

is good therefore to be found in the way of the Spirit. Had that poor man, that lay so long at the pool of Bethesda, reasoned thus with himself, So long have I lain here in vain expecting a cure, it is to no purpose to wait longer, and so had been absent at that very time when the angel came down, he had, in all likelihood, carried his disease to the grave with him.

How dost thou know but this very *sabbath*, this sermon, this prayer, which thou hast no heart to attend, and are tempted to neglect, may be the season and instrument wherein, and by which, the Lord may do that for thy soul which was never done before?

Infer. 8. *To conclude, How are all the saints engaged to put forth all the power and ability they have for God, who hath put forth his infinite Almighty Power to draw them to Christ?*

God hath done great things for your souls; he hath drawn you out of the miserable state of sin and wrath; and that when he let others go, by nature as good as you, he hath drawn you into union with Christ, and communion with his glorious privileges. O that you would henceforth employ all the power you have for God in the duties of obedience, and in drawing others to Christ, as much as in you lies, and say continually with the Church, "Draw me, we will run after thee," Cant. i. 4.

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

SERMON V.

Of the Work of the Spirit more particularly, by which the Soul is enabled to apply CHRIST.

EPH. ii. 1.

And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.

IN the former sermons we have seen our union with Christ in the general nature of it, and the means by which it is effected, both *external*, by the preaching of the gospel, and *internal*, by the drawing of the Father. We are now to bring our thoughts yet closer to this great mystery, and consider the bands by which Christ and believers are knit together in a blessed union.

And if we heedfully observe the scripture expressions, and ponder the nature of this union, we shall find there are two bands which knit Christ and the soul together, *viz.*

1. The Spirit on Christ's part.
2. Faith on our part.

The *Spirit*, on Christ's part, *quickening* us with spiritual life, whereby Christ first takes hold of us, and *faith* on our part, when thus quickened, whereby we take hold of Christ; accordingly, this union with the Lord Jesus is expressed in scripture sometimes by the one and sometimes by the other of the means or bands by which it is effected. Christ is sometimes said to be in us; so Col. i. 27. "Christ is in you the hope of glory." And Rom. viii. 10. "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin." At other times it is expressed by the other band on our part, as 1 John v. 20. "We are in him that is true, even in his Son Christ Jesus." And 2 Cor. v. 17. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

The difference betwixt both these is thus aptly expressed by a late author*. Christ is in believers by his *Spirit*, 1 John iv. 13. "The believer is in Christ by *faith*, John i. 12. Christ is in the believer by *inhabitation*, Rom. iii. 17. The believer is in Christ by *implantation*, Rom. vi. 35. Christ is in the believer as the head is in the body, Col. i. 18. As the root in the branches, John xv. 5. Believers are in Christ as the members are in the head, Eph. i. 23. or as the branches are in the root, John xv. 1, 7. Christ in the believer implieth life, and influence from Christ, Col. iii. 4. The believer implieth *communion* and *fellowship* with Christ, 1 Cor. i. 30. When Christ is said to be in the believer, we are to understand it in reference to *sanctification*. When the believer is said to be in Christ, it is in order to justification."

Thus we apprehend, being ourselves first apprehended by Jesus Christ, Phil. iii. 12. We cannot take hold of Christ till first he take hold of us; no vital act of faith can be exercised till a vital principle be first inspired: of both these bands of union we must speak distinctly, and first of "Christ quickening us by his Spirit, in order to our union with him," of which we have an account in the scripture before us, "You he hath quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins:" In which words we find these two things noted, *viz.*

1. The infusion of a vital principle of grace.
2. The total indisposedness of the subject by nature.

First, The infusion of a vital principle of grace, *You hath he quickened*. These words [*hath he quickened*] are a supplement made to clear the sense of the apostle, which else would have been more obscure, by reason of that long parenthesis betwixt the first and fifth verses, "for as the † learned observe, this word *υμας*, you, is

* Mount Pisgah, p. 22, 23.

† *Illud υμας* regitur a συνεζωοποιησε, v. 5. est igitur hoc loco et hyperbaton et

“governed by the verb *συνεζωοποιήσε*, *hath he quickened*, ver. 5. So “that here the words are transposed from the plain grammatical “order, by reason of the interjection of a long sentence, there- “fore, with good warrant our translators have put the verb into “the first verse, which is repeated, ver. 5. and so keeping faith- “fully to the scope, have excellently cleared the syntax and order “of the words.” Now this verb *συνεζωοποιήσε*, *hath he quickened*. imports the first vital act of the Spirit of God, or his first enlivening work upon the soul, in order to its union with Jesus Christ: For look, as the blood of Christ is the fountain of all merit, so the Spirit of Christ is the fountain of all spiritual life; and until he quicken us, i. e. infuse the principle of the divine life into our souls, we can put forth no hand, or vital act of faith, to lay hold upon Jesus Christ.

This his quickening work is therefore the first in order of nature to our union with Christ, and fundamental to all other acts of grace done and performed by us, from our first closing with Christ throughout the whole course of our obedience; and this quickening act is said, ver. 5. to be together with Christ. Either noting (as some expound it) that it is the effect of the same power by which Christ was raised from the dead, according to Eph. 1. 19. or rather, to be *quickened together with Christ*, notes that new spiritual life which is infused into our dead souls in the time of our union with Christ: “For it is Christ to whom we are conjoined “and united in our regeneration, out of whom, as a fountain, all “spiritual benefits flow to us, among which this vivification or “quickenings is one *, and a most sweet and precious one.”

Zanchy Bodius, and many others, will have this *quickenings* to comprize both our justification and regeneration, and to stand opposed both to *eternal* and *spiritual* death, and it may well be allowed; but it most properly imports our regeneration, wherein the Spirit, in an ineffable and mysterious way, makes the soul to live to God, yea, to live the life of God, which soul was before *dead in trespasses and sins*. In which words we have,

Secondly, In the next place, the total indisposedness of the subjects by nature: For, as it is well noted by a † learned man, “the “apostle doth not say of these Ephesians that they were half “dead, or sick, and infirm, but dead wholly; altogether dead,

synopsis et αποκοπή της περιόδου, quæ est species τῆς ἀνανταπόδοτος, cujus quidem anomalie causa est ἐπεμβολή interjectio sententiæ prolixioris. Piscator. Pool's Synop.

* *Ex Christo conjuncto nobiscum, ut capite cum membris, profluunt in nos omnia beneficia, in quorum numero est vivificatio. Rolloc. in Loc.*

† *Non vocat hic semimortuos aut ægrotos ac infirmos, sed prorsus mortuos, omni facultate bene cogitandi aut agendi destituti. Rolloc. in Loc.*

“destitute of any faculty or ability, so much as to think one good thought, or perform one good act.” You were dead in respect of *condemnation*, being under the damning sentence of the law, and you are dead in respect of the privation of spiritual life; dead in opposition to justification, and dead in opposition to regeneration and sanctification: And the fatal instrument by which their souls died is here shewed them; you were dead in, or by *trespasses* and *sins*, this was the sword that killed your souls, and cut them off from God. Some do curiously distinguish betwixt trespasses and sins, as if one pointed at *original*, the other at *actual* sins; but I suppose they are promiscuously used here, and serve to express the cause of their ruin, or means of their spiritual death and destruction: this was their case when Christ came to quicken them, *dead in sin*; and being so, they could not move themselves towards union with Christ, but as they were moved by the quickening Spirit of God. Hence the observation will be this,

Doct. *That those souls which have union with Christ, are quickened with a supernatural principle of life by the Spirit of God in order thereunto.*

The Spirit of God is not only a living Spirit, *formally* considered; but he is also the Spirit of life, *effectively* or *casually* considered; And without his breathing, or infusing life into our souls, our union with Christ is impossible.

It is the observation of learned * Camero, “that there must be an *union* before there can be an *union* with Christ. *Union* is to be conceived *efficiently* as the work of God’s Spirit, joining the believer to Christ, and *union* is to be conceived *formally*, the joining itself of the persons together:” We close with Christ by faith, but that faith being a vital act, pre-supposes a principle of life communicated to us by the Spirit; therefore it is said, John xi. 26. “Whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die:” The vital act and operation of faith springs from this quickening Spirit: So in Rom. viii. 1, 2. The apostle, having in the first verse opened the blessed estate of them that are in Christ, shews us in the second verse how we come to be in him: “The Spirit of life (saith he) which is in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”

There is indeed a quickening work of the Spirit, which is *sub-*

* *Observandum est unionem et unionem inter se differere: unio est rerum actus, qui forma rationem habet, nempe actus rerum unitarum qua unitæ sunt: unio autem actus significat causæ efficientis, &c.* Camero de Eccles. p. 222.

sequent to regeneration, consisting in his exciting, recovering, and actuating of his own graces in us; and from hence is the *liveliness* of a Christian; and there is a quickening act of the Spirit *in our regeneration*, and from hence is the spiritual life of a Christian; of this I am here to speak, and that I may speak profitably to this point, I will in the doctrinal part labour to open these five particulars.

First, What this spiritual life is in its nature and properties.

Secondly, In what manner it is wrought or inspired into the soul.

Thirdly, For what end, or with what design, this life is so inspired.

Fourthly, I shall shew this work to be wholly supernatural.

And then, *Fifthly*, Why this quickening must be antecedent to our actual closing with Christ by faith.

First, We shall enquire into the nature and properties of this life, and discover (as we are able) what it is. And we find it to consist in that *wonderful change which the Spirit of God makes upon the frame and temper of the soul, by his infusing or implanting the principles of grace in all the powers and faculties thereof*.

A change it makes upon the soul, and that a marvellous one, no less than from death to life; for though a man be *physically* a living man, i. e. his natural soul hath union with his body, yet his soul having no union with Christ, he is *theologically* a dead man, Luke xv. 24. and Col. ii. 13. Alas, it deserves not the name of life, to have a soul serving only to season and preserve the body a little while from corruption: to carry it up and down the world, and only enable it to eat, and drink, and talk, and laugh, and then die: Then do we begin to live, when we begin to have union with Christ the Fountain of life, by his Spirit communicated to us: From this time we are to reckon our life * as some have done: There be many changes made upon men besides this, many are changed from profaneness to civility, and from mere civility to formality, and a shadow of religion, who still remain in the state and power of spiritual death, notwithstanding: but when the Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon us, to quicken us with the new spiritual life, this is a wonderful change indeed: It gives us an *esse supernaturale*, a new supernatural being, which is therefore called a *new creature, the new man, the hidden man of the heart*: The natural essence and faculties of the soul remain still, but it is divested of the old qualities, and endowed with new ones, 2 Cor. v. 17. "Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."

And this change is not made by altering and rectifying the disorders of the life only, leaving the temper and frame of the heart

* *Hic jacet Similis, cujus ætas multoties annorum fuit, ipse septem duntaxat annos vixit.*

still carnal; but by the infusion of a supernatural permanent principle into the soul, John iv. 14. "It shall be in him a well of water:" principles are to a course of actions, as fountains or springs are to the streams and rivers that flow from them, and are maintained by them: and hence is the evenness and constancy of renewed souls in the course of godliness.

Nor is this principle or habit *acquired* by accustoming ourselves to holy actions, as natural habits are acquired by frequent acts, which beget a *disposition*, and thence grow up to an *habit* or second nature, but it is infused, or implanted in the soul by the Spirit of God. So we read, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you:" It grows not up out of our natures, but is put or infused into us: as it is said of the two witnesses, Rev. xi. 11. who lay dead in a *civil sense*, three days and a half, that *the Spirit of life from God entered into them*: so it is here in a *spiritual sense*, the Spirit of life from God enters into the dead, carnal heart: it is all by way of supernatural infusion.

Nor is it limited to this or that faculty of the soul, but grace or life is poured into all the faculties: "Behold, all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. The *understanding, will, thoughts,* and *affections*, are all renewed by it: the whole inner *man* is changed; yea, the *tongue* and *hand*, the *discourses* and *actions*, even all the *ways* and *courses* of the outward *man* are renewed by it.

But more particularly, we shall discern the *nature* of this *spiritual life*, by considering the *properties* of it; among which, these are very remarkable.

First, The soul that is joined to Christ is quickened with a *divine life*, so we read in 2 Pet. i. 4. Where believers are said to be *partakers of the divine nature*: a very high expression, and warily to be understood. *Partakers of the divine nature*: not *essentially*; so it is wholly incommunicable to the creature, nor yet *hypostatically*, and personally; so Christ only was a partaker of it; but our participation of the divine nature, must be understood in a way proper to believers; that is to say, we partake of it by the inhabitation of the Spirit of God in us, according to 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" The Spirit, who is God by nature dwells in, and actuates the soul whom he regenerates, and by sanctifying it, causes it to live a *divine life*: from this life of God the un sanctified are said to be alienated, Eph. iv. 18. but believers are partakers of it.

Secondly, And being divine, it must needs be the most *excellent*, and transcendent life that any creature doth, or can live in this world: it surmounts the natural, rational, and moral life of the

unsanctified, as much as the angelical life excels the life of flies and worms of the earth.

Some think it a rare life to live in sensual pleasures; but the scripture will not allow so much as the name of life to them; but tells us, "they are dead whilst they live," 1 Tim. v. 6. certainly it is a wonderful elevation of the nature of man to be quickened with such a life as this. There are two ways wherein the blessed God hath honoured poor man above the very angels of heaven. One was by the hypostatical union of our nature, in Christ, with the divine nature: the other is by uniting our persons mystically to Christ, and thereby communicating spiritual life to us: this latter is a most glorious privilege, and in one respect a more singular mercy than the former; for that honour which is done to our nature by the hypostatical union, is common to all, good and bad, even they that perish have yet that honour; but to be implanted into Christ by regeneration, and live upon him as the branch doth upon the vine, this is a peculiar privilege, a mercy kept from the world that is to perish, and only communicated to God's elect, who are to live eternally with him in heaven.

Thirdly, This life infused by the regenerating Spirit, is a most pleasant life. All delights, all pleasures, all joys, which are not fantastic and delusive, have their spring and origin here, Rom. viii. 6. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace," i. e. a most serene, placid life; such a soul becomes, so far as it is influenced and sanctified by the Spirit, the very region of life and peace: when one thing is thus predicated of another, *in casu recto*, (saith a learned man) it speaks their intimate connection: peace is so connatural to this life, that you may either call it a life that hath peace in it, or a peace that hath life in it: yea, it hath its enclosed pleasures in it, "such as a stranger intermeddles not with," Prov. xiv. 10. Regeneration is the term from which all true pleasure commences; you never live a cheerful day, till you begin to live to God: therefore it is said, Luke xv. 24. when the *prodigal son* was returned to his father, and reconciled, then *they began to be merry*.

None can make another, by any words, to understand what that pleasure is which the renewed soul feels diffused through all its faculties and affections, in its communion with the Lord, and in the sealings and witnessings of his Spirit. That is a very apt and well known similitude, which Peter Martyr used, and the Lord blessed to the conversion of that noble marquis Galeacus: if, said he, a man should see a company of people dancing upon the top of a remote hill, he would be apt to conclude they were a company of wild distracted people; but if he draw nearer, and behold the excellent order, and hear the ravishing sweet music that are among

them, he will quickly alter his opinion of them, and be for dancing himself with them.

All the *delights* in the sensual *life*, all the pleasure that ever your *lusts* gave you, are but as the putrid, stinking *waters* of a corrupt *pond*, where *toads* lie croaking and spawning, compared to the *crystal streams* of the most pure and pleasant *fountain*.

Fourthly, This life of God, with which the regenerate are quickened in their union with Christ, as it is a *pleasant*, so it is also a *growing increasing life*, John iv. 14. "It shall be in him a well of "water springing up into everlasting life."

It is not in our sanctification, as it is in our justification; our justification is complete and perfect, no defect is found there; but the new creature labours under many defects: all believers are equally justified, but not equally sanctified. Therefore you read, 2 Cor. iv. 16. that "the inward man is renewed day by day:" And 2 Pet. iii. 18. Christians are exhorted "to grow in grace, and "in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour:" if this work were perfect, and finished at once, as justification is, there could be no renewing day by day, nor growth in grace. *Perfectum est cui nihil deest & cui nihil addi potest*; i. e. that is perfect which wants nothing, and to which nothing can be added. The apostle indeed prays for the Thessalonians, "that God would sanctify them," *ὁλοκληρίαις*,—wholly, perfectly, 1 Thes. v. 23. And this is matter of prayer and hope; for, at last, it will grow up to perfection; but this perfect holiness is reserved for the perfect state in the world to come, and none but * deluded, proud spirits boast of it here: but when "that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part "shall be done away," 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10. And upon the imperfection of the new creature in every faculty, that warfare and daily conflict spoken of, Gal. v. 17. and experienced by every Christian, is grounded; grace rises gradually in the soul, as the sun doth in the heavens, "which shineth more and more unto a "perfect day," Prov. iv. 18.

Fifthly, To conclude; This life with which the regenerate are quickened, is an *everlasting life*. "This is the record, that God "hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son," 1 John v. 11. This principle of life, is the seed of God; and that remains in the soul for ever, 1 John iii. 9. It is no transient, vanishing thing, but a fixed, permanent principle, which abides in the soul for ever; a man may lose his *gifts*, but grace abides; the soul may, and must be separated from the body, but grace cannot be separated from the soul: when all forsake us, this will not leave us.

* Perfection of sanctification is not found in this life, unless in the dreams of some fanatics. *Ages*.

This infused principle is therefore vastly different, both from the extraordinary gifts of prophecy, wherein the Spirit was sometimes said to come upon men, under the Old Testament, 1 Sam. x. 6, 10. and from the common vanishing effects he sometimes produceth in the unregenerate, of which we have frequent accounts in the New Testament, Heb. vi. 4. and John v. 35. It is one thing for the Spirit to come upon a man in the way of present influence and assistance, and another thing to dwell in a man as in his temple.

And thus of the nature and quality of this blessed work of the Spirit in quickening us.

Secondly, Having seen the nature and properties of the spiritual life, we are concerned in the next place to enquire into the way and manner in which it is wrought and infused by the Spirit, and here we must say,

First of all, that the work is wrought in the soul very *mysteriously*; so Christ tells Nicodemus, John iii. 8. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit." There be many opinions among *philosophers* about the original of wind; but we have no certain knowledge of it; we describe it by its effects and properties, but know little of its original: and if the works of God in nature be so obstruse, and unsearchable, how much more so are these sublime, and supernatural works of the Spirit?

We are not able to solve the *Phænomena* of nature, we can give no account of our own formation in the womb, Eccl. xi. 5. Who can exactly describe how the parts of the body are formed, and the soul infused? "It is curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth," as the Psalmist speaks, Psal. cxxxix. 16. but how, we know not. Basil saith, divers questions may be moved about a *fly*, which may puzzle the greatest *philosopher*: we know little of the forms and essences of natural things, much less of these profound, and abstruse spiritual things.

Secondly, But though we cannot pry into these secrets by the eye of reason, yet God hath revealed this to us in his word, that it is wrought by his own Almighty Power, Eph. i. 19. The *apostle* ascribes this work to the *exceeding greatness* of the power of God; and this must needs be, if we consider how the Spirit of God expresses it in scripture by a new creation; i. e. a giving being to something out of nothing, Eph. ii. 10. In this it differs from all the effects of human power, for man always works upon some pre-existent matter, but here is no such matter; all that is in man, the subject of this work, is only a passive capacity, or receptivity, but nothing is found in him to contribute towards this work; this

supernatural life is not, nor can it be educed out of natural principles; this wholly transcends the sphere of all natural power; but of this more anon.

Thirdly, This also we may affirm of it, that this divine life is infused into all the natural faculties and powers of the soul, not one exempted, 1 Thes. v. 23. The whole soul and spirit is the recipient subject of it; and with respect to this general infusion into all the faculties and powers of the soul, it is called a new creature, a new man, having an integral perfection, and fulness of all its parts and members; it becomes light in the mind, John xvii. 3. Obedience in the will, 1 Pet. i. 2. In the affections an heavenly temper and tenderness, Col. iii. 1, 2. And so is variously denominated, even as the sea is from the several shores it washes, though it be one and the same sea. And here, we must observe, lies one main difference betwixt a regenerate soul and an hypocrite; * the one is all of a piece, as I may say, the principle of spiritual life runs into all, and every faculty and affection, and sanctifies or renews the whole man; whereas the change upon hypocrites is but partial and particular; he may have new light, but no new love; a new tongue, but not a new heart; this or that vice may be reformed, but the whole course of his life is not altered.

Fourthly, and lastly, This infusion of spiritual life is done *instantaneously*, as all *creation work* is; hence it is resembled to that *plastic power*, which, in a moment, made the light to shine out of darkness; just so God shines into our hearts, 2 Cor. iv. 6.

It is true, a soul may be a long time under the preparatory works of the Spirit, he may be under convictions and humiliations, purposes and resolutions a long time; he may be waiting at the pool of Bethesda, attending the means and ordinances, but when the Spirit comes once to quicken the soul, it is done in a moment: even as it is in the infusion of the rational soul, the body is long ere it be prepared and moulded, but when once the *embryo* or matter is ready, it is quickened with the spirit of life in an instant: so it is here; but O what a blessed moment is this! Upon which the whole weight of our eternal happiness depends; for it is Christ in us, i. e. Christ formed in us, who is the hope of glory, Col. i. 27. And our Lord expressly tells us, John iii. 3. That except we be regenerate and born again, we cannot see the kingdom of God. And thus of the way and manner of its infusion.

Thirdly, Let the design and end of God, in this his *quickenings*

* *Ab uno desuper principio quod convenienter voluntati operatur dependent prima, secunda et tertia. Quemadmodum minima pars ferri lapidis magnetis spiritu movetur, per multos annulos ferreos extensa: ita etiam qui sunt virtute præditi, divino spiritu attracti, cum prima monitione, conjungantur, deinceps autem alii usque ad postremam.* Clem. Alexand. Strom. lib. 7.

work, be next considered; for what end and with what design and aim this work is wrought. And if we consult the scriptures in this matter, we shall find this principle of life is infused in order to our glorifying God, in this world, by a *life of obedience*, and our enjoying of God in the world to come.

First, Spiritual life is infused in order to a course of obedience in this world, whereby God is glorified: So we read in Eph. ii. 10. "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them:" habits are to actions, as the root is to the fruit, it is for fruit sake that we plant the root, and ingraff the branches. So in Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. "A new spirit will I also put within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." This is the next or immediate design and end, not only of the first infusion of the principle of life into the soul, but of all the exciting, actuating, and assisting works of the Spirit afterwards. Now this principle of spiritual life infused, hath a twofold influence into obedience.

First, This makes a sincere and true *obedience*, when it flows from an inward vital principle of grace. The hypocrite is moved by something *ab extra*, from without, as the applause of men, the accommodation of fleshly interests, the force of education: or if there be any thing from within that moves him, it is but self-interest, to quiet a disturbing conscience, and support his vain hopes of heaven; but he never acts from a new principle, a new nature, inclining him to holy actions. Sincerity mainly lies in the harmony and correspondency of actions to their principles: from this infused principle it is, that men hunger and thirst for God, and go to their duties as men do to their meals, when they find an empty craving stomach.

O reader, pause a little upon this ere thou pass on, ask thy heart whether it be so with thee: are holy duties connatural to thee? Doth thy soul move and work after God by a kind of supernatural instinct? This then will be to thee a good evidence of thy integrity.

Secondly, From this infused principle of life results the *excellency of our obedience*, as well as the sincerity of it; for by virtue and reason thereof, it becomes free and voluntary, not forced and constrained, it drops like honey, and of its own accord, out of the comb, Cant. iv. 11. or as waters from the fountain, without forcing, John iv. 14. An unprincipled professor must be pressed hard by some weight of affliction, ere he will yield one tear, or pour out a prayer, Psal. lxxviii. 34. "When he slew them, then they sought him."

Now the freedom of obedience is the excellency of it, God's eye

is much upon that, 1 Cor. ix. 17. yea, and the uniformity of our obedience, which is also a special part of the beauty of it, results from hence: he that acts from a principle acts fluently and uniformly, and there is a proportion betwixt the parts of his conversation; this is it which makes us holy, *εν παση αναστροφη*, in all manner of conversation, or in every point and turning of our conversations, as the word imports, 1 Pet. i. 15. Whereas he that is moved by this or that external accidental motive, must needs be very uneven, "like the legs of a lame man," as the expression is, Prov. xxvi. 7. "which are not equal." Now a word of God, and then the discourse runs muddy and profane or carnal again; all that evenness and uniformity that are in the several parts of a Christian's life, are the effect of this infused principle of spiritual life.

Thirdly, Another aim and design of God in the infusion of this principle of life, is thereby to prepare and qualify the soul for the enjoyment of himself in heaven: "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. All that shall possess that inheritance must be begotten again to it, as the apostle speaks, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. This principle of grace is the very seed of that glory; it is eternal life in the root and principle, John xvii. 3. by this the soul is attempered and qualified for that state and employment. What is the life of glory but the vision of God, and the soul's assimilation to God by that vision? From both which results that unspeakable joy and delight which passeth understanding: but what vision of God, assimilation to God, or delight in God, can that soul have which was never quickened with the supernatural principle of grace? The temper of such souls is expressed in that sad character, Zech. xi. 8. "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me." For want of this vital principle it is, that the very same duties and ordinances which are the delights and highest pleasures of the saints, are no better than a mere drudgery and bondage to others, Mal. i. 13. Heaven would be no heaven to a dead soul; this principle of life, in its daily growth and improvement, is our meetness, as well as our evidence, for heaven: these are the main ends of its infusion.

Fourthly, In the next place, according to the method proposed, I am obliged to shew you, that *this quickening work is wholly supernatural*; it is the sole and proper work of the Spirit of God. So Christ himself expressly asserts it, in John iii. 6, 8. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit: the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Believers are the birth or offspring of the Spirit. who produceth

the new creature in them in an unintelligible manner, even to themselves. So far is it above their own ability to produce, that it is above their capacity to understand the way of its production: as if you should ask, Do you know from whence the wind comes? No: Do you know whither it goes? No: But you hear and feel it when it blows? Yes: Why, so is every one that is born of the Spirit; he feels the efficacy, and discerns the effects of the Spirit on his own soul, but cannot understand or describe the manner of their production. This is not only above the carnal, but above the renewed mind to comprehend; we can contribute nothing, I mean actively, to the production of this principle of life, we may indeed be said to concur passively with the Spirit in it; i. e. there is found in us a capacity, aptness, or receptiveness of this principle of life: our nature is endowed with such faculties and powers as are meet subjects to receive, and instruments to act this spiritual life: God only quickens the rational nature with spiritual life.

It is true also, that in the *progress of sanctification*, a man doth actively concur with the Spirit, but in the first production of this spiritual principle he can do nothing: he can indeed perform those external duties that have a remote tendency to it, but he cannot by the power of nature perform any saving act, or contribute any thing more than a passive capacity to the implantation of a new principle: as will appear by the following arguments.

Arg. 1. He that actively concurs to his own regeneration, makes himself to differ; but this is denied to all regenerate men, 1 Cor. iv. 7. "Who maketh thee to differ from another? And "what hast thou that thou didst not receive?"

Arg. 2. That to which the scripture ascribes both *impotency* and *enmity*, with respect to grace, cannot actively, and of itself, concur to the production of it: but the scripture ascribes both impotency and enmity to nature, with respect to grace. It denies to it a power to do any thing of itself, John xv. 5. And, which is less, it denies to it a power to speak a good word, Mat. xii. 34. And, which is least of all, it denies it power to think a good thought, 2 Cor. iii. 5. This impotency, if there were no more, cuts off all pretence of our active concurrence; but then if we consider that it ascribes enmity to our natures, as well as impotency, how clear is the case! See Rom. viii. 7. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." And Col. i. 21. "And you that were enemies in your minds by wicked "works." So then nature is so far productive of this principle, as impotency and enmity can enable it to be so.

Arg. 3. That which is of natural production, must needs be subject to natural dissolution; that which is born of the flesh is flesh, a perishing thing, for every thing is as its principle is, and

there can be no more in the effect, than there is in the cause : but this principle of spiritual life is not subject to dissolution, it is the water that springs up into everlasting life, John iv. 14. The seed of God, which remaineth in the regenerate soul, 1 John iii. 9. And all this, because it is “ born not of corruptible, but of incorruptible seed,” 1 Pet. i. 23.

Arg. 4. If our new birth be our resurrection, a new creation, yea, a victory over nature, then we cannot actively contribute to its production ; but under all these notions it is represented to us in the scriptures ; it is our resurrection from the dead, Eph. v. 14. And you know the body is wholly passive in its resurrection : but though it concurs not, yet it gives pre-existent matter : therefore the metaphor is designedly varied, Eph. iv. 24. where it is called a *creation* : in which there is neither active concurrence, nor pre-existent matter ; but though creation excludes pre-existent matter, yet in producing something out of nothing, there is no reluctancy nor opposition : therefore to shew how purely supernatural this principle of life is, it is clothed and presented to us in the notion of a victory, 2 Cor. x. 4. And so leaves all to grace.

Arg. 5. If nature could produce, or but actively concur to the production of this spiritual life, then the best natures would be soonest quickened with it ; and the worst natures not at all, or at last, and least of all : but contrarily, we find the worst natures often regenerated, and the best left in the state of spiritual death : with how many sweet *homilitical* virtues was the young man adorned ? Mark x. 21. yet graceless : and what a sink of sin was Mary Magdalen, Luke vii. 37. yet sanctified. Thus beautiful Rachel is barren, while Leah bears children. And there is scarce any thing that affects and melts the hearts of Christians more than this comparative consideration doth, when they consider vessels of gold cast away, and leaden ones chosen for such noble uses. So that it is plain enough to all wise and humble souls, that this new life is wholly of supernatural production.

Fifthly, and lastly, I shall briefly represent the necessary antecedency of this quickening work of the Spirit, to our first closing with Christ by faith : and this will easily let itself into your understandings, if you but consider the nature of the vital act of faith ; which is the soul's receiving of Christ, and resting upon him for pardon and salvation : in which two things are necessarily included, viz.

1. The renouncing of all other hopes and dependencies.
2. The opening of the heart fully to Jesus Christ.

First, The renouncing of all other hopes and dependencies whatsoever. Self in all its acceptations, natural, sinful, and moral, is now to be denied and renounced for ever, else Christ can never be

received, Rom. x. 3. not only self in its vilest pollutions, but self in its richest ornaments and endowments: but this is as impossible to the unrenewed and natural man, as it is for rocks or mountains to start from their centre, and fly like wandering atoms in the air: nature will rather chuse to run the hazard of everlasting damnation, than escape it by a total renunciation of its beloved lusts, or self-righteousness: this supernatural work necessarily requires a supernatural principle, Rom. viii. 2.

Secondly, The opening the heart fully to Jesus Christ, without which Christ can never be received, Rev. iii. 20. but this also is the effect of the quickening Spirit, the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus. Sooner may we expect to see the flowers and blossoms open without the influence of the sun, than the heart and will of a sinner open to receive Christ without a principle of spiritual life first derived from him: and this will be past doubt to all that consider, not only the impotence, but the ignorance, prejudice, and aversations of nature, by which the door of the heart is barred, and chained against Christ, John v. 40. So that nature hath neither ability nor will, power nor desire, to come to Christ: if any have an heart opened to receive him, it is the Lord that opens it by his Almighty Power, and that in the way of an infused principle of life supernatural.

Quest. But here it may be doubted and objected, against this position. If we cannot believe till we are quickened with spiritual life, as you say, and cannot be justified till we believe, as all say, then it will follow, that a regenerate soul may be in the state of condemnation for a time, and consequently perish, if death should befall him in that juncture.

Sol. To this I return, That when we speak of the priority of this quickening work of the Spirit to our actual believing, we rather understand it of the priority of nature, than of time, the nature and order of the work requiring it to be so: a vital principle must, in order of nature, be infused before a vital act can be exerted. First, Make the tree good, and then the fruit good: and admit we should grant some priority in time also to this quickening principle, before actual faith, yet the absurdity mentioned would be no way consequent upon that concession; for as the vital act of faith quickly follows the regenerating principle, so the soul is abundantly secured against the danger objected: God never beginning any special work of grace upon the soul, and then leaving it and the soul with it in hazard, but preserves both to the finishing and completing of his gracious design, Phil. i. 6.

First Use of Information.

Inf. 1. If such be the nature and necessity of this principle of

divine life, as you have heard it opened in the foregoing discourse, then hence it follows, *That unregenerate men are no better than dead men.* So the text represents them. "You hath he quickened "who were dead in trespasses and sins:" i. e. spiritually dead, though naturally alive; yea and lively too as any other persons in the world. There is a threefold consideration of objects, viz.

1. Naturally.
2. Politically.
3. Theologically.

First, Naturally, To all those things that are natural, they are alive: they can understand, reason, discourse, project, and contrive, as well as others; they can eat, drink, and build, plant, and suck out the natural comfort of these things, as much as any others. So their life is described, Job xxi. 12. "They take the "timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ; they "spend their days in wealth," &c. And James v. 5. "Ye have "lived in pleasure upon earth," as the fish lives in the water its natural element, and yet this natural sensual life is not allowed the name of life, 1 Tim. v. 9. such persons are *dead whilst they live*; it is a base and ignoble life, to have a soul only to salt the body, or to enable a man for a few years to eat, and drink, and talk, and laugh, and then die.

Secondly, Objects may be considered politically, and with respect to such things, they are alive also: they can buy and sell, and manage all their worldly affairs with as much dexterity, skill, and policy as other men: yea, "the children of this world are wiser in their "generation than the children of light," Luke xvi. 8. The entire * stream of their thoughts, projects, and studies, running in that one channel; having but one design to manage, they must needs excel in worldly wisdom: But then,

Thirdly, Theologically considered, they are dead; without life, sense, or motion, towards God, and the things that are above: their understandings are dead, 1 Cor. ii. 14. and cannot receive the things that are of God; their wills are dead, and cannot move towards Jesus Christ, John vi. 65. Their affections are dead, even to the most excellent and spiritual objects; and all their duties are dead duties, without life or spirit. This is the sad case of the unregenerate world.

Inf. 2. This speaks encouragement to ministers and parents, to wait in hopes of success at last, even upon those that yet give them little hope of conversion at the present.

The work you see is the Lord's; when the Spirit of life comes upon their dead souls, they shall believe, and be made willing;

* May God free me from him who is a man only of one business. *Bern.*

till then, we do but plough upon the rocks: yet let not our hand slack in duty, pray for them, and plead with them: you know not in which prayer, or exhortation, the Spirit of life may breathe upon them. *Can these dry bones live?* Yes, if the Spirit of life from God breathe upon them, they can, and shall live: what though their dispositions be averse to all things that are spiritual and serious, yet even such have been regenerated, when more sweet and promising natures have been passed by, and left under spiritual death.

It was the observation of Mr. Ward, upon his brother Mr. Daniel Rogers, (who was a man of great gifts and eminent graces, yet of a very bad temper and constitution) Though my brother Rogers, saith he, hath grace enough for two men, yet not half enough for himself.

It may be you have prayed and striven long with your relations and to little purpose, yet be not discouraged. How often was Mr. John Rogers, that famous and successful divine, a grief of heart to his relations in his younger years, proving a wild and lewd young man, to the great discouragement of his pious friends; yet, at last, the Lord graciously changed him, so that Mr. Richard Rogers would say, when he could exercise the utmost degree of charity or hope, for any that at present were vile and naught, *I will never despair of any man for John Rogers' sake.*

Inf. 4. *How honourable are Christians by their new birth!* "They are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John i. 13. i. e. not in an impure, or mere natural way, but in a most spiritual and supernatural manner: they are the offspring of God, the children of the Most High, as well by regeneration as by adoption; which is the greatest advancement of the human nature, next to its hypostatical union with the second person. Oh, what honour is this for a poor sinful creature, to have the very life of God breathed into his soul! All other dignities of nature are trifles compared with this; this makes a Christian a sacred hallowed thing, the living temple of God, 1 Cor. vi. 19. The special object of his delight.

Inf. 4. *How deplorable is the condition of the unregenerate world, in no better case than dead men?* Now to affect our hearts with the misery of such conditions, let us consider and compare it in the following particulars,

First, There is no *beauty* in the dead, all their loveliness goes away at death; there is no spiritual beauty or loveliness in any that are unregenerate: It is true, many of them have excellent moral *homilitical virtues*, which adorn their conversations in the eyes of men; but what are all these, but so many sweet flowers strewed over a dead corpse?

Secondly, The dead have no *pleasure* nor delight; even so the unregenerate are incapable of the delights of the Christian life; "to be spiritually minded is life and peace," Rom. viii. 6. i. e. this is the only serene, placid, and pleasant life: when the *prodigal*, who was once dead, was alive, then he began to be merry, Luke xv. 24. They live in sensual pleasures, but this is to be dead while alive, in scripture-reckoning.

Thirdly, The dead have no *heat*, they are as cold as clay; so are all the unregenerate towards God and things above: their *lusts* are *hot*, but their affections to God *cold* and *frozen*: that which makes a gracious heart *melt*, will not make an unregenerate heart *move*.

Fourthly, The dead must be buried, Gen. xxiii. 4. "Bury my dead out of my sight:" So must the unregenerate be buried out of God's sight for ever: buried in the lowest hell, in the place of darkness, for ever, John iii. 3. Wo to the unregenerate, good had it been for them had they never been born!

Infer. 5. *How greatly are all men concern'd to examine their condition with respect to spiritual life and death!* It is very common for men to * presume upon their union with, and interest in Christ. This privilege is, by common mistake, extended generally to all that profess the Christian religion, and practise the external duties of it, when, in truth, no more are or can be united to Christ, than are quickened by the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus, Rom. viii. 1, 2. O try your interest in Christ by this rule, if I am quickened by Christ, I have union with Christ. And,

First, If there be spiritual sense in your souls, there is spiritual life in them: there are *αισθησεις*, senses belonging to the spiritual as well as to the animal life, Heb. v. 14. They can feel and sensibly groan under soul pressures and burdens of sin, Rom. vii. 24. The dead feel not, moan not under the burdens of sin, but the living do: they may be sensible indeed of the evil of sin, with respect to themselves, but not as against God; damnation may scare them, but pollution doth not; hell may fright them, but not the offending of God.

Secondly, If there be spiritual *hunger and thirst*, it is a sweet sign of spiritual life; this sign agrees to Christians of a day old, 1 Pet. ii. 2. Even "new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word:" If spiritual life be in you, you know how to expound that scripture, Psal. xlii. 1. without any other interpreter than your own experience: you will feel somewhat like the gnawing of an empty stomach making you restless during the interruption of your daily communion with the Lord.

Thirdly, If there be *spiritual conflicts* with sin, there is spiritual

* By presuming they hope, and by hoping they perish. *Ames.*

life in your souls, Gal. v. 17. Not only a combat betwixt *light* in the higher, and *lust* in the lower faculties; not only opposition to more gross external corruptions, that carry more infamy and horror with them than other sins do: but the same faculty will be the seat of war; and the more inward and secret any lust is, by so much the more will it be opposed and mourned over.

In a word, the weakest Christian may, upon impartial observation, find such signs of spiritual life in himself (if he will allow himself time to reflect upon the bent and frame of his own heart) as desires after God; conscience of duties; fears, cares, and sorrows, about sin; delight in the society of heavenly and spiritual men; and a loathing and burden in the company of vain and carnal persons.

Object. O but I have a very dead heart to spiritual things!

Sol. It is a sign of life that you feel, and are sensible of that deadness; and besides, there is a great deal of difference betwixt *spiritual deadness* and *death*; the one is the state of the unregenerate, the other is the *disease* of regenerate men.

Object. Some signs of spiritual life are clear to me, but I cannot close with others.

Sol. If you can really close with any, it may satisfy you, though you be dark in others; for if a child cannot go, yet if it can suck; but if it cannot suck, yet if it can cry; yea, if it cannot cry, yet if it breathe, it is alive.



SERMON VI.

Of that Act on our Part, by which we do actually and effectually apply Christ to our own Souls.

JOHN i. 12.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name.

NO sooner is the soul quickened by the Spirit of God, but it answers, in some measure, the end of God in that work, by its *active reception of Jesus Christ, in the way of believing*: What this vital act of faith is upon which so great a weight depends, as our interest in Christ and everlasting blessedness, this scripture before us will give you the best account of; wherein (omitting the consideration of the coherence and context of the words) we have three things to ponder.