

hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price." John vi. 37, "All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out." And you have the testimony of them who have gone before you: Luke i. 52, 53, "He has exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things."

Here, however, there may be proposed this objection. Is it possible for a person to find satisfaction in such a course, turning his back on the world and its lusts? ANSW. Come and see. The saints have found and do find satisfaction, and this such as has made them despise the smiles and frown of the world: Psalm iv. 7, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time when their corn and their wine increased: Heb. xi. 24—26, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Esteeming the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of reward." Is there any perfection or sweetness in the creature but what comes from God? does not the whole creation shine with borrowed light? If so, then God must be more sweet, infinitely more sweet, than all the creatures, even if combined together. And does not the natural constitution of the soul call for the enjoyment of an infinite good? It must then be the greatest reality.

Still, however, some may press this objection, But will he fill me who am full of sin? ANSW. Christ fills freely, as freely as the rain falls, and the sun shines, without hire, and his fulness will wear out the fulness of sin: Isa. i. 18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool." Amen.

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THE NATURE AND SOURCE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.\*

SERMON XLIV.

JOHN vi. 57,

*He that eateth me, even he shall live by me.*

You have been eating the bread of the Lord: who those are who have done this may be already known; happy are those who

\* Delivered at Wamphray, Monday, July 2, 1711, immediately after the dispensation of the Lord's supper.

have ate that bread which is the Lord ; who these are must be discovered by the effects. Persons will readily look like their meat : they who have ate Christ will look like Christ, seeing this food has a transforming virtue, there will be such a difference betwixt them and others as that mentioned in Dan. i. 15, " Their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." Living bread will make living lively souls : " He that eateth me, even he shall live by me."— In which words we have,

1. The character and privilege of a believer : " He shall live," viz. the life of God, from which others are alienated. To his natural life, common with others, by which he is distinguished from things without life, he shall have another of a more sublime nature, by which he shall rise superior to other men who are dead in sin, while they live a natural life : he shall live spiritually and eternally.

2. We have the spring from whence the believer derives this supernatural life of his, in its beginning, progress, and continuation. It is not from himself, he is but a branch, not a root ; it is not immediately from God, as Adam's, but from the Mediator, Jesus Christ. The justice and holiness of God refused an intermediate union with the sinful creature, yet there could be no life but as proceeding from God, the prime fountain of all, and there could be no communication of this life without union with him ; wherefore it pleased God to unite the human nature to the divine in the person of his Son, and so to make him the Mediator, the mean of the sinner's union and communion with the Father ; that he deriving life from his Father, they might again derive it from him. This is the import of the former part of the verse, in which Christ shews how he comes to be living bread. 1. He is fitted for giving life, seeing he lives by the Father, deriving life from the Fountain of life. 2. There is a divine appointment of him by the Father, by which he was ordained and set apart to be life-giving bread to his people.

3. We have the way how this life is derived from Christ to the soul, and this is by eating him, that is, by faith. It cannot be understood of a corporeal eating, for this eating would not give life : John vi. 63, " It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." Our Lord himself determines it to be believing, ver. 35, " He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." The word here used properly signifies a keen appetite, being the same as in Matth. xxiv. 35, and may denote unto us that greedy appetite which the believer has after Christ, his soul-food, and that there is no hazard of excess

here, either in the appetite which obtains, or in the continuance at this blessed work; we may eat all the day long, and also in the night, and welcome. Yea, it is remarkable that it is not said, He that hath eaten, that has got a taste of Christ, and is satisfied; but "he that eateth," denoting a continuing action, such as he that breathes, lives. There must be a constant improvement of Christ as the fountain of life, a living by believing: Gal. ii. 20, "And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

4. We have the peculiar interest of the believer in this life: "*Even he shall live by me.*" All others are, and will be dead while they live; he, and only he, shall live; for there is no life but from Christ, and none from him but by faith.—From the words I take this

DOCTRINE, That the believer lives by Christ, deriving his life from him by faith.—For illustrating this doctrine, I shall,

I. Shew what is that life which the believer lives by Christ, and derives from him.

II. How the believer derives this life from Christ by faith. And then,

III. Conclude with some improvement.—We are,

I. To shew what is that life which the believer lives by Christ, and derives from him.—As to this I observe,

1. That the believer derives from Christ a life of grace, and lives by him, in opposition to that death in sin under which all unbelievers are: Eph. ii. 1, "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." The believer has infused into him an inward vital principle of action; formerly the whole powers of his soul were buried in the grave of sin, devoid of all life and sense in spiritual things. Now the dead are raised, the dry bones have come together, and stand upon their feet. The dead soul could never have infused life into itself, but would have eternally rotted in the grave of sin, if the spirit of Christ had not entered into it, and Christ become the life of the soul: Psalm xvi. 11, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life." As the life of the body lies in the union of the soul with the body, so the life of the soul lies in its union with God through Christ. And as it was by eating, Gen. iii. 6, that mankind were separated from God, and laid in the dust of death, so it is by eating that the soul comes to be re-united to God, and to live again in Christ: John vi. 53, 56, "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."—The believer derives from Christ,

2. A life of favour with God : Psalm xxx. 5, "In his favour is life." We are naturally dead in law, under a sentence of condemnation, the broken law has doomed us to eternal death : Gal. iii. 10, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." But the sentence against the believer is reversed, he is no more a condemned man, but is justified : Rom. viii. 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." Now he is a free man ; who can lay any thing to his charge ? "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth ?" Can justice say any thing ? it is satisfied. Can the law ? it has got all its demands upon them in Christ : Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us." What is become of those long accounts of their debts, subscribed with their own hands ? Christ has blotted them out with his blood, put them out of the way, lest the criminal should fear that they yet may be read. The nails are driven through the writing, so that it is nailed to the cross, and hence will never appear more against them, Col. ii. 14. What has become of the face-covering, which was on the condemned man ? Christ has destroyed in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations, Isa. xxv. 7. What is become of death which stood before him, ready to devour him ? Ver. 8, "Christ has swallowed up death in victory." Glory, then, be to the Lamb, by whom we live. Ver. 9, "Lo, this is our God : we have waited for him, and he will save us : this is the Lord ; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."—The believer derives from Christ,

3. The new life of gospel-obedience and true holiness : Rom. vi. 4, 5, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death : that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we had been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." The believer is not now the man he once was, he is not only come out of the grave of his natural state, but he has cast off his grave-clothes : Col. iii. 8, "But now ye also put off all these, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." These reigning lusts are laid aside, for the Lord hath said, "Loose him and let him go." He has put on Christ, personates him, as the beggar in borrowed robes represents a king on the stage. There is none resembles Christ in his life among men, so near as the believer does ; for he labours to walk, even as he also walked. Now his obedience is universal. He has respect unto all God's commandments, Psalm cxix. 9. His heart is

enlarged in breadth and length to the law of Christ. He loves those ways which he formerly hated, and hates those which he formerly loved. His obedience is a cluster of vital acts in the soul, of all which Christ is the principle: Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified," saith he, "with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." As Christ is the principle, so he is also the end of the believer's life: Phil. i. 21, "For to me to live," says he, "is Christ, and to die is gain." O! whence comes this new life! surely it could never be struck out of vows, resolutions, and Christless endeavours, nor hammered out of the united force of the whole powers of the soul, called forth together as in a solemn day. But they have been planted together with Christ, Rom. vi. 5, (quoted above). Therefore they rise up with him, in the likeness of his resurrection. An eternal barrenness had shut up their womb: but being married to Christ, who is risen from the dead, they now bring forth fruit unto God, Rom. vii. 4.—The believer derives from Christ,

4. A life of activity in grace, as springing water is accounted living water: Psalm lxxx. 18, "So will we not go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name." Sometimes the believer is at a low ebb with his graces. Faith, the conduit-pipe, by which life comes into the soul, is stopped, and then all the flowers in his garden, the believer's graces, begin to hang down their heads, and wither. The weeds of corruption begin to thrive. What shall become of the soul then? There is still one ground of hope, it is not like the false path of the hypocrite, laid short of the fountain, in which all communication is cut off, and this is the reason why their common graces go back, and never rise again; but the faith of the true believer remains still a bond of union betwixt Christ and the soul, and therefore says he, John xiv. 19, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Christ puts in his hand at the hole of the door, his Spirit opens the means of conveyance, and influences again flow, which put quite a new face upon the soul: Hos. xiv. 7, "They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon." Christ speaks life, and thus the coldrife soul begins to glow: Luke xxiv. 32, "And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Fire is brought from the altar of burnt-offering, and this is set to the incense of their prayers which lay downwards before, and then they mount up like pillars of smoke.—The believer derives from Christ,

5. A life of growth in grace ; life, and more life : John x. 10, " I am come," says Jesus, " that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Things which have life, grow in the growing time, and grace is of a growing nature : Prov. iv. 18, " The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The trees planted in the house of God, even the righteous, shall flourish like the palm-tree : he shall grow like the cedar in Lebanon. " Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God," Psalm xcii. 12, 13. They do not indeed grow always ; and why, but because they do not eat always ? they have their sick fits, when they lose their appetite, and then may they say, My leanness ! my leanness ! neither is their growth always discernible ; they may notwithstanding be growing. The kingdom of God in the soul is like seed cast into the ground, which springs and grows up, one knows not how, Mark iv. 26, 27. But they grow sometimes ; there are golden spots of time, when the dew of heaven lies on their branches, so that they will be adding a cubit to their spiritual stature. And all this is derived from Christ : Mal. iv. 2, " But unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings ; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves in the stall." It is their being planted by the Lord which produces this ;—their waiting on him ; Isa. xl. 31, " They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint." And this growth which they have from him has a beauty which that wants which arises from any other quarter. It is universal, regular, and proportionable ; Eph. iv. 15, " But speaking the truth in love, may grow up to him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." They are not as others, who, like the rickety child, have a big head, but a slender body ; but all comes away together under influences from Christ. They grow inwardly in close walking with God, the soul cleaving more closely with Christ : They grow outwardly in good words and works, which are more communicative and edifying to others ; they grow upwardly in heavenly-mindedness, and contempt of the world ; and in the meantime also downwardly in humility and self-loathing.—The believer derives from Christ,

6. A life of comfort : as 1 Sam. xxv. 26, " Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be to all thou hast."—This life of comfort may be considered,

(1.) As it denotes the ordinary rest of the soul, in having something that satisfies it. The soul of man is a weak empty thing, which must have something to which it leans, and upon which it

feeds. Those who want Christ, they lean to other things. The believer has something also upon which he stays his soul, by which he lives, and this is Christ; he feeds on him, satisfying his soul in him; and this in opposition to the lusts of the world, without which the carnal world have no satisfaction, having never relished as much sweetness in Christ as in their lusts: But, "whosoever," says Jesus, John iv. 14, "drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." They shall no more suck, as they were wont to do, their comfort out of these breasts, as in the day when their navel was not cut, Ezek. xvi. 4. They feed on Christ in opposition to outward comforts, or enjoyments in the world. I confess the believer may at a time lay overmuch stress on these, and then the comfort soon runs out, Psalm cxliii. 3, 4. But his great stress lies always on Christ, and therefore he can stand without them on him. Though they all fail, he can, with Habakkuk, chap. iii. 18, "rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of their salvation." May I add, believers feed on Christ in opposition to inward precious enjoyments they have from him? Even good frames, enlargements, inherent grace, these are indeed too weak supports for the soul, which is so weighty, upon which it may lean. The great stay of the believer is not the grace of God within him, which is a well whose streams are often dry; but the grace of God without him, in Christ, which is an everlasting fountain, to which they can never come wrong; therefore, Phil. iii. 3, "They rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."—This life of comfort may be considered,

(2.) As it denotes the lifting up of the soul from under discouragements and breaking dispensations, with which the believer is sometimes trysted. Sometimes they can sing in a prison, and their souls leap within them under outward pressures: Heb. x. 34, "They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they have a better and an enduring substance." Whence is this joy derived? Paul tells us, 2 Cor. i. 5, "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." Yea, but they often feel inward pressures, their discharge falls by, they lose sight of their pardon, and the law raises up a process against them for a debt already paid; God hides his face, the soul is wounded, and who can bear it? Yet after all, when they get to their feet again, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, the wounds of the soul are healed. Whence is all this? See Job xxxiii. 23, 24. But what comes of the poor body? ver. 21. See ver. 25. Yea, the bones must say, Who is like unto thee?—The believer derieves from Christ,

7. And lastly, eternal life, which in effect is nothing other than the present life brought to perfection, and extended to eternity: 2 Cor. iii. 18, "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." This is derived from Christ: "I am," says Jesus, John vi. 51, "the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." By him it is they shall live for ever in glory, seeing he shall remain the eternal bond of union betwixt God and the saints, and the medium of communion: Heb. vii. 26, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Rev. vii. 17, "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.—We now proceed,

II. To shew how the believer derives this life from Christ by faith.—For this purpose consider,

1. That faith unites the soul to Christ, receiving Christ into the heart, as the meat we eat is received into our bodies, and incorporates with them: John vi. 56, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." Seeing, then, faith makes us members of Christ, it must needs make us living souls, partakers of the same Spirit which actuates the Head. Faith knits the soul as a branch to the vine, whereby it partakes of the sap. And it lays down the soul at the fountain of life, and knits it to Christ the Head of influences.

2. Faith applies Christ and his fulness to the soul for life according to its needs: "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me," even as by eating we receive the sap and strength of the meat for our nourishment. Christ offers himself as the fountain of life, faith accepts, and on the acceptance applies him. Faith, as the mouth of the soul, sucks here, and so lives by him, as he lives by the Father, Gal. ii. 20, (quoted above.)

3. Faith presses the promises through which the golden oil runs; Psalm cxix. 49, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." All the influences of grace run in the channel of the covenant, which is the word of divine appointment, upon that bread which we eat by faith: Isa. lix. 2, "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." Each of these promises are full of the fulness of Christ to

the believer. Sometimes they drop out at will to the soul: Isa. lxx. 1, "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." But it is not always so. What should a person then do? He should go and press the sap out of them by faith, and put God to the fulfilling of his word; Ezek. xxxvi. 37, "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."—Against a complying with this advice, some may propose this

**OBJECTION,** But I dare not meddle with a promise. **ANSW.** Then meddle not with life. Is a drowning man so fearful, that he dare not catch hold of a rope let out to draw him to land? O no! if your soul be content with Christ, though the promise be in your eyes like Moses' rod, which was turned into a serpent, take it by the tail, and it will be a rod of life to you.—Still the objection may be, But the qualifications of the promise stave me off. **ANSW.** Go to Christ, in the free promise to all who will take him, Isa. lv. 1; John vi. 37, "All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me: and him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out." Many bar the door of the promises with bars of their own making, and then complain they cannot enter. Say not, If I had so much love, repentance, brokenness of heart, I would believe. If you be wise, you will believe that you shall get these things: Zech xii. 10, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Acts v. 31, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

4. Faith relishes the sweetness of Christ in general, and the sweetness of every part of Christ in particular: "Hearken diligently unto me," says he, Isa. lv. 2, "and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." And O this is life to the soul! it makes the whole soul flee away from the world and lusts, after him. "O!" says faith, "thy spirit is good!" "O! then," adds the soul, "lead me to the land of uprightness." "Thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee." His words are good, and are as the best of wine, when it goes down sweetly, it causes the lips of those that are asleep to speak, Song vii. 5. Faith discovers Christ in his glory,—in the glory of his person; and then all the world is but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of him.—In the glory of his righte-

ousness ; then who can lay any thing to their charge ?—In the glory of his Spirit ; and then the strongest lusts will get an assault. The soul will triumph over them.—I come now,

III. To make some practical improvement of the whole. Here I confine myself to a short use of information and exhortation.

1. From this subject we may learn, that Christless sinners are dead withered branches, ready to be cast over the hedge, Ye live not at all, because ye live not by Christ. Ye have not taken him for the food of your souls, and therefore no other prospect presents itself to you, but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation, ready to devour the adversaries.

2. This lets us see who those are who will persevere and not apostatise, even those who eat Christ by faith. Some there are, who appear very lively at a communion or so, but they quickly wither ; why ?—because they have not the living Spirit of God in them, they lie not at the fountain. The streams must be dry, when communion with the fountain is stopped. But those who are knit to Christ, and cleave to him, shall partake of his spirit, and so shall never fall away from grace, John iv. 14, (quoted above.)

I would conclude, exhorting you to an eating of Christ by faith, in order to your living by him. And therefore,

1. Study to make it appear that your greedy appetite after that dust, which is the serpent's meat, and the meat of the serpent's brood, is now blunted. Shew that you hunger and thirst no more after it. You must not now feed on the world and your former lusts. True, Christ finds his people with their navel cut, but he does not leave them so. If you have tasted the sweetness which is in Christ, your lusts will now have no sweetness at all. But if indeed you find no sweetness in him, your lusts, it is likely, will be strengthened, instead of being weakened by this communion ; and this is dreadful, Prov. vii.

2. Derive your life from Christ, live by believing. It is a sad evidence of a decline, when there is no communication of the life of grace from him.

3. Live on Christ and learn to be content with him alone.

*Lastly*, Study to live to his glory ; Phil. i. 21, " For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Amen.