

S E R M O N CXIV.

QUESTION XXX.

QUOW doth the Holy Spirit apply to us the Redemption purchased by Christ?

A N S W E R.

THE Spirit applyeth to us the Redemption purchased by Christ, by working Faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ, in our Effectual Calling.

UNDER the former Question, we took an Account of the general Nature, Necessity, and Author of Application. We are here pointed to the Consideration of the Way or Manner of the Spirit's working it in us. There are Three things intimated to us in this Answer, 1. The Way in which the Spirit so applies Christ's Redemption to us, as it becomes ours, i.e. by uniting us to Christ. 2. The Course that he takes to produce this Union, *vis.* by working Faith in us. 3. The Work in which this Faith, and the consequent Union is produced, *vis.* Effectual Calling. The two latter of these will come under after Consideration. I shall therefore at present take no further notice of them, than is necessary for the opening and clearing of the former. Let us then observe, that Faith is the proper uniting Grace, by which we are made one with Christ, and that this Faith is a

work of the Holy Spirit, and produced in us in Conversion. But that that lies before us, is our Union with Christ. And herein general, let us observe, That there are two parts of Application, *viz.* Union to, and Communion with Christ. The former of these is the ground of the latter, or the foundation on which it is laid, or the medium by which it is introduced. We must first be in Christ, before we can partake in his benefits. All the promises are treasured up in him, 2 Cor. 1. 20. And so, it is with Him, that God gives every thing else to us, Rom. 8. 32. The Doctrine of this Union, is very mysterious, and most abstruse, next to that of the hypostatical Union of the two Natures, Divine and Humane, in the Person of Christ. It is therefore profitable for us to take a brief view of it at present, for the avoiding of the dangerous mistakes on either hand. And here I shall purposely wave divers niceties used by some, and endeavour to accommodate my self to vulgar Capacities. And here we may first consider of the Nature of this Union, and then of the Way in which it is wrought.

I. TOUCHING the Nature of this Union, we may conceive of it in this Description, *It is a mystical and spiritual Conjunction made between Christ and the Believer, whereby they are brought into the nearest relation, one to the other.* In which Description there are several things to be taken notice of,

1. *THE Parties between whom this Union is made, viz. Christ, and the Believer.* The notion of

of Union intimates things that are *diverse*, and yet in some respect *one*; and oftentimes they become one by virtue of this Union, which before it, were not only *divers*, but *distinct*. And so it is here. There are therefore two Parties, which are supposed to be subjects of it.

(1.) *THE one Party is Christ.* On which account he and his Church are called by one name, Christ, 1 Cor. 12. 12. *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many are one body: so also is Christ.* And here we are to consider him, neither merely as God, or a divine Person, nor merely in regard of his humane Nature, but as God-Man Mediator. It is true, by Christ, we are united to God. Hence that wonderful expression, Joh. 17. 21. *That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.* But it is the Person of Christ whom they nextly adhere to. And indeed, it was by the Son's becoming Man, and Mediator, that the way was made for this Union, but for which, there had been no coming at God by sinful man, but he would have been as dry stubble to a consuming fire. It is by him that we have access to God, Eph. 2. 18.

(2.) *THE other Party is the Believer.* Not that there is any article of time in which he is a Believer before this Union is made; for our Answer tells us, that by working Faith in us, he unites us. We therefore read, Eph. 3. 17. *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.* Before believing we are sinners, and separate from him, but by faith we receive him. But yet there is an antecedency in order of nature, in as much as faith hath the nature of an instrument, or medium of this Union. It may also well be expressed by the Believer, because all Believers, and none but Believers, are thus united to him.

2. *THE general nature of it; it is a Conjunction made between these two.* Believers are, on this account, said to be *joined to the Lord*, 1 Cor. 6. 17. The word signifies to adhere close, as things that are glued one to another, noting the intimacy of it. There are several Conjunctions of things, all of which are not of the same kind or nature, though all imply an uniting of them; we must therefore pursue this a little further.

Hence,

3. *THE special nature of it, may be gathered from the rest of the Description.* Where three things are asserted,

(1.) *THAT it is a mystical Union.* The Apostle tells us that *it is a great Mystery*, Eph. 5. 32. Now a Mystery is a thing that is abstruse and secret, we have a notion of the thing itself, but are at a loss about the way and manner of it, we cannot understand or express how it was brought about. The Mystery of a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the God-head, of the two Natures infinitely disproportionable in themselves, united in the Person of Christ; and of the Union of

a Believer to Christ in Regeneration, are depths, which the line of our understanding is not able to fathom; but after our utmost search, we must sit down to gaze upon them with admiration. How many overdaring Spirits, not content to acknowledge their own ignorance, have run themselves into blasphemy, whiles they have confounded this with the two former, and said, we are Godded with God, and Christed with Christ? It is certain, that our whole Man, Soul and Body are united to the whole Christ, God-Man; but neither are we made to lose our humane nature, and become divine; nor is our humanity so united to Christ, as is that individual which he hath assumed into union with his Person; which Hypostatical union is proper to that individual: It is another manner of thing, and we may make some guesses at it by that which follows.

(2.) *It is a spiritual Union.* It is not therefore to be looked on with a carnal Eye, or entertained with carnal Conceptions. It is real and not imaginary, but yet it is not that which our senses are to be admitted Judges of, but being spiritual, we must have spiritual thoughts about it. The Apostle tells us, 1 Cor. 6. 17. *But he that is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit.* The distance of place between the humane nature of Christ in Heaven, and ours here upon Earth, doth no way impede it; the separation between our Souls and Bodies at Death, doth not dissolve it, but when the Soul is in Heaven, and the Body is turned to Dust in the Grave, the union of both to him abides indissoluble. We are therefore said to *die in the Lord*, Rev. 14. 13. *To be dead in Christ*, 1 Thes. 4. 16. And to *sleep in Jesus*, ver. 14. But though this union be truly spiritual, yet the Word of God gives us diverse carnal similitudes of it, for the help of our understandings, which we must warily apply to it; not grossly, but spiritually, remembering that every similitude hath something defective in it, and the Spirit of God useth many, because no one can fully adumbrate it. It is compared to that of a *Vine* and its *Branches*, Joh. 15. 1, 2, 4, 5. to note the closeness and connaturalness of it, and to let us understand, that by virtue of it, we derive all our life, and fruit from Christ, and receive the same sap of Grace from him, which is radiated in him. But yet, there is this difference, the branches do grow naturally out of the Vine, and are of the same individual substance with it, whereas Christ and we are personally distinct, and we are put into him by an implanting, Rom. 6. 5. *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death: we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection;* Hence it is resembled to a *Cion*, that is grafted into a stock, Rom. 11. 17. Thereby intimating, that though by it we participate in his sap and vigour, yet this union is not by nature, but it is an effect of free Grace. We were before united to the first Adam, but we are taken out of him, and put into Christ.

And

And there is here also this remarkable difference, that the Cion turns the sap into fruits of its own kind, whereas the Believer upon Union with Christ, and drawing nourishment from him, bears fruit accordingly; *spiritual fruit*. It is express'd by a Body consisting of head and members, 1 Cor. 12. 12. noting the symmetry & proportion there is between Christ and Believers in his mystical Body: and that they are managed & assisted by his influence, and that there is a sympathy between them; but yet this is after a more transcendent manner than that. It is compared to that of a Building, consisting of a foundation & superstructure, in which every Believer is one stone, 1 Pet. 2. 4, 5, 6. to shew us, that the whole strength of this Union is in Christ. It is he who bears it up, and holds it together; that our whole weight lies upon him. Only in this it differs, that in this Building every one is a living stone. And to name no more, it is resembled by the union that is made in Marriage, between Husband and Wife, Eph. 5. 31. 32. They remain two individual persons still, but yet there is an oneness between them. And this adds to all the former comparisons, that it is a rational union, and is founded, in mutual consent, from whence proceeds that bond by which, they are tyed one to the other inseparably. This therefore of all the similitudes used in Scripture to express this union, is most frequently made use of, as most wonderfully expressing the excellency of it, and most clearly distinguishing it from the hypostatical union of the two Natures in Christ. Hence,

3. *IT is an Union that brings them into the nearest Relation each to other.* Indeed, it is not merely and purely relative; it is a real thing as was before observed. And so there is something real, which is the foundation of many relations in this World; as between the Vine and its Branches, the Stock and the Grass, the Foundation, and the Stones that are built upon it, the Husband and the Wife. This Union is such, as by virtue of it we dwell in him, and he dwelleth in us, 1 Joh. 4. 15. And so we become *the Temple of the living God*. It is an Union by which the same Spirit that dwells in the Man Christ, dwells in us, so that we are one Spirit, 1 Cor. 6. 17. Hence we have such a wonderful expression, Rom 8. 11. *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you: he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* It is an Union by which Christ derives every Grace of his to us, and causeth us to partake in it, according to our measure, Joh. 1. 16. *And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.* It being like that *precious Ointment*, Psal. 133. 2. It is an Union by which our whole spiritual life is fountained in him, and derives continually from him to us, Gal. 2. 20. Without which derivation, or continued influence, we can do no spiritual action, Joh. 15. 5. But yet the resultancy of the Union is the making

of that relation between him and us, whereby we are placed most near to him. Hence that wonderful expression, Eph. 5. 30. *For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.* Which is not carnally but spiritually to be understood. Not that we do by it derive our body, and flesh and blood from him, as the efficient, for in this we differ not from all other Creatures; but he is looked upon as the second Adam, and so spiritually deriving a new Nature to us, by which we are made like him, and spiritually are as near him, as a man's *flesh and bones* are to him naturally. Hence all those relative Titles derive, as Head and Members, Beloved and Spouse, &c. And this may suffice to be spoken concerning the *Nature* of this Union.

II. *TOUCHING the Way in which it is wrought:* This also is as mysterious as the former. We are told that it is done by *Effectual Calling*. So that when we come to a particular inquiry into the nature of that Work, we may from thence receive further light into it. We are also told, that it is done by the working of Faith in us, which is the product of effectual Calling. When therefore we come to consider how we come to be made Believers, we may then perceive, how this Union is brought about & completed. This might be illustrated in each of the forecited comparisons, but that which looks upon us as reasonable Creatures, and points us to that mutual consent which goes into it, is the most full and comprehensive. Here then let these few Remarks be made for our help in it.

1. *THAT there is not only a natural, but a moral distance between Christ, and the Sinner, in his natural state.* Not only are they two distinct Persons, but sin had made a great separation between them. Psal. 53. 2. *They were far off from him, before he came to do this in them,* Eph. 2. 13. *But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.* They were as contrary one to another as light is to darkness. They were gone far from God, and had no mind to return to him again. And hence, there was little appearance of any likelihood of there ever coming together; there being such a contrariety between his spotless holiness, and their universal impurity.

2. *THAT the first leading cause of this Union, is the Everlasting Love of God to the Creature.* God is the Author of it. If he had not sought it the sinner never would. Hence that, Isaï. 65. 1. *I am sought of them that asked not for me: I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my Name.* And that, 1 Joh. 4. 19. *We love him: because he first loved us.* God did purpose concerning some, from Eternity, that when their sin had broken the union between them and their Maker, he would bring about another between them and their Redeemer. This therefore is assigned as the prime reason of their being drawn

drawn to him, Jer. 31. 3. *The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.* Yea, this is the Love that sent Christ to make way for such an Union as this, which could not be till our sin was satisfied for, which he employed him about. 1 Joh. 4. 10. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

3. **THAT** from this Love, God holds a treaty with the Sinner about this Affair. God treats with Man as a reasonable Creature, and hereupon, in order to the bringing about of this Union, he comes and communes with him about it, and makes offers of it to him. This is done outwardly by the Gospel, and the Ordinances of it, for the dispensing whereof, he sends forth his Ministers as Ambassadors, and their great business is to make the offers of, and invite sinful Men to embrace Reconciliation with God, through Christ, which is to be brought about in this Union. Hence we have that in, 2 Cor. 5. 20. *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

4. **THAT** in this treaty, he lays before the Sinner all Arguments persuasive, to move him to comply with the offer made. He lays before him, how highly rational it is that he should so do, and how every way advantageous and happying it will be for him. He therefore declares to him the miserable and undone estate that he is at present in, and that the reason of it is because by sin he hath separated himself from the fountain of Life and Happiness, and brought himself under all the Curses of the Law. He declared to him that it can never be better with him, so long as he remains as he is, and the distance between God and him is not removed; that there is no other Object of trust with which he can unite, that is able to do him the least kindness on this account, but will prove a refuge of lies, and an hiding place of deceit. He propounds the Lord Jesus Christ to him as one that is able and willing to remedy all this misery, by delivering him from it, and to make him compleatly happy in case he will reject his assistance elsewhere, and place it upon him; that he hath Salvation to the utmost to bestow upon him; he opens to him therefore the terms of the New Covenant, and shows to him how he may come by a title to all the precious promises that are laid up in it, viz. by believing on him, and closing in with him, as Prophet, Priest, and King of Salvation: Assures him, that in case he thus doth, he shall receive all his benefits which derive from him, and must go with his Person, Rom. 4. 32. That he shall receive from him, Pardon of Sin, Peace with God, the Adoption of a Son, all Grace to serve him, freedom from Condemnation, and an Inheritance among those that are Sanctify'd. And withal assures him that if he neglect

or reject this Offer and Invitation, he will not only lose all this Felicity, but add to his Guilt, and incur the sorer Condemnation for slighting so great Salvation.

5. **THE Spirit comes into the Soul, together with the proposals, and brings the Union about.** While the treaty is outwardly managing, He applies himself inwardly, and makes it to become effectual. And here,

(1.) **HE leaves a clear Illumination on the Understanding, wholly to discern the Emptiness of every other Object, and the glorious Excellency of Christ.** This saving Union begins with Light. The Eyes of the Understanding are opened, and the Discoveries that are now made are surprizing, Eph. 1. 18, 19. He sees now the Vanity of every thing else, which he sometimes thought of worth; and the Beauty of Christ, wherewithal he is surprized; and by vertue of this, he gives in a true Verdict, his judgment being rectified; and this is the Renovation in the image of his mind, Eph. 4. 23.

(2.) **HEREWITHAL He plants all his saving Graces in the Soul.** That indeed is the New Creature, for it is renewed in righteousness, and true holiness, Eph. 4. 24. This is that which prepares the Soul to give Christ entertainment in it; for so long as that is un-sanctified, or unregenerate, it can be no Habitation for the holy One of Israel to take up his abode in, it being nothing else but a hovel of impurity; yea, this is that that is called the *forming of Christ in us*, Gal. 4. 19. For we must not think that the Person of Christ individually dwells in us, as it doth in his own humanity, but he forms his likeness in us, by infusing of all renewing Grace into us. And this is that which impowers us for the subsequent acts in which this Union is compleated. For till the body of saving Grace be formed in us, we cannot put forth any act of Grace.

(3.) **TOGETHER with this, he draws forth the Act of the Soul, in which renouncing his league with other objects, he consents to, believes in, and so embraceth Christ as his own.** And this is the uniting act on our part, though wrought by the efficacy of the Spirit of God. He had put in a principle of faith before, and now he draws it out and assists it. Now the man casts off his former trust on his Idols. He was glued to them, Hos. 4. 17. *Ephraim is joined to idols:* But now he will have nothing more to do with them, Chap. 14. 5. *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols.* Now he takes Christ as offered, receives him, according to the terms of the Treaty held with him. And it is with, and in his whole Soul that he thus entertains him. He takes Christ for his own, and resigns himself up freely to Christ to be his. And this is that Covenant of Espousal mentioned, Hos. 2. 18, 19.

(4.) **HEREWITH the Spirit takes up his abode in the Man; and having ratified the Union, establisheth it unalterably.** It is therefore called an Everlasting Covenant, Isa. 55. 3. And

not to be broken; their whole Life is now hid in him, yea, he is their life, *Col. 3. 3, 4.* His Spirit manageth them, his Grace invigorates them, his Image shines forth by them, they derive all their strength from him, and they return it all to him; they that touch them to hurt them, touch him, and he feels and resents it; and they that dishonour him, wound them, and they cannot bear it; such is the Union between them. Thus are we brought into a participation in the Redemption of Christ, and all the precious benefits flowing from it.

USE. I. LEARN hence the Dignity and Safety of all true Believers. Both of these necessarily flow from this Union. Needs must it be a superlative Honour for any Creature, much more sinful dust and ashes, to be advanced to so near a Conjunction with the Ever-blessed and Eternal Son. It was an Honour that he put upon our Nature, to assume it into his Person; but it an high personal Honour to us, that he will advance us to be Members of his Body, to be of his Flesh and Bones, that he will put his Name upon us, and dwell in us. And how secure must the estate of every such Soul be? If

Christ live, he must live also; if Christ be in Glory, so shall he too; nor can all the Powers of Earth and Hell ever be able to undermine that Man's happiness, who is thus built upon this Rock of Ages.

USE. II. HENCE, *Let this be a powerful Persuasive to Young and Old, to come and believe on Christ.* Behold he invites you in the Gospel, and by his Ambassadors; and he is striving with you by his Spirit. He stands at the Door and knocks, open to, and let him in, yield to the framing hand of the Blessed Spirit. Resist him not, quench him not, receive him, and he is yours; turn all your other Lovers out of doors, that you may be for him and no other; so shall the King of Glory come into you, and take up his Everlasting abode in you; so shall that knot be tied, that Union be made between him and you, which shall abide to, and through Eternity; through which shall derive to you all those Blessings which shall make you happy through Time and Forever. Take him now in his most earnest Offer, least if you refuse him, you rue it when it is too late.

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