

have seen so much of the evil that is in it, and the danger that follows it; you that have had such inward terrors and fears of spirit about it, when that terrible representation was made you, will be loth to feel those gripes and distresses of conscience again, for the best enjoyment in this world.

Blessed be God if any word has been brought home to our hearts, which hath been instrumental to bring us to Christ!

SERMON XXII.

The Teachings of God opened, in their Nature and Necessity.

JOHN vi. 45.

It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

HOW necessary to our union with Jesus Christ, the application of the law, or coming home of the commandment to the heart of a sinner is, we have heard in the last discourse; and how impossible it is, either for the commandment to come to us, or for us to come to Christ without illumination and instruction from above, you shall hear in this.

This scripture hath much of the mind of God in it; and he that is to open it, had need himself to be taught of God. In the foregoing verses, Christ offers himself as the bread of life unto the souls of men: against this doctrine they oppose their carnal reason, ver. 41, 42. Christ strikes at the root of all their cavils and objections in his reply, ver. 43, 44. "Murmur not among yourselves: no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him;" q. d. you slight me because you do not know me; you do not know me because you are not taught of God; of these divine teachings, the prophets of old have spoken, and what they foretold is at this day fulfilled in our sight; so many as are taught of God, and no more, come unto me in the way of faith: it is impossible to come without the teachings of God, ver. 44. It is as impossible not to come, or to miscarry in their coming unto me, under the influence of these divine teachings, ver. 45.

The words read, consist of two parts, viz.

1. An allegation out of the prophets.
2. The application thereof made by Christ.

First, An allegation out of the prophets: "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God." The places in

the prophets to which Christ seems here to refer, are, Isa. liv. 13. "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord;" and, Jer. xxxi. 34. "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." These promises contain the great blessings of the new covenant, viz. Divine instruction and heavenly illumination, without which no man can obtain an interest in the new covenant.

Secondly, We have here the application of these testimonies out of the prophets, made by Christ himself; "Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, come unto me."

In which words we have both the necessity and the efficacy of these divine teachings; without them no man can come, and under them no man can miscarry. The words being fitly rendered, and the sense obvious,

The notes are,

Doct. 1. *That the teachings of God are absolutely necessary to every man that cometh unto Christ, in the way of faith.*

Doct. 2. *No man can miss of Christ, or miscarry in the way of faith, that is under the special instructions and teachings of the Father.*

Doct. 1. *That the teachings of God are absolutely necessary to every man that cometh unto Christ, in the way of faith.*

Of the necessity of divine teaching, in order to believing, the apostle speaks, in Eph. iv. 20, 21. "But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that you have heard him, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus;" i. e. Your faith must needs be effectual, both to the reformation of your lives, and your perseverance in the ways of holiness, if it be such a faith as is begotten and introduced into your hearts by divine teachings*. Now, in the explication of this point, I shall speak distinctly to the following enquiries.

1. How doth God teach men, or what is imported in our being taught of God?

2. What those special lessons are, which all believers do hear, and are taught of God?

* They who believe, by means of the preacher speaking to them outwardly, hear and learn inwardly of the Father; they who believe not, hear outwardly, but not inwardly. *Aug. on Predest. chap. 8.*

3. In what manner doth God teach these things to men in the day of their conversion to Christ?

4. What influence God's teaching hath upon our believing?

5. Why it is impossible for any man to believe, or come to Christ without the Father's teachings.

First, How doth God teach men, or what is imported in our being taught of God? To this I will speak both negatively and positively, for your clearer apprehension of the sense and meaning of the Spirit of God in this phrase.

First, The teaching of God, and our hearing and learning of him, is not to be understood of any extraordinary visional appearances, or oraculous and immediate voice of God to men: God indeed hath so appeared unto some, Numb. xii. 8. Such voices have been heard from heaven, but now these extraordinary ways are ceased, Heb. i. 1, 2. and we are no more to expect them; we may sooner meet with satanical delusions than divine illuminations in this way. I remember, the learned Gerson tells us that the devil once appeared to an holy man in prayer, personating Christ, and saying, I am come in person to visit thee, for thou art worthy. But he with both hands shut his eyes, saying, *Nolo hic Christum videre, satis est ipsum in gloria videre*; i. e. I will not see Christ here; it is enough for me to see him in glory. We are now to attend only to the voice of the Spirit in the scriptures: this is a more sure word than any voice from heaven, 2 Pet. i. 19.

Secondly, The teachings of God are not to be understood as opposite unto, or exclusive of the teachings of men. Divine teachings do not render ministerial teachings in vain or useless. Paul was taught of God, Gal. i. 12. and his conversion had something extraordinary in it, yet the ministry of Ananias was used and honoured in that work, Acts ix. 4, 17. compared. Divine teachings do indeed excel, but not exclude human teachings. I know that scripture, Jer. xxxi. 24. to which Christ here refers, is objected against the necessity of a standing ministry in the church, "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother," &c. But if those words should be understood absolutely, they would not only overthrow all public ordinances of God's own institution, 1 Cor. xii. 28. and deprive us of a principal fruit of Christ's ascension, Eph. iv. 11. 12. but, for the same reason, would destroy all private instructions and fraternal admonitions also. Such a sense would make the prophet to contradict the apostle, and spoil the consent and harmony of the scriptures: the sense thereof cannot be negative, but comparative; it shews the excellency of divine, but doth not destroy the usefulness of human teachings; *Subordinata non pugnant*. The teachings of men are

made effectual by the teachings of the Spirit; and the Spirit in his teachings will use and honour the ministry of man.

Thirdly, But to speak positively, the teachings of God are nothing else but that spiritual and heavenly light, by which the Spirit of God shineth into the hearts of men, to give them “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. iv. 6. And though this be the proper work of the Spirit, yet it is called the teachings of the Father, because the Spirit who enlightens us is commissioned and sent by the Father so to do, John xiv. 26. Now these teachings of the Spirit of God, consist in two things, *viz.* in his,

1. Sanctifying impressions.

2. Gracious assistances.

First, In his sanctifying impressions or regenerating work upon the soul, by virtue whereof it receives marvellous light and insight into spiritual things; and that not only as illumination is the first act of the Spirit in our conversion, Col. iii. 10. but as his whole work of sanctification is illuminative and instructive to the converted soul, 1 John ii. 27. “The anointing which you have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you.” The meaning is that sanctification gives the soul experience of those mysterious things which are contained in the scriptures, and that experience is the most excellent key to unlock and open those deep scripture-mysteries; no knowledge is so distinct, so clear, so sweet, as that which the heart communicates to the head, John vii. 17. “If any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.” A man that never read the nature of love in books of philosophy, nor the transports and extasies thereof in history, may yet truly describe and express it by the sensible motions of that passion in his own soul; yea, he that hath felt, much better understands, than he that hath only read or heard. O what a light doth spiritual sense and experience cast upon a great part of the scriptures! for indeed sanctification is the very copy or transcript of the word of God upon the heart of man; Jer. xxxi. 33. “I will write my law in their hearts:” so that the scriptures and the experiences of believers, by this means answer to each other, as the lines and letters in the press answer to the impressions made upon the paper; or the figures in the wax, to the engravings in the seal. When a sanctified man reads David’s psalms, or Paul’s epistles, how is he surprized with wonder to find the very workings of his own heart so exactly decyphered and fully expressed there! O, saith he, this is my very case, these holy men speak what my heart hath felt.

Secondly, The Spirit of God teacheth us, as by his sanctifying impressions, so by his gracious assistances, which he gives us *pro re*

nata, as our need requires, Mat. x. 19. "It shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak, John xiv. 26. "He shall bring all things to your remembrance: he assisteth both the understanding in due apprehensions of truth, and the heart in the spiritual improvements of truth. And so much briefly of the first particular.

Secondly, In the next place we are to enquire what those special truths are which believers hear and learn of the Father, when they come to Christ.

And there are divers great and necessary truths, wherein the Spirit enlightens men in that day. I cannot say they are all taught every believer in the same degree and order; but it is certain they are taught of God such lessons as these are, which they never so understood before.

Lesson 1. First, They are taught of God *that there is abundantly more evil in their sinful natures and actions, than ever they discerned or understood before*: "the Spirit when he cometh shall convince the world of sin," John xvi. 8, 9. Men had a general notion of sin before; so had Paul, when a Pharisee: but how vastly different were his apprehensions of sin, from all that ever he had in his natural state, when God brought home the commandment to his very heart? There is a threefold knowledge of sin, *viz. traditional, discursive, and intuitive*. The first is the more rude and illiterate multitude. The second is more rational and knowing men. The third is only found in those that are enlightened and taught of God. And there is as great a difference betwixt this intuitive knowledge of sin, whereby God makes a soul to discern the nature and evil of it in a spiritual light, and the two former, as there is betwixt the sight of a *painted lion* upon the wall, and the sight of a *living lion* that meets us roaring in the way. The intuitive sight of sin is another thing than men imagine it to be: it is such a sight as wounds a man to the very heart, Acts ii. 37. for God doth not only shew a man this or that particular sin, but in the day of conviction, he sets all his sins in order before him, Psal. l. 21. yea, the Lord shews him the sinfulness of his nature as well as practice. Conviction digs to the root, shews and lays open that original corruption, from whence the innumerable evils of the life do spring, James i. 14, 15. and which is yet more, the Lord shews the man whom he is bringing to Christ the sinful and miserable estate which he is in by reason of both, John xvi. 9. And now all excuses, pleas and defences of sin are gone, he shews him "how their iniquities have exceeded," Job xxxvi. 8, 9. exceeded in number, and in aggravations of sinfulness; exceeding many, and exceeding vile; no such sinner in the world as I; can such sins as mine be pardoned? The greatness of God greatens my

sin; the holiness of God makes it beyond measure vile; the goodness of God puts unconceivable weight into my guilt. O, can there be mercy for such a wretch as I! If there be, then there will not be a greater example of the riches of free grace in all the world than I am. Thus God teacheth the evil of sin.

Lesson 2. Secondly, *God teacheth the soul whom he is bringing to Christ, what that wrath and misery are which hang over it in the threatenings because of sin.* Scripture-threatenings were formerly slighted, now the soul trembles at them: They once apprehended themselves safe enough, Isa. xxviii. 15. Psal. l. 21. They thought, because they heard no more of their sins after the commission of them, that therefore they should never hear more; that the effect had been as transient a thing as the act of sin was; or if trouble must follow sin, they should speed no worse than others, the generality of the world being in the same case; and besides, they hoped to find God more merciful than sour and precise preachers represented him. But when a light from God enters into the soul, to discover the nature of God, and of sin, then it sees that whatever wrath is treasured up for sinners in the dreadful threatenings of the law, is but the just demerit of sin, the recompence that is meet: "The wages of sin is death," Rom. vi. 23. The *penal* evil of damnation is but equal to the *moral* evil of sin: So that in the whole ocean of God's eternal wrath, there is not one drop of injustice; yea, the soul doth not only see the justice of God in its eternal damnation, but the wonderful mercy of God in the suspension thereof so long. O, what is it that hath withheld God from damning me all this while! How is it that I am not in hell! Now do the fears and awful apprehensions of eternity seize the soul, and the worst of sensitive creatures is supposed to be in a better condition than such a soul. Never do men tremble at the threatenings of God, nor rightly apprehend the danger of their condition, until sin, and wrath, and the wages of sin be discovered to them by a light from heaven.

Lesson 3. Thirdly, *God teaches the soul whom he brings to Christ that deliverance from sin, and wrath to come, is the greatest and most important business it hath to do in this world.* Acts xvi. 30. "What must I do to be saved?" *q. d.* O direct me to some effectual way (if there be any) to secure my poor wretched soul from the wrath of God. Sin, and the wrath that follows it, are things that swallow up the souls, and drink up the very spirits of men: Their thoughts never conversed with things of more confessed truth and awful solemnity: These things float not upon their fancies as matters of mere speculation, but settle upon their hearts day and night, as the deepest concernment in all the world: They now

know much better than any mere scholar, the deep sense of that text, Matth. xvi. 26. "What is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Five things shew how weighty the thoughts and cares of salvation are upon their hearts.

First, Their continual thoughtfulness and solicitude about these things: if earthly affairs divert them for a while, yet they are still returning again to this solemn business.

Secondly, Their careful redeeming of time, and saving the very moments thereof to employ about this work: Those that were prodigal of hours and days before, look upon every moment of time as a precious and valuable thing now.

Thirdly, Their fears and tremblings lest they should miscarry, and come short at last, shew how much their hearts are set upon this work.

Fourthly, Their inquisitiveness and readiness to embrace all the help and assistance that they can get from others, evidently discover this to be their great design.

Fifthly, and *lastly*, The little notice they take of all other troubles and afflictions, tells you their hearts are taken up about greater things. This is the third lesson they are taught of God.

Lesson 4. Fourthly, *The Lord teaches the soul that is coming to Christ, that though it be their duty to strive to the uttermost for salvation; yet all strivings, in their own strength, are insufficient to obtain it.* This work is quite above the power of nature: "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." The soul is brought to a full conviction of this, by the discovery of the heinous nature of sin, and of the rigour and severity of the law of God. No repentance nor reformation can possibly amount unto a just satisfaction, nor are they within the compass and power of our will. It was a saying that Dr. Hill often used to his friends, speaking about the power of man's will; he would lay his hand upon his breast, and say, "Every man hath something here to confute the Arminian doctrine." This fully takes off the soul from all expectations of deliverance that way; it cannot but strive, that is its duty; but to expect deliverance, as the purchase of its own strivings, that would be its sin.

Lesson 5. Fifthly, *The soul that is coming to Christ by faith, is taught of God, that though the case it is in be sad, yet it is not desperate and remediless:* There is a door of hope, a way of escape for poor sinners, how black and fearful soever their own thoughts and apprehensions are; there is usually at this time a dawning light of hope in the soul that is under the Father's teachings; and this com-

monly arises from the general and indefinite encouragements and promises of the gospel, which, though they do not presently secure the soul from danger, yet they prop and mightily support it against despair: For though they be not certain that deliverance shall be the event of their trouble; yet the possibilities, and much more the probabilities of deliverance are a great stay to a sinking soul. The troubled soul cannot but acknowledge itself to be in a far better case than the damned are, whose hopes are perished from the Lord, and a death-pang of despair hath seized their consciences. And herein the merciful and compassionate nature of God is eminently discovered, in hasting to open the door of hope, almost as soon as the evil of sin is opened. It was not long after Adam's eyes were opened to see his misery, that God opened Christ, his remedy, in that first promise, Gen. iii. 15. And the same method of grace is still continued to his elect offspring, Gal. iii. 21, 22. Rom. iii. 21, 22. These supporting hopes the Lord sees necessary to encourage industry in the use of means; it is hope that sets all the world awork; if all hope were cut off, every soul would sit down in a sullen despair, yielding itself for hell.

Lesson 6. Sixthly, *The Lord teaches those that come to Christ, that there is a fulness of saving power in him, whereby any soul that duly receives him, may be perfectly delivered from all its sin and misery,* Heb. vii. 25. Col. i. 19. Matth. xxviii. 18. This is a great and necessary point for every believer to learn and hear from the Father; for unless the soul be satisfied of the fulness of Christ's saving power, it will never move forward towards him; and herein also the goodness of God is most sweetly and seasonably manifested; for, at this time, it is the great design of Satan to fill the soul with despairing thoughts of a pardon; but all those black and heart-sinking thoughts vanish before the discovery of Christ's all-sufficiency. Now the sin-sick soul saith with that woman, Matth. ix. 21. "If I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be healed." How deep soever the guilt and stain of sin be, yet the soul which acknowledges the infinite dignity of the blood of Christ, the offering it up to God in our room, and God's declared satisfaction in it, must needs be satisfied that Christ is "able to save, to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him;" which is the sixth lesson believers are taught of God.

Lesson 7. Seventhly, *Every man that cometh to Christ is taught of God, that he can never reap any benefit by the blood of Christ, except he have union with the person of Christ,* 1 John v. 12. Eph. iv. 16. 'Twas when men fondly thought nothing was necessary to their salvation but the death of Christ; but now the Lord shews them that their union with Christ by faith is as necessary, in the place of an *applying cause*, as the death of Christ is, in the place of

a *meritorious cause* : The *purchase* of salvation is an act of Christ *without us*, whilst we are yet sinners ; the *application* thereof is by a work wrought *within us*, when we are believers, Col. i. 27. In the purchase all the elect are redeemed together by way of price ; in the application they are actually redeemed, each person, by way of power. Look, as the sin of the first Adam could never hurt us, unless he had been our head by way of generation ; so the righteousness of Christ can never benefit us, unless he be our head by way of regeneration. In teaching this lesson, the Lord, in mercy, unteaches and blots out that dangerous principle, by which the greatest part of the christianized world do perish, viz. that the death of Christ is, in itself, effectual to salvation, though a man be never regenerated or united to him by saving faith.

Lesson 8. Eighthly, *God teaches the soul, whom he is bringing to Christ, that whatever is necessary to be wrought in us, or done by us, in order to our union with Christ, is to be obtained from him in the way of prayer*, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. And it is observable, that the soul no sooner comes under the effectual teachings of God, but the Spirit of prayer begins to breathe in it, Acts ix. 8. "Behold, he prayeth." Those that were taught to pray by men before, are now taught of the Lord to pray : 'To pray did I say ? yea, and to pray fervently too, as men concerned for their eternal happiness ; to pray not only with others, but to pour out our souls before the Lord in secret ; for their hearts are as bottles full of new wine, which must vent or break. Now the soul returns upon its God often in the same day ; now it can express its burdens and wants, in words and groans which the Spirit teacheth. They pray, and will not give over praying, till Christ come with complete salvation.

Lesson 9. Ninthly, *All that come to Christ are taught of God to abandon their former ways and companions in sin, as ever they expect to be received unto mercy*, Isa. lv. 7. 2 Cor. v. 17. Sins that were profitable and pleasant, that were as the right hand, and right eye, must now be cut off. Companions in sin, who were once the delight of their lives, must now be cast off. Christ saith to the soul concerning these, as he said in another case, John xviii. 8. "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." And the soul saith unto Christ, as it is, Psal. cxix. 115. "Depart from me, ye evil-doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God." And now pleasant sins and companions in sin, become the very burden and shame of a man's soul. Objects of delight are become objects of pity and compassion : No endearments, no union of blood, no earthly interests whatsoever, are found strong enough to hold the soul any longer from Christ : Nothing but the effectual teachings of God are found sufficient to dissolve such bonds of iniquity as these.

Lesson 10. Tenthly, *All that come unto Christ are taught of God, that there is such a beauty and excellency in the ways and people of God, as is not to be equalled in the whole world,* Psal. xvi. 3. When the eyes of strangers to Christ begin to be opened, and enlightened in his knowledge, you may see what a change of judgment is wrought in them, with respect to the people of God: and towards them especially, whom God hath any way made instrumental for the good of their souls, Cant. v. 9. they then call the spouse of Christ, *the fairest among women.* The convincing holiness of the bride then began to enamour and affect them, with a desire of nearer conjunction and communion: *We will seek him with thee; with thee that hast so charged us,* that hast taken so much pains for the good of our souls; now, and never before, the righteous appeareth more excellent than his neighbour. Change of heart is always accompanied with change of judgment, with respect to the people of God: thus the gaoler, Acts xvi. 33. washed the apostle's stripes, to whom he had been so cruel before. The godly now seem to be the glory of the places where they live; and the glory of any place seems to be darkened by their removal; as one said of holy Mr. Barrington, "Methinks the town is not at home when "Mr. Barrington is out of town." They esteem it a choice mercy to be in their company and acquaintance; Zech. viii. 23. "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." No people like the people of God now; as one said, when he heard of two faithful friends, *Utinam tertius essem!* O that I might make the third! Whatever vile or low thoughts they had of the people of God before, to be sure now they are the excellent of the earth, in whom is all their delight: The holiness of the saints might have some interest in their consciences before, but they never had such an interest in their estimation and affections, till this lesson was taught them by the Father.

Lesson 11. Eleventhly, *All that come to Christ are taught of God, that whatever difficulties they apprehend in religion, yet they must not, upon pain of damnation, be discouraged thereby, or return again to sin,* Luke ix. 62. "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Ploughing-work is hard work; a strong and steady hand is required for it: he that ploughs must keep on, and make no balks of the hardest and toughest ground he meets with. Religion also is the running of a race, 1 Cor. ix. 24. there is no standing still, much less turning back, if ever we hope to win the prize.

The devil, indeed, labours every way to discourage and daunt the soul, by representing the insuperable difficulties of religion to it; and young beginners are but too apt to be discouraged, and fall under despondency; but the teachings of the Father are en-

couraging teachings; they are carried on from strength to strength against all the oppositions they meet with from without them, and the many discouragements they find within them. To this conclusion they are brought by the teaching of God, *We must have Christ, we must get a pardon, we must strive for salvation, let the difficulties, troubles, and sufferings in the way be never so great or many.* As he said, *Necesse est ut eam, non ut vivam*; it is necessary that I go on, it is not necessary that I live: So saith the soul that is taught of God; it is easier for me to dispense with ease, honour, relations, yea, with life itself, than to part with Christ, and the hopes of eternal life.

Lesson 12. Twelfthly, *They that come to Christ, are taught of God, that whatever guilt and unworthiness they discover in themselves, and whatever fears and doubts are upon their hearts, as to pardon and acceptance; yet as the case stands, it is their wisdom and great interest to venture themselves in the way of faith, upon Jesus Christ, whatever the issue thereof be.*

Three great discouragements are usually found upon the hearts of those that come to Christ in the way of faith.

First, The sensible greatness of guilt and sin. How can I go to Christ that am in such a case, that have been so vile a wretch? And here measuring the grace and mercy of Christ, by what it finds in itself, or in other creatures, 1 Sam. xxiv. 19. the soul is ready to sink under the weight of its own discouraging and mis-giving thoughts.

Secondly, The sense they have of their own weakness and inability to do what God requires, and must of necessity be done, if ever they be saved. My heart is harder than adamant, how can I break it? My will is stubborn, and exceeding obstinate, I am no way able to bow it; the frame and temper of my spirit is altogether carnal, and earthly; and it is not in the power of my hand to alter and change it; alas! I cannot subdue any one corruption, nor perform one spiritual duty, nor bear one of those sufferings and burdens which religion lays upon all that follow Christ: this also proves a great discouragement in the way of faith.

Thirdly, And, which is more than all, the soul that is coming to Jesus Christ, hath no assurance of acceptance with him, if it should adventure itself upon him: it is a great hazard, a great adventure; it is much more probable, if I look to myself, that Christ will shut the door of mercy against me.

But under all these discouragements the soul learns this lesson from God, That, as ungodly as it is, nevertheless it is every way its great duty and concernment to go on in the way of faith, and make that great adventure of itself upon Jesus Christ: and of this the Lord convinceth the soul by two things, viz.

1. From the absolute necessity of coming.

2. From the encouraging probabilities of speeding.

First, The soul seeth an absolute necessity of coming: necessity is laid upon it, there is no other way, Acts iv. 12. God hath shut it up by a blessed necessity to this only door of escape, Gal. iii. 23. Damnation lies in the neglect of Christ, Heb. ii. 3. The soul hath no choice in this case; angels, ministers, duties, repentance, reformation cannot save me; Christ, and none but Christ can deliver me from present guilt, and the wrath to come. Why do I dispute, demur, delay, when certain ruin must inevitably follow the neglect or refusal of gospel-offers?

Secondly, The Lord sheweth those that are under his teaching, the probabilities of mercy, for their encouragement in the way of believing. And these probabilities the soul is enabled to gather from the general and free invitations of the gospel, Isa. lv. 1, 7. Rev. xxii. 17. from the conditional promises of the gospel, John vi. 37. Mat. xi. 28. Isa. i. 18. from the vast extent of grace, beyond all the thoughts and hopes of the creatures, Isa. lv. 8, 9. Heb. vii. 25. from the encouraging examples of other sinners, who have found mercy in as bad a condition as they, 1 Tim. i. 13. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 3. 2 Cor. vi. 10, 11. from the command of God, which warrants the action, and answers all the objections of unworthiness and presumption in them that come to Christ, 1 John iii. 23. and lastly, from the sensible changes already made upon the temper and frame of the heart. Time was, when I had no sense of sin, nor sorrow for sin; no desire after Christ, no heart to duties. But it is not so with me now; I now see the evil of sin, so as I never saw it before; my heart is now broken in the sense of that evil; my desires begin to be enflamed after Jesus Christ; I am not at rest, nor where I would be, till I am in secret mourning after the Lord Jesus; surely these are the dawns of the day of mercy; let me go on in this way. It saith, as the lepers at the siege of Samaria, 2 Kings vii. 3, 4. "If I stay here, I perish:" If I go to Christ I can but perish. Hence believers bear up against all objected discouragements, *certum exitium commutemus incerto*; it is the dictate of wisdom, the vote of reason, to exchange a certain for an uncertain ruin. And thus you have here what those excellent lessons are, which all that come to Christ are taught by the Father.

SERMON XXIII

JOHN vi. 45.

It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be all taught of God: Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

IN the former sermon, you have been taught this great truth ;

Doct. That the teachings of God are absolutely necessary to every soul that cometh unto Christ, in the way of faith.

What the teachings of God import, hath been formerly opened ; and what those special lessons are, which all believers hear and learn of the Father, was the last thing discoursed : that which remains to be further cleared about this subject, before I come to the application of the whole, will be to shew you,

1. What are the properties of divine teachings.
2. What influence they have in bringing souls to Christ.
3. Why it is impossible for any man to come to Christ without these teachings of the Father.

First, What are the properties of divine teachings? Concerning the teachings of God, we affirm in general, that, though they exclude not, yet they vastly differ from all human teachings: as the power of God in effecting transcends all human power, so the wisdom of God in teaching transcends all human wisdom. For,

1. God teacheth powerfully ; he speaketh to the soul with a strong hand ; when the word cometh accompanied with the Spirit, it is "mighty through God, to cast down all imaginations," 2 Cor. x. 4. Now the gospel "comes not in word only, (as it was wont to do,) but in power," 1 Thes. i. 4, 5. a power that makes the soul fall down before it, and acknowledge that God is in that word, 1 Cor. xiv. 25.

2. The teachings of God are sweet teachings. Men never relish the sweetness of a truth, till they learn it from God, Cant. i. 3. "His name is as ointment poured forth." Cant. v. 16. "His mouth is most sweet." O how powerfully and how sweetly doth the voice of God slide into the hearts of poor melting sinners ! how jejune, dry, and tasteless are the discourses of men, compared with the teachings of the Father !

3. God teacheth plainly and clearly : He not only opens truths to the understanding, but he openeth the understanding also to perceive them, 2 Cor. iii. 16. In that day the vail is taken away

from the heart; a light shineth into the soul; a clear beam from heaven is darted into the mind, Luke xxiv. 45. Divine teachings are fully satisfying; the soul doubts no more, staggers and hesitates no more, but acquiesces in that which God teaches; it is so satisfied, that it can venture all upon the truth of what it hath learned from God; as that martyr said, *I cannot dispute, but I can die for Christ.* See Prov. viii. 8, 9.

Fourthly, The teachings of God are *infallible teachings*. The wisest and holiest of men may mistake, and lead others into the same mistakes with themselves; but it is not so in the teachings of God. If we can be sure that God teacheth us, we may be as sure of the truth of what he teacheth; for his Spirit *guideth us into all truth*, John xvi. 3. and into nothing but truth.

Fifthly, The teachings of God are *abiding teachings*; they make everlasting impressions upon the soul, Psal. cxix. 98. *they are ever with it*: The words of men vanish from us; but the words of God abide by us: what God teacheth, he writeth upon the heart, Jer. xxxi. 33. and that will abide; *litera scripta manet*. It is usual with souls, whose understandings have been opened by the Lord, many years afterward to say, I shall never forget such a scripture that once convinced, such a promise that once encouraged me.

Sixthly, The teachings of God are *saving teachings*; they make the soul wise unto salvation, 2 Tim. iii. 15. There is a great deal of other knowledge that goes to hell with men: The pavement of hell (as one speaks) is pitched with the skulls of many great scholars, but eternal life is the teachings of God, John xvii. 3. "This is the eternal life, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." This is deservedly stiled the light of this life, John viii. 12. "In this light we shall see light," Psal. xxxvi. 9.

Seventhly, The teachings of God make their own way into the dullest and weakest capacities, Isa. xxxii. 4. "The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly." Upon this account Christ said, Matth. xi. 25. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." It is admirable to see what clear illuminations some poor illiterate Christians have in the mysteries of Christ and salvation, which others, of great abilities, deep and searching heads, can never discover with all their learning and study.

Eighthly, To conclude, The teachings of God are *transforming teachings*; 2 Cor. iii. 18. they change the soul into the same image; God casts them, whom he teacheth, into the very mould of those

truths which they learn of him, Rom. vi. 17. These are the teachings of God, and thus he instructeth those that come to Christ.

Secondly, Next let us see what influence divine teachings have upon souls, in bringing them to Christ; and we shall find a three-fold influence in them.

1. They have an influence upon the external *means*, by which they come to Christ.

2. They have an influence upon the mind, to remove what hindered it from Christ.

3. They have an influence upon the will, to allure and draw it to Christ.

First, They have an influence upon the *means* by which we come to Christ; the best ordinances are but a dead letter except the Spirit, the teaching and quickening Spirit of God, work in fellowship with them, 2 Cor. iii. 6. The best ministers, like the disciples, cast forth the net, but take nothing, win not one soul to God, till God teach as well as they. Paul is nothing, and Apollos nothing, but God that giveth the increase, 1 Cor. iii. 7. Let the most learned, eloquent, and powerful orator be in the pulpit, yet no man's heart is persuaded till it hear the voice of God; *Cathedram in cælis habet, qui corda docet.*

Secondly, They have influence upon the mind, to remove what hindered it from Christ. Except the minds of men be first untaught those errors, by which they are prejudiced against Christ, they will never be persuaded to come unto him; and nothing but the Father's teachings can unteach those errors, and cure those evils of the mind. The natural mind of man slights the truths of God, until God teach them; and then they tremble with an awful reverence of them. Sin is but a trifle, till God shews us the face of it in the glass of the law, and then it appears *exceeding sinful*, Rom. vii. 13. We think God to be such a one as ourselves, Psal. l. 21. until he discover himself unto us in his infinite greatness, awful holiness, and severe justice; and then we cry, who can stand before this great and dreadful God! We thought it was time enough hereafter, to mind the concernments of another world, until the Lord open our eyes, to see in what danger we stand upon the very brink of eternity; and then nothing alarms us more, than the fears that our time will be finished before the great work of salvation be finished. We thought ourselves in a converted state before, till God made us to see the necessity of another manner of conversion, upon pain of eternal damnation. We readily caught hold upon the promises before, when we had no right to them; but the teachings of God make the presumptuous sinner let go his hold, that he may take a better and surer hold of them in Christ. We once thought that the death

of Christ, in itself, had been enough to secure our salvation; but, under the teachings of God, we discern plainly the necessity of a change of heart and state; or else the blood of Christ can never profit us. Thus the teachings of God remove the errors of the mind, by which men are withheld from Christ.

Thirdly, The teachings of God powerfully attract and allure the will of a sinner to Christ, Hos. ii. 14. But of these drawings of the Father I have largely spoken before, and therefore shall say no more of them in this place, but hasten to the last thing propounded, viz.

Thirdly, Why it is impossible for any man to come to Christ without the Father's teachings; and the impossibilities hereof will appear three ways.

1. From the power of sin.
2. From the indisposition of man.
3. From the nature of faith.

By all which, the last point designed to be spoken to from this scripture, will be fully cleared, and the whole prepared for application.

First, The impossibility of coming to Christ without the teachings of the Father, will appear from the power of sin, which hath so strong an holdfast upon the hearts and affections of all unregenerate men, that no human arguments or persuasions whatsoever can divorce or separate them; for,

First, Sin is connatural with the soul, it is born and bred with a man; Psal. li. 4. Isa. xlviii. 8. It is as natural for fallen man to sin, as it is to breathe.

Secondly, The power of sin hath been strengthening itself from the beginning, by long continued custom, which gives it the force of a second nature, and makes regeneration and mortification naturally impossible, Jer. xv. 23. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may he also do good that is accustomed to do evil."

Thirdly, Sin is the delight of a sinner: "It is sport to a fool to do mischief," Prov. x. 23. Carnal men have no other pleasure in this world, but what arises from their lusts; to cut off their corruptions by mortification, were at once to deprive them of all the pleasure of their lives.

Fourthly, Sin being connatural, customary, and delightful, doth therefore bewitch their affections and enchant their hearts, to that degree of madness and fascination, that they rather chuse damnation by God, than separation from sin: "Their hearts are fully set in them to do evil," Eccles. viii. 11. they rush into sin, as the "horse rusheth into the battle," Jer. viii. 6. And now, what think you can separate a man from his beloved lust, except the

powerful and effectual teachings of God? Nothing but a light from heaven can rectify and reduce the enchanted mind; no power, but that of God, can change and alter the sinful bent and inclination of the will; it is a task above all the power of the creature.

Secondly, The impossibility of coming to Christ, without the Father's teachings, evidently appears from the *indisposedness* of man, the subject of this change; "The natural man receives not "the things which are of God," 1 Cor. ii. 14. Three things must be wrought upon man, before he can come to Christ: His blind understanding must be enlightened; his hard and rocky heart must be broken and melted; his stiff, fixed, and obstinate will must be conquered and subdued: but all these are effects of a supernatural power. The illumination of the mind is the peculiar work of God, 2 Cor. iv. 6. Rev. iii. 17. Eph. v. 8. The breaking and melting of the heart is the Lord's own work; it is he that giveth repentance, Acts v. 31. It is the Lord that "takes away the heart "of stone, and giveth an heart of flesh, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. It is he that poureth out the spirit of contrition upon man, Zech. xii. 10. The changing of the natural bent and inclination of the will, is the Lord's sole prerogative, Phil. ii. 13. All these things are effectually done in the soul of man, when God teacheth it, and never till then.

Thirdly, The nature of faith, by which we come to Christ, plainly shews the impossibility of coming without the Father's teaching. Every thing in faith is supernatural; the implantation of the habit of faith is so, Eph. ii. 8. It is not of ourselves, but the gift of God; it is not an habit *acquired* by industry, but *infused* by grace, Phil. i. 29. The *light* of faith, by which spiritual things are discerned, is supernatural, Heb. xi. 1, 27. It seeth things that are invisible. The *adventures* of faith are supernatural; for "against hope, a man *believeth* in hope, giving glory to God," Rom. iv. 18. By faith a man goeth unto Christ, against all the dictates and discouragements of natural sense and reason. The *self-denial* of faith is supernatural; the cutting off the right-hand, and plucking out of right-eye sins, must needs be so, Matt. v. 29. The *victories* and conquests of faith do all speak it to be supernatural; it overcomes the strongest oppositions from without, Heb. xi. 33, 34. It subdueth and purgeth the most obstinate and deep-rooted corruptions within, Acts xv. 9. It overcometh all the blandishments and charming allurements of the bewitching world, 1 John v. 4. All which considered, how evident is the conclusion, that none can come to Christ without the Father's teachings? The uses follow.

First use for information.

Inference 1. How notoriously false and absurd is that doctrine

which asserteth the possibility of believing without the efficacy of supernatural grace? The desire of self-sufficiency was the ruin of Adam, and the conceit of self-sufficiency is the ruin of multitudes of his posterity. This doctrine is not only contradictory to the current stream of scripture, Phil. ii. 13. 1 John i. 13. with many other scriptures; but it is also contradictory to the common sense and experience of believers; yet the pride of nature will strive to maintain what scripture and experience plainly contradict and overthrow.

Inf. 2. Hence we may also inform ourselves, how it cometh to pass that so many rational, wise and learned men miss Christ, whilst the simple and illiterate, even babes in natural knowledge, obtain interest in him, and salvation by him. The reason hereof is plainly given us by Christ, in Matth. xiii. 11. "To you it is given to know the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." It is the dropping and dews of divine teaching upon one, and not upon another, that dryeth up the green tree, and maketh the dry tree to flourish. Many natural men have very fine brains, searching wits, solid judgments, nimble fancies, tenacious memories; they can search out the mysteries of nature, solve the *phænomena*, satisfy the enquiries of the most curious; they can measure the earth, discover the motions of the heavens; but after all take up their place in hell, when, in the mean time, *the statutes of the Lord* (by the help of his teachings) *make wise the simple*, Psal. xix. 17. It is no matter how dull and incapable the scholar be, if God undertake to be the teacher. I remember, Austin speaks of one who was commonly reputed a fool, and yet he could not but judge him to be truly godly, and that by two signs of grace which appeared in him; one was, his seriousness when he heard any discourses of Christ; the other was, his indignation manifested against sin. It was truly said by those two Cardinals, (who, riding to the council of Constance, overheard a poor shepherd in the fields with tears bewailing his sins) *Surgent indocti et rapient cælum*; The unlearned will rise and take heaven, whilst we with all our learning shall descend into hell.

Inf. 3. This also informs us of the true reason of the strange and various successes of the gospel upon the souls of men. Here we see why the ministry of one man becomes fruitful, and another's barren; yea why the labours of the same poor man prosper exceedingly at one time, and not at another; these things are according as the teachings of God do accompany our teachings. We often see a weaker and plainer discourse blessed with success, whilst that which is more artificial, neat and laboured, comes to nothing. St. Austin hath a pretty similitude to illustrate this; Suppose, saith he, two *conduits*, the one very plain, the other curiously carved and adorned with images of lions, eagles, &c. the water doth not refresh

and nourish as it cometh from such a curious *conduit*, but as it is water. Where we find most of man, we frequently find least of God. I speak not this to encourage carelessness and laziness, but to provoke the dispensers of the gospel to more earnestness and frequent prayer for the assistance and blessing of the Spirit upon their labours, and to make men less fond of their own gifts and abilities; blear-eyed Leah may bear children, when beautiful Rachel proves barren.

Inf. 4. Learn hence the transcendent excellency of saving, spiritual knowledge, above that which is merely literal and natural. One drop of knowledge taught by God, is more excellent than the whole ocean of human knowledge and acquired gifts, Phil. iii. 8. John xvii. 3. 1 Cor. ii. 2. Let no man therefore be dejected at the want of those gifts with which unsanctified men are adorned. If God have taught thee the evil of sin, the worth of Christ, the necessity of regeneration, the mystery of faith, the way of communion with God in duties; trouble not thyself because of thine ignorance in natural or moral things: thou hast that, reader, which will bring thee to heaven; and he is a truly wise man that knows the way of salvation, though he be ignorant and unskilful in other things: thou knowest those things which all the learned doctors and libraries in the world could never teach thee, but God hath revealed them to thee; others have more *science*, thou hast more *savour* and sweetness; bless God, and be not discouraged.

Second use for examination.

If there be no coming to Christ without the teachings of the Father: then it greatly concerns us to examine our own hearts, whether ever we have been under the saving teachings of God, during the many years we have sat under the preaching of the gospel. Let not the question be mistaken; I do not ask what books you have read, what ministers you have heard, what stock of natural or speculative knowledge you have acquired; but the question is, whether ever God spake to your hearts, and hath effectually taught you such lessons, as were mentioned in our last discourse? O there is a vast difference betwixt that notional, speculative, and traditional knowledge which man learneth from men, and that spiritual, operative, and transforming knowledge which a man learneth from God. If you ask how the teachings of God may be discerned from all other mere human teachings; I answer, they may be discerned, and distinguished by these six signs.

Sign 1. *The teachings of God are very humbling to the soul that is taught.* Human knowledge puffeth up, 1 Cor. viii. 1. but the teachings of God do greatly abase the soul, Job xlii. 5. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

the same light which discovers to us the holiness, justice, greatness, and goodness of God, discovereth also the vileanness, baseness, emptiness, and total unworthiness of men; yea, of the best and holiest of men, Isa. vi. 5.

Sign 2. *The teachings of God are deeply affecting and impressive teachings*; they fully reach the heart of man, Hos. ii. 14. "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her;" or, as it is in the Hebrew, I will speak to her heart. When God sheweth unto man the evil of sin, he so convinceth the soul, that no creature-comforts have any pleasure or sweetness in them; and when he sheweth unto man his righteousness, pardon, and peace in Christ, he so comforteth and refresheth the heart, that no outward afflictions have any weight or bitterness in them: one drop of consolation from heaven, sweetens a sea of trouble upon earth, Psal. xciv. 19. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul."

Sign 3. *The teachings of God are sanctifying and renewing teachings*; they reform and change the heart, Eph. iv. 21, 22, 23. "If so be that you have heard him, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus; that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts: and be renewed in the spirit of your mind," &c. See here what holiness and purity are the effect of divine teaching! Holiness, both external and internal, negative and positive: holiness of every kind follows the Father's teachings: all the discoveries God makes to us of himself in Christ, have an assimilating quality, and change the soul into their own likeness, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

Sign 4. *All God's teachings are practical, producing obedience.* Idle notions and useless speculations are not learned from God. As God's creating words, so his teaching words are with effect: as when he said, "Let there be light, and there was light:" so when he saith to the soul, Be comforted, be humbled; it is effectually comforted, Isa. lxvi. 13. it is humbled, Job xl. 4, 5. As God hath in nature made no creature in vain, so he speaks no word in vain: every thing which men hear, or learn from the Father, is for use, practice, and benefit to the soul.

Sign 5. *All teachings of God are agreeable with the written word:* The Spirit of God, and the word of God do never jar, John xiv. 26. "He shall take of mine, and shew it unto you." When God speaketh unto the heart of man, whether in a way of conviction, consolation, or instruction in duty, he always either maketh use of the express words of scripture, or speaks to the heart in language every way consentaneous and agreeable to scripture: So that the written word becomes the *standard* to weigh and try all divine teachings, Isa. viii. 20. "To the law, and to the testimony: If

“they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light (or morning) in them.” Whatever is disagreeing or jarring with the scripture must not pass for an inspiration of God, but a deluding sophism, and insinuation of Satan.

Sign 6. *The teachings of God are very satisfying teachings to the soul of man*: The understanding faculty, like a dial, is enlightened with the beams of divine truth shining upon it: this no man's teachings can do: Men can only teach *objectively*, by propounding truth to the understanding: but they cannot enlighten the faculty itself, as God doth, 1 John v. 20. He giveth man understanding as well as instructions, to be understood; he opens the eyes of the understanding, as well as propoundeth the object, Eph. i. 18. And thus we may discern and distinguish the teachings of God from all other teachings.

Third use of exhortation.

The last use I shall make of this point, shall be a word of *exhortation*, both to them that never were yet effectually taught of God, and to them also that have heard his voice, and are come to Christ.

First, To those that never yet heard the voice of God speaking to their hearts; and truly this is the general case of most men and women, in the professing world: They have heard the sound of the gospel, but it hath been a confused, empty, and ineffectual sound in their ears; they have heard the voice of man, but have never yet heard the voice of God. The gifts and abilities of preachers have, in a notional and mere human way, improved their understandings, and sometimes slightly touched their affections: All this is but the effect of man upon man. O that you would look for something which is beyond all this: satisfy not yourselves with what is merely natural and human in ordinances; come to the word with higher ends and more spiritual designs, than to get some notions of truth which you had not before, or to judge the gifts and abilities of the speaker: If God speak not to your hearts, all the ordinances in the world can do you no good, 1 Cor. iii. 7. O remember what a solemn and awful thing it is to come to those ordinances, and attend upon that ministration, in and by which the eternal decrees of heaven are to be executed upon your souls, which must be to you the “savour of life unto life, or of death unto death;” Wrestle with God by prayer for a blessing upon the ordinances. Say, Lord, speak thyself to my heart, let me hear thy voice, and feel thy power in this prayer, or in this sermon: “Others have heard thy voice, cause me to hear it: It had been much better for me if I had never heard the voice of preachers, except I hear thy voice in them.”

Secondly, Let all those that have heard the voice of God, and

are come to Christ in the virtue of his teachings, admire the wonderful condescension of God to them. O that God should speak to thy soul, and be silent to others! There be many thousands living at this day under ordinances, to whom the Lord hath not given an ear to hear, nor an heart to obey, Deut. xxix. 4. "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given," Mat. xiii. 11. And I beseech you, walk as men and women that have been taught of God. When Satan and your corruptions tempt you to sin, and to walk in the ways of the carnal and careless world; remember then that scripture, Eph. iv. 20, 21. "But ye have not so learned Christ, if so be that you have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus." To conclude, see that you be exceeding humble, and lowly in spirit. Humility qualifies you for divine teachings, Psal. xxv. 9. *The meek he will teach*; and the more ye are taught of God, the more humble you will still be.

And thus you see, that no man can come to Christ without the *application of the law, and the teachings of the Father*; which being considered, may be very useful to convince us, (which indeed is the design of it) that among the multitudes of men and women, living under the ordinances of God, and the general profession of religion, there are but few, very few to be found, who have effectually received the Lord Jesus Christ by saving faith.

And now, reader, I suppose by this time thou art desirous to know by what signs and evidences thy union with Christ by faith may be cleared up, and made evident to thee; and how that great question, whether thou hast yet effectually applied Christ to thy soul or no, may be clearly decided; which brings me to the third general use of the whole, viz.

The examination of our interest in Christ, by

1. The donation of the Spirit, from 1 John iii. 24.
2. The new creation, from 2 Cor. v. 17.
3. The mortification of sin, from Gal. v. 24.
4. The imitation of Christ, from 1 John ii. 6.

Of each of these trials of our interest in Christ I shall speak in their order: And, first, of the donation of the Spirit.