

## SERMON IV.

Concerning the work of the Spirit, as the internal, and most effectual Mean of the Application of CHRIST.

JOHN vi. 44.

*No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.*

**O**UR last discourse informed you of the usefulness and influence of the preaching of the gospel, in order to the *application* of Christ to the souls of men. There must be (in God's ordinary way) the external ministerial offer of Christ, before men can have union with him.

But yet, all the preaching in the world can never effect this union with Christ in itself, and in its own virtue, except a supernatural and mighty power go forth with it for that end and purpose. Let Boanerges and Barnabas try their strength, let the *angels* of heaven be the preachers; till God draw, the soul cannot come to Christ.

No saving benefit is to be had by Christ, without union with his person, no union with his person without faith, no faith ordinarily wrought without the preaching of the gospel by Christ's *ambassadors*, their preaching hath no saving efficacy without God's drawings, as will evidently appear by considering these words and the occasion of them.

The occasion of these words is found (as learned \* Cameron well observes) in the 42d verse, "And they said, is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" Christ had been pressing upon them in his ministry, the great and necessary duty of faith; but notwithstanding the *authority* of the preacher; the *holiness* of his life; the miracles by which he confirmed his *doctrine*; they still objected against him, "is not this the carpenter's son?" From whence Christ takes occasion for these words; "No man can come unto me, except my Father which hath sent me, draw him," q. d. In vain is the authority of my person urged; in vain are all the miracles wrought in your sight, to confirm the doctrine preached to you; till that secret, almighty power of the Spirit be put forth upon your hearts, you will not, you cannot, come unto me.

The words are a negative proposition,

In which the author, and powerful manner of divine operation in working faith, are contained: there must be drawing before

\* Cameronis *Myrothec.* p. 159.

believing, and that drawing must be the drawing of God: every word hath its weight: we will consider them in the order they lie in the text.

Οὐδείς, — *No Man*] not one, let his natural qualifications be what they will, let his external advantages, in respect of means and helps, be never so great: it is not in the power of any man; all persons, in all ages, need the same power of God, one as well as another; every man is alike dead, impotent, and averse to faith in his natural capacity. No man, or—not one, among all the sons of men.

Δυναταί, — *Can*] or is able: he speaks of impotency to special and saving actions, such as believing in Christ is: no act that is saving can be done without the concurrence of special grace. Other acts that have a remote tendency to it, are performed by a more general concourse and common assistance; so men may come to the word, and attend to what is spoken, remember and consider what the word tells them; but as to believing or coming to Christ, that no man can do of himself, or by a general and common assistance. No man can.

Ἐλθέτω πρὸς με, — *Come unto me,*] i. e. believe in me unto salvation. Coming to Christ, and believing in him, are terms *æquipollent*, and are indifferently used to express the nature of saving faith, as is plain, ver. 35. “He that cometh to me shall never hunger, “and he that believeth on me shall never thirst:” it notes the terms from which and to which the soul moves, and the voluntariness of the motion, notwithstanding that divine power by which the will is drawn to Christ.

Εάν μη ὁ Πατήρ, — *Except my Father*] not excluding the other two Persons; for every work of God relating to the creatures is common to all the three Persons; nor only to note that the Father is the first in order of working: but the reason is hinted in the next words.

Ὁ πεμψάς με, — *who hath sent me,*] God hath entered into covenant with the Son, and sent him, stands obliged thereby, to bring the promised seed to him, and that he doth by drawing them to Christ by faith: so the next words tell us the Father doth,

Ἐλκύσῃ αὐτον. — *Draw him.*] That is, powerfully and effectually incline his will to come to Christ: “\* Not by a violent co-action, “but by a benevolent bending of the will which was averse;” and as it is not in the way of force and compulsion, so neither is it by a simple *moral suasion*, by the bare proposal of an object to the will, and so leaving the sinner to his own election; but it is such a per-

\* *Non violenta coactio immediata, sed voluntatis a Deo aversæ benevola flectio.* Glas. Rhet. Sacra. p. 256.

suasion, as hath a mighty overcoming efficacy accompanying it : of which more anon.

The words thus opened, the observation will be this :

Doct. *That it is utterly impossible for any man to come to Jesus Christ, unless he be drawn unto him by the special and mighty power of God.*

No man is compelled to come to Christ against his will, he that cometh, comes willingly, but even that will and desire to come is the effect of grace, Phil. ii. 13. "It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

"If we desire the help and assistance of grace, (saith \* Fulgentius) even the desire is of grace; grace must first be shed forth upon us, before we can begin to desire it." "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8. Suppose the utmost degree of natural ability; let a man be as much disposed and prepared as nature can dispose or prepare him, and to all this, add the proposal of the greatest arguments and motives to induce him to come; let all these have the advantage of the fittest season to work upon his heart; yet no man can come till God draw him: we move as we are moved: as Christ's coming to us, so our coming to him are the pure effects of grace.

Three things require explication in this point before us.

First, *What the drawing of the Father imports.*

Secondly, *In what manner he draws men to Christ.*

Thirdly, *How it appears that none can come till they be so drawn.*

First, *What the drawing of the Father imports.*

To open this, let it be considered, that drawing is usually distinguished into *physical* and *moral*. The former is either by co-action, force, and compulsion; or, by a sweet congruous efficacy upon the will. As to violence and compulsion, it is none of God's way and method, it being both against the nature of the will of man, which cannot be forced, and against the will of Jesus Christ, who loves to reign over a free and willing people, Psal. cx. 5. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Or, as that word may be rendered, they shall be *voluntarinesses*, as willing as willingness itself. It is not then by a forcible *co-action*, but in a *moral* way of persuasion, that God the Father draws men to Jesus Christ: He draws *with the bands of a man*, as they are called, Hos.

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\* *Ut ergo desideremus adiutorium, hoc quoque est gratiæ; ipsa namque incipit effundi, ut incipit posci.* Fulgen. Epist. 6. ad Theod.

xi. 14. i. e. in a way of rational conviction of the mind and conscience, and effectual persuasion of the will.

But yet by *moral persuasion*, we must not understand a simple and bare proposal or tender of Christ and grace, leaving it still at the sinner's choice, whether he will comply with it or no. \* For though God does not force the will contrary to its nature, yet there is a real internal efficacy implied in this *drawing*, or an immediate operation of the Spirit upon the heart and will, which, in a way congruous and suitable to its nature, takes away the rebellion and reluctance of it, and of unwilling, makes it willing to come to Christ. And, in this respect, we own a *physical*, as well as a *moral* influence of the Spirit in this work; and so scripture expresses it, Eph. i. 19, 20. "That we may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." Here is much more than a naked proposal made to the will; there is a *power* as well as a *tender*; greatness of power; and yet more, the exceeding greatness of his power; and this power hath an actual efficacy ascribed to it, he works upon our hearts and wills *according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead*. Thus he fulfils in us all the good pleasure of his will, and the work of faith with power, 2 Thess. i. 11.

And this is that which the schools call *gratia efficax*, effectual grace; and others *victrix delectatio*, an overcoming, conquering delight †: thus the work is carried on with a most efficacious sweetness. So that the liberty of the will is not infringed, whilst the obstinacy of the will is effectually subdued and over-ruled. For want of this, there are so many *almost Christians* in the world; hence are all those vanishing and imperfect works which come to nothing, called in scripture, a *morning cloud*, an *early dew*. Had this mighty power gone forth with the word, they had never vanished or perished like *embryos* as they do. So then, God draws not only in a *moral way*, by proposing a suitable object to the will, but also in a *physical way*, or by immediate powerful influence upon the will; not infringing the liberty of it, but yet infallibly and effectually persuading it to come to Christ.

*Secondly*, Next let us consider the marvellous way and manner in which the Lord draws the souls of poor sinners to Jesus Christ, and you will find he doth it,

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\* We do not see God preaching, writing, and teaching, yet we believe as if we saw these; for all truth hath a power of inclining the mind to assent; the greater truth, the greater power, and the greatest truth, the greatest power of all. But why then do not all believe the gospel? I answer, because all are not drawn by God. *Baptist. Mantuanus de patientia, lib. 3. cap. 2.*

† A certain heavenly sweetness. *Jansenius Aug. lib. iv. cap. 1.*

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| 1. Gradually,   |  | 4. Effectually, |
| 2. Congruously, |  | and             |
| 3. Powerfully,  |  | 5. Finally.     |

*First*, This blessed work is carried on by the Spirit gradually; bringing the soul step by step in the due method and order of the gospel to Christ; illumination, conviction, compunction, prepare the way to Christ; and then faith unites the soul to him: without humiliation there can be no faith, Matt. xxi. 32. "Ye repented not, that ye might believe." It is the burdensome sense of sin, that brings the soul to Christ for rest, Matt. xi. 28. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden." But without conviction there can be no compunction, no humiliation; he that is not convinced of his sin and misery, never bewails it, nor mourns for it. Never was there one tear of true repentance seen to drop from the eye of an unconvinced sinner.

And without illumination there can be no conviction; for what is conviction, but the application of the light which is in the understanding, or mind of a man, to his heart and conscience? Acts ii. 37. In this order, therefore, the Spirit (ordinarily) draws souls to Christ, he shines into their minds by illumination; applies that light to their consciences by effectual conviction; breaks and wounds their hearts for sin in compunction; and then moves the will to embrace and close with Christ in the way of faith for life and salvation.

These several steps are more distinctly discerned in some Christians than in others; they are more clearly to be seen in the *adult convert*, than in those that were drawn to Christ in their youth; in such as were drawn to him out of a state of profaneness, than in those that had the advantage of a pious education; but in this order the work is carried on ordinarily in all, however it differ in point of clearness in the one and in the other.

*Secondly*, He draws sinners to Christ congruously, and very agreeably to the nature and way of man, so he speaks, Hos. xi. 4. "I drew them with the \* cords of a man, with bands of love;" Not as beasts are drawn; but as men are inclined and wrought to compliance, by rational conviction of their judgments, and powerful persuasion of their wills: the minds of sinners are naturally blinded by ignorance, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. and their affections bewitched to their lusts, Gal. iii. 4. and whilst it is thus, no arguments or entreaties can possibly prevail to bring them off from the ways of sin to Christ.

The way therefore which the Lord takes to win and draw them

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\* *Funibus hominum (i. e.) humanis: non quibus trahi ac deduci solent boves.*

to Christ, is by rectifying their false apprehensions, and shewing them infinitely more good in Christ than in the creature and in their lusts; yea, by satisfying their understandings, that there is goodness enough in Jesus Christ, to whom he is drawing them.

*First*, Enough to out-bid all temporal good, which is to be denied for his sake.

*Secondly*, Enough to preponderate all temporal evils, which are to be suffered for his sake.

*First*, That there is more good in Christ than in all temporal good things, which we are to deny or forsake upon his account. This being once clearly and convincingly discovered to the understanding, the will is thereby prepared to quit all that which entangles and with-holds it from coming to Christ. There is no man that loves money so much, but he will willingly part with it, for that which is more worth to him than the sum he parts with to purchase it, Matth. xiii. 56, 46. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant-man, seeking goodly pearls, who when he hath found one pearl of great price, goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth it."

Such an invaluable *pearl* is Jesus Christ; infinitely more worth than all that a poor sinner hath to part with for him; and is a more real good than the creature. These are but vain shadows; Prov. xxiii. 5. Christ is a solid, substantial good: yea, he is, and by conviction appears to be a more suitable good than the creature: The world cannot justify and save, but Christ can. Christ is a more necessary good than the creature, which is only for our temporal conveniency, but he is of eternal necessity. He is a more durable good than any creature comfort is, or can be: "The fashion of this world passeth away," 1 Cor. vii. 13. But durable riches and righteousness are in him, Prov. viii. 17. Thus Christ appears in the day of conviction, infinitely more excellent than the world; he out-bids all the offers that the world can make; and this greatly forwards the work of drawing a soul to Jesus Christ.

*Secondly*, And (then to remove every thing out of the way to Christ) God discovers to the soul enough in him to preponderate, and much more than will recompense all the evils and sufferings it can endure for his sake.

It is true, they that close with Christ close with his cross also: they must expect to save no more but their souls by him. He tells us what we must trust to, Luke xiv. 26, 27. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters; yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

To read such a text as this, with such a comment upon it, as

Satan and our flesh can make, is enough to fright a man from Christ for ever. Nor is it possible by all the arguments in the world to draw any soul to Christ upon such terms as these, till the Lord convince it, that there is enough, and much more than enough in Jesus Christ to recompense all these sufferings and losses we endure for him.

But when the soul is satisfied that those sufferings are but *external* upon the vile *body*, but that the benefit which comes by Christ is *internal* in a man's own *soul*; these afflictions are but *temporal*, Rom. viii. 18. But Christ and his benefits are *eternal*: This must needs prevail with the will to come over to Christ, notwithstanding all the evils of suffering that accompany him, when the reality of this is discovered by the Lord, and the power of God goes along with these discoveries. Thus the Lord draws us in our own way, by rational convictions of the understanding, and allurements of the will.

And it is possible this may be the reason why some poor souls mis-judge the working of the Spirit of God upon themselves, thinking they never had that wonderful and mighty power of God in conversion, acting upon their hearts, because they find all that is done upon their hearts that way is done in the ordinary course and method of nature; They consider, compare, are convinced, and then resolved to chuse Christ and his ways; whereas they expect to feel some strange operations, that shall have the visible characters of the immediate power of God upon them, and such a power they might discern, if they would consider it as working in this way and method: but they cannot distinguish God's acts from their own, and that puzzles them.

*Thirdly*, The drawings of the Father are very *powerful*. "The arm of the Lord is revealed in this work," Isa. liii. 1. It was a powerful word indeed that made the light at first shine out of darkness, and no less power is required to make it shine into our hearts, 2 Cor. v. 14. That day in which the soul is made willing to come to Christ, is called, "the day of his power," Psal. cx. 3. The scripture expresseth the work of conversion by a threefold *metaphor*, viz.

That of a *resurrection* from the dead, Rom. iv. 4.

That of *creation* Eph. ii. 10. And

That of *victory* or *conquest*, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. All these set forth the infinite power of God in this work; for no less than Almighty Power is required to each of them, and if you strictly examine the distinct notions, you shall find the power of God more and more illustriously displayed in each of them.

To raise the dead, is the effect of Almighty Power; but then the resurrection supposeth pre-existent matter. In the work of

creation, there is no pre-existent matter; but then there is no opposition: That which is not, rebels not against the power which gives it being. But *victory* and *conquest* suppose *opposition*, all the power of corrupt nature arming itself, and fighting against God: but yet not able to frustrate his design.

Let the soul whom the Father draws, struggle and reluctate as much as it can, it shall come, yea, and come willingly too, when the drawing power of God is upon it\*. O the self-conflicts, the contrary resolves, with which the soul finds itself distracted, and rent asunder! The hopes and fears; the encouragements and discouragements; they will, and they will not: but victorious grace conquers all opposition at last. We find an excellent example of this in blessed † Augustin, who speaks of this very work, the drawing of his soul to Christ, and how he felt in that day two wills in himself, “one old, the other new; one carnal, the other spiritual;” and how in these their contrary motions and conflicts, he was “torn asunder in his own thoughts and resolutions, suffering that “unwillingly which he did willingly.” And certainly, if we consider how deep the soul is rooted by natural inclination, and long continued custom in sin, how extremely averse it is to the ways of strict godliness and mortification; how Satan, that invidious enemy, that strong man armed, fortifies the soul to defend his possession against Christ, and intrenches himself in the understanding, will, and affections, by deep-rooted prejudices against Christ and holiness, it is a wonder of wonders to see a soul quitting all its beloved lusts, and fleshly interests and endearments, and coming willingly under Christ’s yoke.

*Fourthly*, the drawings of God are very effectual: There is indeed a common and *ineffectual* work upon hypocrites and apostates, called in scripture a “morning cloud and early dew,” Hos. vi. 4. These may believe for a time, and fall away at last, Luke viii. 13. Their wills may be half won, they may be drawn half way to Christ, and return again. So it was with Agrippa, Acts xxvi. 28. *εἰ ὀλίγω με πείθεις*, within a very little thou persuadest me to be a Christian: But in God’s elected ones it is effectual: ‡ Their wills are not only *almost*, but *altogether* persuaded to embrace Christ, and quit the ways of sin, how pleasant, gainful, and dear soever they

\* A sweet moving from the word, and a powerful drawing on God’s part. For there is a certain kind of voluntary necessity. *Moulin. Amut. Armin.*

† *Ita due voluntates mee, una vetus, alia nova, illa carnalis, illa spiritualis confligebant inter se, atque discordando dissipabant animam meam—ibi enim magis jam non ego, quia, ex magna parte id patiebar invitus, quod faciebam volens.* Aug. confes. lib. 8. cap. 5.

‡ Suasion is the act of one using endeavours: persuasion the act of an efficient cause. He uses suasion, who gives advice; persuasion is the deed of him who determines a man to what he pleases. *Erasmus.*



have been to them. The Lord not only draws, but draws home those souls to Christ, John vi. 37. "All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me."

It is confessed, that in drawing home of the very elect to Christ, there may be, and frequently are, many pauses, stands, and demurs; they have convictions, affections, and resolutions stirring in them, which, like early blossoms, seem to be nipt and die away again. There is frequently, (in young ones especially), an hopeful appearance of grace; they make conscience of avoiding sins, and performing duties: they have sometimes great awakenings under the word, they are observed to retire for meditation and prayer; and delight to be in the company of Christians: and after all this, youthful lusts and vanities are found to stifle and choak these hopeful beginnings, and the work seems to stand, (it may be some years), at a pause; however, at last, the Lord makes it victorious over all opposition, and sets it home with power upon their hearts.

*Fifthly*, To conclude, those whom the Father draws to Christ, he draws them finally and for ever. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance," Rom. xi. 29. they are so, as to God the giver; he never repents, that he hath called his people into the fellowship of his Son Christ Jesus: and they are so on the believer's part; he is never sorry, whatever he afterwards meets with, that he is come to Christ.

There is a time when Christians are drawn to Christ, but there shall never be a time in which they shall be drawn away from Christ, John x. 29. There is no plucking them out of the Father's hand. It was common to a proverb, in the primitive times, when they would express an impossibility, to say, "You may as soon draw a Christian from Christ, as do it." When Christ asked that question of the disciples, "Will ye also go away?" Lord, (said Peter, in the name of them all), to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life," John vi. 68. They who are thus drawn, do with full purpose of heart, cleave unto the Lord. And thus of the manner and quality of effectual drawing.

*Thirdly*, In the last place, I am to evince the impossibility of coming to Christ without the Father's drawings; and this will evidently appear upon the consideration of these two particulars.

*First*, The difficulty of this work is above all the power of nature to overcome.

*Secondly*, That little power and ability that nature hath, it will never employ to such a purpose as this, till the drawing power of God be upon the will of a sinner.

*First*, If all the power of nature were employed in this design,

yet such are the difficulties of this work, that it surmounts all the abilities of nature. This the scripture very plainly affirms, Eph. ii. 8. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, "it is the gift of God." To think of Christ is easy, but to come to Christ, is to nature impossible. To send forth cold and ineffectual wishes to Christ we may, but to bring Christ and the soul together, requires the Almighty Power of God, Eph. i. 19. The grace of faith by which we come to Christ, is as much the free gift of God, as Christ himself, who is the object of faith, Phil. i. 29. "To you "it is freely given to believe." And this will easily appear to your understandings, if you do but consider

The { Subject,  
Act, and  
Enemies } of this work of faith, or coming to Christ.

*First*, Consider the subject of faith in which it is wrought; or what it is that is drawn to Christ: It is the heart of a sinner which is naturally as indisposed for this work, as the wood which Elijah laid in order upon the altar was to catch fire, when he had poured so much water upon it, as did not only wet the wood, but also filled up the trench round about it, 1 Kings xviii. 33. For it is naturally a dark, blind, and ignorant heart, Job xi. 12. And such an heart can never believe, till he that commanded the light to shine out of darkness do shine into it, 2 Cor. iv. 6.

Nor will it avail any thing to say, though man be born in darkness and ignorance, yet afterwards he may acquire knowledge in the use of means, as we see many natural men do to a very high degree: For this is not that light that brings the soul to Christ, yea, this natural unsanctified light blinds the soul, and prejudices it more against Christ than ever it was before, 1 Cor. i. 21, 26.

As it is a blind, ignorant heart, so it is a selfish heart by nature: All its designs and aims terminate in self; this is the centre and weight of the soul; no righteousness but its own is sought after, that, or none, Rom. x. 3. Now, for a soul to renounce and deny self, in all its forms, modes, and interests, as every one doth that cometh to Christ; to disclaim and deny natural, moral, and religious self, and come to Christ as a poor, miserable, wretched, empty creature; to live upon his righteousness for ever, is as supernatural and wonderful, as to see the hills and mountains start from their bases and centres, and fly like wandering atoms in the air.

Nay, this heart which is to come to Christ, is not only dark and selfish, but full of pride. O, it is a desperate proud heart by nature, it cannot submit to come to Christ, as Benhadad's servants came to the king of Israel, with sackcloth on their loins, and ropes upon their heads. To take guilt, shame, and confusion

of face to ourselves, and acknowledge the righteousness of God in our eternal damnation; to come to Christ naked and empty, as one that justifies the ungodly. I say, nature left to itself, would as soon be damned as do this; the proud heart can never come to this, till the Lord hath humbled and broken it by his power.

*Secondly*, Let us take the act of faith into consideration also, as it is here described by the soul's coming to Jesus Christ; and you will find a necessity of the Father's drawings; for this evidently implies, that which is against the stream and current of corrupt nature, and that which is above the sphere and capacity of the most refined and accomplished nature.

*First*, It is against the stream and current of our corrupt nature to come to Christ. For let us but consider the term from which the soul departs, when it comes to Christ. In that day it leaves all its lusts, and ways of sin, how pleasant, sweet, and profitable soever they have been unto it, Isa. lv. 7. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord." Way and thoughts, i. e. both the practice of, and delight he had in sin, must be forsaken, and the outward and inward man must be cleansed from it. Now there are in the bosoms of unregenerate men such darling lusts, that have given them so much practical and speculative pleasure, which have brought so much profit to them, which have been born and bred up with them; and which, upon all these accounts, are endeared to their souls to that degree, that it is easier for them to die, than to forsake them; yea, nothing is more common among such men, than to venture eternal damnation, rather than suffer a separation from their sins.

And which is yet more difficult in coming to Christ, the soul forsakes not only its sinful self, but its righteous self, i. e. not only its worst sins, but its best performances, accomplishments, and excellencies. Now this is one of the greatest straits that nature can be put to. Righteousness by works was the first liquor that ever was put into the vessel, and it still retains the tang and savour of it, and will to the end of the world, Rom. x. 3. "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." *οχι υποβουλησαν*, they have not submitted. To come naked and empty to Christ, and receive all from him as a free gift, is, to proud corrupt nature, the greatest abasement and submission in the world.

Let the gospel furnish its table with the richest and costliest dainties that ever the blood of Christ purchased, such is the pride of nature, that it disdains to taste them, except it may also pay for the same. If the old hive be removed from the place where it

was wont to stand, the bees will come home to the old place, yea, and many of them you shall find will die there, rather than go to the hive, though it stand in a far better place than it did before. Just so stands the case with men. The *hive* is removed, i. e. we are not to expect righteousness as Adam did, by obeying and working, but by believing and coming to Christ; but nature had as soon be damned as do this: It still goes about to establish its own righteousness.

Virtues, duties, and moral excellencies, these are the ornaments of nature; here is nature set off in its sumptuous attire, and rich embellishments, and now to renounce it, disclaim and contemn it, as dross and dung, in comparison of Christ, as believers do, Phil. iii. 8. this, I say, is against the grain of nature. We reckon it the strange effect of self-denial in Mahomet the Great\*, who being so enamoured with his beautiful Irene, would be persuaded, upon reasons of state, with his own hand to strike off her head: and that even when she appeared in all her rich ornaments before him, rather like such a goddess, as the poets in their ecstasies use to feign, than a mortal creature. And yet certainly this is nothing to that self-denial which is exercised in our coming to Christ.

*Secondly*, And if we look to the other term to which the soul moves, we shall find it acting as much above the sphere and ability of improved nature, as here it acts and moves against the stream and current of corrupted nature: for how wonderful and supernatural an adventure is that, which the soul makes in the day that it comes to Jesus Christ.

Surely, for any poor soul to venture itself for ever upon Jesus Christ whom it never saw, nay, upon Christ, whose very existence its own unbelief calls in question whether he be or no: and that when it is even weighed down to the dust, with the burdensome sense of its own vileness and total unworthiness, feeling nothing in itself but sin and misery, the workings of death and fears of wrath: to go to Christ, of whose pardoning grace and mercy it never had any the least experience, nor can find any ground of hope in itself that it shall be accepted; this is as much above the power of nature, as it is for a stone to rise from the earth, and fix itself among the stars. Well might the apostle ascribe it to that Almighty Power which raised up Christ from the dead, Eph. i. 19, 20. If the Lord draw not the soul, and that omnipotently, it can never come from itself to Christ. And yet farther,

*Thirdly*, The natural impossibility of coming to Christ, will more clearly appear, if we consider the enemies to faith, or what blocks are rolled by Satan and his instruments into the way to Christ:

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\* Knolle's History of the Turks.

to mention, in this place, no more but our own carnal reason, as it is armed and managed by the subtilty of Satan, what a wonder is it that any soul should come to Christ?

These are the strong holds, (mentioned 2 Cor. x. 4.) out of which those objections, fears, and discouragements sally, by which the soul is fiercely assaulted in the way to Christ.

Wilt thou forsake all thy pleasures, merry company, and sensible comforts, to live a sad, retired, pensive life? Wilt thou beggar and undo thyself, let go all thy comforts in hand, for an hope of that which thine eyes never saw, nor hast thou any certainty that it is any more than a fancy! Wilt thou that hast lived in reputation and credit all thy life, now become the scorn and contempt of the world? Thinkest thou thyself able to live such a strict, severe, mortified, and self-denying life, as the word of God requires? And what if persecution should arise, (as thou mayest expect it will,) canst thou forsake father and mother, wife and children, yea, and give up thine own life too, to a cruel and bloody death! be advised better, before thou resolve in so important a matter. What thinkest thou of thy forefathers, that lived and died in that way thou art now living? Art thou wiser than they? Do not the generality of men walk in the same paths thou hast hitherto walked in? If this way lead to hell, as thou fearest it may, think then how many millions of men must perish as well as thyself: and is such a supposition consistent with the gracious and merciful nature of God? Besides, think what sort of people those are, unto whom thou art about to join thyself in this new way? Are there not to be found among them many things to discourage thee, and cool thy zeal? They are generally of the lower and baser sort of men, poor and despicable: Seest thou not, though their profession be holy, how earthly, carnal, proud, factious, and hypocritical, many of them are found to be! And doubtless, the rest are like them, though their hypocrisy be not yet discovered.

O what stands and demurs, what hesitations and doubts, is the soul clogged with in its way to Christ! But yet none of these can withhold and detain the soul when the Father draws: Greater then is he that is in us, than he that is in the world. And thus you see the nature, manner, and efficacy of divine drawings, and how impossible it is for any soul to come to Christ without them.

The inferences and improvements of the point follow.

*Inference 1. How deeply and thoroughly is the nature of man corrupted, and what an enemy is every man to his own happiness, that he must be drawn to it? John v. 40. "You will not come unto me, that ye might have life."*

Life is desirable in every man's eyes, and eternal life is the most

excellent: yet, in this, the world is rather agreed to die and perish for ever than come to Christ for life. Had Christ told us of fields and vineyards, sheep and oxen, gold and silver, honours and sensual pleasures, who would not have come to him for these? But to tell of mortification, self-denial, strictness of life, and sufferings for his sake, and all this for an happiness to be enjoyed in the world to come, nature will never like such a proposition as this.

You see where it sticks, not in a simple inability to believe, but in an inability complicated with enmity; they neither can come, nor will come to Christ. It is true, all that do come to Christ, come willingly; but thanks be to the grace of God, that hath freed and persuaded the will, else they never had been willing to come. Who ever found his own heart first stir and move towards Christ? How long may we wait and expect before we shall feel our hearts naturally burn with desires after, and love to Jesus Christ?

This aversion of the will and affections from God is one of the main roots of original sin. No argument can prevail to bring the soul to Christ, till this be mastered and overpowered by the Father's drawing. In our motions to sin we need restraining, but in all our motions to Christ we as much need drawing. He that comes to heaven may say, Lord, if I had had mine own way and will, I had never come here: if thou hadst not drawn me, I should never have come to thee. O the riches of the grace of God! Oh unparalleled mercy and goodness! not only to prepare such a glory as this for an unworthy soul, but to put forth the exceeding greatness of thy power, afterwards to draw an unwilling soul to the enjoyment of it.

*Infer. 2. What enemies are they to God and the souls of men, that do all they can to discourage and hinder the conversion of men to Christ? God draws forward, and these do all that in them lies to draw backward, i. e. to prejudice and discourage them from coming to Jesus Christ in the way of faith: this is a direct opposition to God, and a plain confederacy with the devil.*

O how many have been thus discouraged in their way to Christ by their carnal relations, I cannot say friends! Their greatest enemies have been the men of their own house. These have pleaded (as if the devil had hired and fee'd them) against the everlasting welfare of their own flesh. O cruel parents, brethren, and sisters, that jeer, frown, and threaten, where they should encourage, assist, and rejoice! Such parents are the devil's children. Satan chuses such instruments as you are, above all others, for this work: he knows what influence and authority you have upon them, and over them; and what fear, love, and dependence they have for

you, and upon you; so that none in all the world are like to manage the design of their damnation so effectually, as you are like to do.

Will you neither come to Christ yourselves, nor suffer your dear relations that would? Had you rather find them in the ale-house than in the closet? Did you instrumentally give them their being, and will you be the instruments of ruining for ever those beings they had from you? Did you so earnestly desire children, so tenderly nurse and provide for them; take such delight in them; and, after all this, do what in you lies to damn and destroy them! If these lines shall fall into any such hands, O that God would set home the conviction and sense of this horrid evil upon their hearts.

And no less guilty of this sin are scandalous and loose professors, who serve to furnish the devil with the greatest arguments he hath to dissuade men from coming to Christ; it is your looseness and hypocrisy by which he hopes to scare others from Christ. It is said, Cant. ii. 7. "I charge you by the roes and hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my beloved till he please."

Roes and hinds, like young converts and comers towards Christ, are shy and timorous creatures, that start at the least sound, or yelp of a dog, and fly away. Take heed what you do in this case, lest you go down to hell under the guilt of damning more souls than your own.

*Infer. 3. Learn hence the true ground and reason of those strange, amazing, and supernatural effects, that you behold and so admire in the world, as often as you see sinners forsaking their pleasant, profitable corruptions and companions, and embracing the ways of Christ, godliness, and mortification.*

It is said, 1 Pet. iv. 4. "They think it strange, that you run not with them into the same excess of riot." The word is *εν ω ξενιζονται*, they stand at a gaze, as the hen that hath hatched partridge eggs doth, when she sees them take the wing and fly away from her.

Beloved, it is the world's wonder to see their companions in sin forsake them; those that were once as profane and vain as themselves, it may be more, to forsake their society, retire into their closets, mourn for sin, spend their time in meditation and prayer, embrace the severest duties, and content to run the greatest hazards in the world for Christ; but they see not that Almighty Power that draws them, which is too strong for all the sinful ties and engagements in the world to withhold and detain them.

A man would have wondered to see Elisha leave the oxen, and run after Elijah, saying, "Let me go, I pray thee, and kiss my father and mother, and then I will follow thee; when Elijah had said nothing to persuade him to follow him only as he passed

by him, he cast his mantle on him, 1 Kings x. 19, 20. Surely that soul whom God draws, must needs leave all and follow Christ, for the power of God resteth on it. All carnal ties and engagements to sin break and give way, when the Father draws the soul to Christ in the day of his power.

*Infer. 4. Is this the first spring of spiritual motion after Christ? Learn then from hence, how it comes to pass that so many excellent sermons and powerful persuasions are ineffectual, and cannot draw and win one soul to Christ. Surely it is because ministers draw alone; and the special saving power of God goes not forth at all times alike with their endeavours.*

Paul was a chosen vessel, filled with a greater measure of gifts and graces by the Spirit, than any that went before him or followed after him; and, as his talents, so his diligence in improving them was beyond any recorded example we read of amongst men; "He rather flew like a seraphim, than travelled upon his Master's "errand about the world\*." Apollos was an eloquent preacher, and mighty in the scriptures, yet Paul is "nothing, and Apollos "nothing; but God that gives the increase," 1 Cor. iii. 7. We are too apt to admire men, yea, and the best are but too apt to go forth in the strength of their own parts and preparations; but God secures his own glory, and magnifies his own power, frequently, in giving success to weaker endeavours, and men of lower abilities, when he withhold it from men of more raised, refined, and excellent gifts and abilities.

It is our great honour, who are the ministers of the gospel, that we are συνεργοι, *workers together with God*, 1 Cor. iii. 9. in his strength we can prevail; "the weapons of our warfare are mighty "through God," 2 Cor. x. 4. But if his presence, blessing, and assistance be not with us, we are nothing, we can do nothing.

If we prepare diligently, pray heartily, preach zealously, and our hearers go as they came, without any spiritual effects and fruits of our labours, what shall we say, but as Martha said to Christ, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died:" Had the Spirit of God gone forth with his especial efficacy and blessing, with this prayer, or that sermon, these souls had not departed dead and senseless from under it.

*Infer. 5. Doth all success and efficacy depend upon the Father's drawings? Let none then despair of their unregenerate and carnal relations, over whose obstinacy they do, and have cause to mourn.*

What, if they have been as many years under the preaching of the gospel, as the poor man lay at the pool of Bethesda, and hitherto to no purpose? A time may come at last, (as it did for him) when

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\* Ως πτηνός τῆν οὐρανὸν, καὶ ὡς ἀσωμάτου διεδύαμε. Chrysost.



the Spirit of God may move upon the waters; I mean put a quickening and converting power into the means, and then the desire of your souls for them shall be fulfilled.

It may be you have poured out many prayers and tears to the Lord for them; you have cried for them as Abraham for his son, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" O that this poor husband, wife, child, brother, or sister, might live in thy sight; and still you see them continue carnal, dead, and senseless: Well, but yet give not up your hopes, nor cease your pious endeavours, the time may come when the Father may draw as well as you, and then you shall see them quit all, and come to Christ; and nothing shall hinder them. They are now drawn away of their own lusts; they are easily drawn away by their sinful companions; but when God draws, none of these shall withdraw them from the Lord Jesus. What is their ignorance, obstinacy, and hardness of heart, before that mighty power that subdues all things to itself? Go therefore to the Lord by prayer for them, and say, Lord, I have laboured for my poor relations in vain, I have spent my exhortations to little purpose; the work is too difficult for me, I can carry it no farther, but thou canst: O let thy power go forth; they shall be willing in the day of thy power.

*Infer. 6. If none can come to Christ except the Father draw them, then surely none can be drawn from Christ except the Father leave them: That power which at first drew them to Christ can secure and establish them in Christ to the end.* John x. 29. "My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

When the power of God at first draws us out of our natural state to Christ, it finds us not only *impotent* but *obstinate*, not only unable, but unwilling to come; and yet this power of God prevails against all opposition; how much more is it able to preserve and secure us, when his fear is put into our inward parts, so that we dare not depart, we have no will to depart from him? Well then if the world say, I will ensnare thee; if the devil say, I will destroy thee; if the flesh say, I will betray thee; yet thou art secure and safe, as long as God hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5.

*Infer. 7. Let this engage you to a constant attendance upon the ordinances of God, in which this drawing power of God is sometimes put forth upon the hearts of men.*

Beloved, there are certain seasons in which the Lord comes nigh to men in the ordinances and duties of his worship; and we know not at what time the Lord cometh forth by his Spirit upon this design: he many times comes in an hour when we think not of him! "I am found of them that sought me not," Isa. lxxv. 1. It

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.*

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## 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.*

**I**N 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.