentence of damnation by coming to the table of the Lord unprepared. This sin, as well as all others, leaves room for forgiveness upon repentance; and the Holy Spirit never indited this passage of scripture to deter serious Christians from their duty, though the devil has often made this advantage of it, and robbed good Christians of their choicest comforts. The Corinthians came to the Lord's table as to a common feast, *not discerning the Lord's body* — not making a difference or distinction between that and common food, but setting both on a level: nay, they used much more indecency at this sacred feast than they would have done at a civil one. This was very sinful in them, and very displeasing to God, and brought down his judgments on them: *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*. Some were punished with sickness, and some with death.

Note, A careless and irreverent receiving of the Lord's supper may bring temporal punishments. Yet the connection seems to imply that even those who were thus punished were in a state of favour with God, at least many of them: *They were chastened of the Lord, that they should not be condemned with the world*, v. 32. Now divine chastening is a sign of divine love: *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth* (Hebrews 12:6), especially with so merciful a purpose, to prevent their final condemnation. In the midst of judgment, God remembers mercy: he frequently punishes those whom he tenderly loves. It is kindness to use the rod to prevent the child's ruin. He will visit such iniquity as this under consideration with stripes, and yet make those stripes the evidence of his lovingkindness. Those were in the favour of God who yet so highly offended him in this instance, and brought down judgments on themselves; at least many of them were; for they were punished by him out of fatherly good-will, punished now that they might not perish for ever.

Note, It is better to bear trouble in this world than to be miserable to eternity. And God punishes his people now, to prevent their eternal woe.

IV. He points out the duty of those who would come to the Lord's table. 1. In general: *Let a man examine himself* (v. 28), try and approve himself. Let him consider the sacred intention of this holy ordinance, its nature, and use, and compare his own views in attending on it and his disposition of mind for it; and, when he has approved himself to his own conscience in the sight of God, then let him attend. Such self-examination is necessary to a right attendance at this holy ordinance. Note, Those who, through weakness of understanding, cannot try themselves, are by no means fit to eat of this bread and drink of this cup; nor those who, upon a fair trial, have just ground to charge themselves with impenitency, unbelief, and alienation from the life of God. Those should have the wedding-garment on who would be welcome at this marriage-feast — grace in habit, and grace in exercise.

2. The duty of those who were yet unpunished for their profanation of this ordinance: *If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged*, v. 31. If we would thoroughly search and explore ourselves, and condemn and correct what we find amiss, we should prevent divine judgments. Note, To be exact and severe on ourselves and our own conduct is the most proper way in the world not to fall under the just severity of our heavenly Father. We must not judge others, lest we be judged (Matthew 7:1); but we must judge ourselves, to prevent our being judged and condemned by God. We may be critical as to ourselves, but should be very candid in judging others.

V. He closes all with a caution against the irregularities of which they were guilty (v. 33, 34), charging them to avoid all indecency at the Lord's table. They were to eat for hunger and pleasure only at home, and not to change the holy supper to a common feast; and much less eat up the provisions before those who could bring none did partake of them, lest they should come together for condemnation. Note, Our holy duties, through our own abuse, may prove matter of condemnation. Christians may keep Sabbaths, hear sermons, attend at sacraments, and only aggravate guilt, and bring on a heavier doom. A sad but serious truth! O! let all look to it that they do not come together at any time to God's worship, and all the while provoke him, and bring down vengeance on themselves. Holy things are to be used in a holy manner, or else they are profaned. What else was amiss in this matter, he tells them, he would rectify when he came to them.