

ding garment. Many are brought within the pale of ordinances, and read and hear, it may be, with considerable interest and anxiety about the things that are ready—the things of the kingdom of God: but of these many, few are persuaded to abhor their own filthy rags and to put on the wedding garment of the Redeemer's righteousness. And these few alone shall sit still to partake of the feast—the joy of their Lord; the rest shall stand speechless, and be cast out into outer darkness, where shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. You may read your Bible, and pray over it till you die—you may wait on the preached Word every Sabbath-day, and sit down at every sacrament till you die; yet if you do not find Christ in the ordinances—if he do not reveal himself to your soul in the preached Word, in the broken bread and poured out wine—if you are not brought to cleave to him—to look to him—to believe in him—to cry out with inward adoration: “My Lord, and my God”—“How great is his goodness! how great is his beauty?”—then the outward observance of the ordinances is all in vain to you. You have come to the well of salvation, but have gone away with the pitcher empty; and however proud and boastful you may now be of your bodily exercise, you will find in that day that it profits little, and that you will stand speechless before the King.

II. *External observances can never stand in the stead of sanctification to the believer.*

If it be a common thing for awakened minds to seek for peace in their external observances—to make a Christ of them, and rest in them as their means of acceptance with God—it is also a common thing for those who have been brought into Christ, and enjoy the peace of believing, to place mere external observances in the stead of growth in holiness. Every believer among you knows how fain the old heart within you would substitute the hearing of sermons, and the repeating of prayers, in the place of that faith which worketh by love, and which overcometh the world. Now, the great reason why the believer is often tempted to do this, is, that he loves the ordinances. Unconverted souls seldom take delight in the ordinances of Christ. They see no beauty in Jesus—they see no form nor comeliness in him—they hide their faces from him. Why should you wonder, then, that they take no delight in praying to him continually—in praising him daily—in calling him blessed? Why should you wonder then that the preaching of the cross is foolishness to them—that his tabernacles are not amiable in their eyes—that they forsake the assembling of themselves together? They never knew the Saviour—they never loved him—how, then, should they love the memorials which he has left behind him?

When you are weeping by the chiselled monument of a departed friend, you do not

wonder that the careless crowd pass by without a tear. They did not know the virtues of your departed friend—they do not know the fragrance of his memory. Just so the world care not for the house of prayer—the sprinkled water—the broken bread—the poured-out wine; for they never knew the excellency of Jesus. But with believers it is far otherwise. You have been divinely taught your need of Jesus; and therefore you delight to hear Christ preached. You have seen the beauty of Christ crucified; and therefore you love the place where he is evidently set forth. You love the very name of Jesus—it is as an ointment poured forth; therefore you could join for ever in the melody of his praises. The Sabbath-day—of which you once said: “What a weariness is it!” when will it be over, that we may set forth corn?”—it is now a “delight,” and “honorable”—the sweetest day of all the seven. The ordinances, which were once a dull and sickening routine, are now green pastures and waters of stillness to your soul; and surely this is a blessed change. But still you are in the body—heaven is not yet gained—Satan is hovering near; and since he cannot destroy the work of God in your soul, therefore he tries all the more to spoil it. He cannot stem the current: therefore he tries to make it turn aside. He cannot drive back God's arrow; and therefore he tries to make it turn awry, and spend its strength in vain. When he finds that you love the ordinances, and it is vain to tempt you to forsake them he lets you love them; ay, he helps you to love them more and more. He becomes an angel of light—he helps in the decoration of the house of God—he throws around its services a fascinating beauty—hurries you on from one house of God to another—from prayer meetings to sermon-hearing—from sermons to sacraments. And why does he do all this? He does all this just that he may make this the whole of your sanctification—that outward ordinances may be the all in all of your religion—that in your anxiety to preserve the shell, you may let fall the kernel.

If there be one of you, then, in whose heart God hath wrought the amazing change of turning you from loathing to loving his ordinances, let me beseech you to be jealous over your heart with godly jealousy. Pause, this hour, and see if in your hasty and anxious pursuit of the ordinances, you have not left the pursuit of that holiness without which the ordinances are sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. I have a message from God unto thee. It is written: “He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision, is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of man, but of God.” He is not a Christian which is one outwardly, neither is that baptism which is merely the outward washing of the body; but he is a Christian which is one inwardly, and