



S E R M O N CXV.

QUESTION XXXI.

WHAT is Effectual Calling?



A N S W E R.

EFFECTUAL Calling is a Work of GOD's Holy Spirit, whereby Convincing us of our Sin and Misery, and Enlightning our Minds in the knowledge of CHRIST, and Renewing our Wills; He doth persuade and enable us to Embrace JESUS CHRIST, freely offered to us in the Gospel.

THE first great thing that is done for and in us in the Work of Application, is the Uniting of us to Christ; of which we took a brief Account under the former Question. And being then told that it is done in *Effectual Calling*; it follows that we now consider of this, in which so glorious an effect is produced. A Description whereof lies before us, and may now be a little explained.

THAT we may not be mistaken in the matter under Consideration, let us first take an Account of the Name here given it, and what is intended in it. It is named, *Effectual Calling*, because it is a Voice of God speaking to the Soul of a Sinner, inviting and alluring of him to come over to the Lord Jesus Christ, and accept of him, by believing in him. Giving us to understand, that the Spirit of God in the work of Application, treats with men

as reasonable Creatures, and Causes by counsel; not carrying them by violent compulsion, but winning them by Arguments, by which they are *made willing in the day of his power*, Psal. 110. 3. So it is express, Psal. 27. 8. *When thou sadst, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.* *Effectual*, because it always gains the Sinner to accept of, and close in with it; and so to distinguish it from other Callings, which are not Effectual. There is an outward and general Call which is given to all that come within the sound of the Gospel. For the Commission which Christ hath given to his Ambassadors, who come in his Name, obligeth them to make offers of him, and Salvation by him to all without exception, and earnestly to invite them to come over to him, and believe in him, Mar. 16. 15. *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.* Hence, Isai. 55. 1. *Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.* Rev. 22. 17. *And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth, say, Come. And let him that is athirst, Come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* But how many are there who regard not this Call in the least? Who stop their ears, and turn their backs upon it. It is Christ's complaint, Joh. 5. 40. *And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.* Mat. 23. 37. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, & stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would*

I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. There is also an outward Call, by which men are in a common work, so far enlightened, and wrought upon, as to give external entertainment to the Gospel, and make a profession of Faith and Repentance, and so become members of a visible Church, and enjoy the external priviledges of it; but yet their hearts were never throughly changed, nor they broken off from their sins. And of this Vocation Christ speaketh, Mat. 22. 14. *For many are called, but few are chosen.* These Callings therefore are ineffectual. This Calling is the same which is sometimes called Conversion, sometimes Regeneration, or the New-birth. Some also make it the same with Sanctification, though others distinguish between them; and so doth our Catechism, which I shall follow. Only let us remember, that the habits of Sanctification, are wrought in Effectual Vocation, which are afterwards carried on in progressive Holiness. So that we find it rooted here, though it may admit of a distinct Discourse by its self. Effectual Calling comprizeth in it, the whole work of Conversion, in which a Sinner is changed and turned, and made to comply with the Gospel call, which invites him to Faith and Repentance. But Divines do generally restrain it to the working of saving Faith in us, whereby we accept of Christ as proposed to us, and adventure our selves upon him for Salvation; upon which the fore mentioned Union is made. And thus doth our Catechism. And so our following Discourse must be restrained to this ultimately; though it is necessary to consider the things which belong to it in common with Repentance, from which Faith is inseparable.

HERE then, let us observe, That as in Conversion, so in Effectual Vocation, there are two things that must be distinctly considered.

1. *THERE is something habitually wrought in the man whereby he is capacitated, and disposed to believe in Christ.* And this is wrought in him together with all the other habits of saving Graces, and is that which is in the Scriptures called, the New Creature. 2 Cor. 5. 17. And this is usually called *passive Conversion*; the reason whereof will be anon considered.

2. *THERE is something done actually by the man in the exerting of this power so created in him, in which he applies these graces or powers in him, to their Objects, and exerciseth them; and particularly his Faith, in closing with, and embracing of Jesus Christ exhibited in the promise; and is in the Gospel called believing.* It is the former of these that our Catechism in the Paragraph before us peculiarly speaks to, though as introductory to the latter; in which Effectual Vocation is completed: And may therefore be particularly spoken unto. For although it will be too nice, to dispute whether Elect Infants, dying in their Infancy, do, before they dye, actually believe in Christ:

tho', as to their capacity of having the habits of saving Grace wrought in them, there is no question to those that allow them to have in them naturally the habit of original sin: yet, as to those who have the use of reason, and are called under the Gospel dispensation, it is not to be denied, but their Vocation determines in their actual exerting of Faith in Christ. Hence, these are expressed together, Mar. 16. 15, 16. I shall then, first speak something to the former in pursuit of the Answer before us: And then add a few words to the latter as consequent on it.

AS to the former, viz. *The producing of the habit of Faith in us*, we may observe,

1. *THE Author or Efficient of it; the Spirit of God.* It is he alone that doth this Work on the Soul. We observed under the former in what respect the Work of Application is ascribed to him. Now this Effectual Vocation properly belongs to the Application; and so it cannot be ascribed to any other Author but him, neither in whole nor part. Regeneration therefore in which this is wrought, is hither restrained, Joh. 1. 12. *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* And for that reason such are said to be *born of the Spirit*, Chap. 3. 6. That he doth make use of the Word in this is certain. Hence that, Jam. 1. 18. *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.* And 1 Pet. 1. 23. *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.* Nor yet are Gospel-Ministers excluded from being serviceable in their place towards the Conversion and Salvation of Sinners. As, 1 Cor. 4. 15. *For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begot ten you through the gospel.* Nor are men themselves to neglect, but be found in the use of means; else Ordinances were appointed in vain. We therefore read, Rom. 10. 14. *How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher.* But yet, the efficiency by which this habit is wrought in the Soul, belongs alone to the Spirit of God. For,

1. *THE act of Faith doth necessarily suppose the habit of it, or the power of believing.* All Acts require a power suitable and sufficient for them; nor can any Agent go beyond its ability: no effect can exceed the vertue of its cause: so that a Man must have Faith in order to his exerting it. It belongs therefore to the Character of *wicked Men*, not to have Faith, 2 Thes. 3. 2.

2. *THIS habit of Faith, or power of Believing, is one of the Graces which are wrought in Conversion.* And hence *must have the same Author with the rest.* It is therefore enumerated among the Works of the Spirit, Gal. 5. 22. And on this account it is particularly ascribed to God as his Gift, Eph. 2. 8. Who is elsewhere called, *The God of all Grace*, 1 Pet. 5. 10.

3. *NO Man in his natural state hath any Seeds of this Faith in him.* He is indeed a Subject capable of receiving the Graces of the Spirit, and that is all the disposition in him towards Faith. God is able to convert him, and make a Believer of him, but then he must create and infuse it into him. There is an active Principle in him, which may be wrought upon and excited, so as to receive the habits of humane Sciences, and common Morality; but there is nothing more than a passive Power to receive these supernatural habits of saving Grace. When the Spirit comes to quicken them, he finds them dead, *Eph. 2. 1.* Believing is called *coming to Christ*; and so, a Power of coming is the habit of Faith, but no natural Man hath it, till God works it in him, *John 6. 44.* This Faith is *not of ourselves*, *Eph. 2. 8.*

4. *HENCE, There is no Co-operation of the man with the spirit in the producing of the habit of Faith in him.* He is a Subject, but not an Agent. He contributes nothing at all to it, but it is wholly put into him by another hand. It is a *creating Work*, and that belongs to God alone, *Eph. 2. 10.* It is a *Resurrection*, and that belongs intirely to the Divine Omnipotency, *Eph. 1. 19.* It is a *Regeneration*, and none ever helped to beget himself, yea, being a *spiritual Regeneration*, none but the Spirit can effect it. *1 Pet. 1. 3.*

5. *THE Means themselves have no Efficiency in the Production of this habit by moral suasion.* Not but that the Spirit useth the Means in order to his bringing about this Work in us. *Ezekiel* was to prophesy in order to the dry Bones living, *Ezek. 37. 9, 10.* The means are properly accommodated to work on Man as a moral Agent, rationally, by evidence or demonstration, by convictions, awakenings, encouragements, and the Spirit comes with them as he sees meet, and gives them such an operation: But either their operation is common, and that can at most be but preparatory; or it is saving, and then it supposeth this habit in them. Moral suasion can do only on a Subject capable. Come to the grave of a dead Man, and make never so grave an Oration to him, tell him what a miserable condition a state of Death is, and what benefits accompany the living, and so beg of him to rise and live; and what will this do? There must be Faith, to receive Christ, ere the endeavours to persuade Men produce the act of believing on him, and this is an operation more then merely ethical or moral.

II. *THE general Nature of it; it is a Work of the Spirit.* It is to be observed, that when Divines speak of the things done for us by the Spirit of God in Application, they generally distinguish between Acts and Works; hence they call Justification and Adoption, *Acts* of the Spirit, whereas they call Effectual Vocation, Sanctification, and Glorification, *Works*: And the reason of this distinction is, to point at the difference there is, between

the one and the other: For though each equally proceed from Him as the Author, and are equally applied by him to the Elect as the Subjects, yea, and one as well as the other makes a change on the Subject to which they are applied, yet there is a double difference between them, which is aimed at in this.

1. *THE former is done at once, whereas the latter is carried on by degrees.* A Work in our common acceptation, doth not consist of one single Act, but many repeated ones, which go together to put that denomination on it. And this may be considered either with respect to the Agent, or to the Thing it self which is done. Now Justification & Adoption are done at once. When God declares the person righteous, his Justification is intire; and when God once puts any into the number of his Children, their Adoption abides, and is never renewed again. Whereas in the other, there are either many distinct things contained, as in Effectual Calling: for, though the new nature, or the whole body of saving Graces are produced in an Infant, yet, if we consider the thing intirely, or all that goes into this affair, it hath many parts in it; and there is usually a gradual proceeding of the Spirit of God in order to it: or else they are not begun and perfected at once, but carried on to more and more perfection, in succession of time, as in Sanctification and Glorification. *2 Pet. 3. 18.* *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* *1 Cor. 13. 12.* *For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am known.*

2. *THE former make only a relative change on the person, but the latter make a real change in his very nature.* So that in the one there is only a change of the estate, in the other of the nature. And so that is better expressed by an act; in which the relation is made, and the state altered; and the other by a work, which leaves something behind it, which makes a man another manner of person than he was before. Such is this work of Effectual Calling, because it leaves the man wholly changed from what it found him, when it was to be wrought in him. Which will evidently appear in the distinct view of it. Hence,

III. *THE special Nature of this Work, described by the things that are particularly done, in the bringing of it about.* In the whole whereof we may make this general remark, viz. *That the Spirit of God, in the Calling of a Sinner home to Christ, doth not deal with him, as with a Stock or stone, but as a reasonable Creature; and accordingly applies himself to him, and leaves such impressions upon him, as are suited to such an Agent; and useth such means as are agreeable to the nature of it.* Accordingly we are here told,

1. *WHAT is the aim or design of Effectual Calling, viz. to bring the man to embrace Jesus Christ, with a true Faith in him.* That he close

close in with him for Life and Salvation, according to the tenor of the Gospel Covenant, which is by cordially believing on him.

2. *WHAT is done by the Spirit of God in the bringing of this about.*

1. *EXTERNALLY*: viz. He offers Christ in the Gospel. Under which is comprehended all the Treaty that is used with men, in and by the means of Grace. In which he shews men their need of Christ, his sufficiency, the way in which they may come by an interest in him, and all the Arguments used with Sinners to persuade them to accept of him.

2. *INTERNALLY*: In which he more peculiarly applies himself to, and deals with the two superiour faculties of the Soul, the *Understanding* and *Will*, to gain the assent of the one, and consent of the other; to win the one to approve of, the other to elect Jesus Christ, for the Object of his trust and confidence.

(1.) *HE applies himself to the Understanding, and accordingly suits himself to it.* And that,

[1.] *BY way of Conviction.* And there are two things which this is directed to, viz. *Sin and Misery*; which points to the state which the apostasy brought men into; of which we have formerly considered; and through all the stages whereof, the Spirit leads the man, and affects him therewithal. And this is that which by many is called *Preparatory Work*, because by it the man is brought to see his need of Christ, to be a Saviour to him. And under it are comprized all things which Divines assign to the Souls preparation for Christ.

[2.] *BY way of saving Illumination.* He enlightens it, &c. in which Christ is discovered to him as a suitable & all-sufficient Saviour. So that in it he is led into a sweet discovery of the whole Work of Redemption. Of which also we have had an account. And this is called the *renewing of the Understanding*.

(2.) *HE applies himself to the Will, by a saving Change made on it; in which it is also renewed, by subduing the old habits & dispositions that were in it; and putting of gracious ones in the room of them.* Which yet at first is done but in part.

3. *WHAT is the effect wrought in the man by these Operations.* We are persuaded and enabled to embrace Jesus Christ: i. e. *the whole Soul is put into a posture and readiness for the exerting of the act of Faith, which follows thereupon.* For there is now a power and inclination in him thus to do. These are the principal heads of this Work, which call for a more particular inspection; only in order thereto, to prevent mistakes, and doing wrong to gracious Souls, let two things be premised,

1. *THAT although, the thing that is wrought by the Spirit in this Work, is one & the same in all, yet he useth an arbitrary liberty in the Circumstances of the Work.* He doth by one and the same act introduce into the Soul that Principle which is called the *New-Creature*; one

principal member whereof is Faith. But yet in his dealings with the Souls of men about it, he acts not alike in all. And as to the Experiences of gracious Souls, they are various on this account. Nor is the method to be limited to any one's particular observation in himself. We read, Joh. 3. 8. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whether it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* In some he makes shorter work by the Means, others he holds longer under Awakenings, Terrors, &c. Some are drawn to Christ more gently, others more terribly; and all this according as he pleaseth. And it will be a great injury to the Souls we are concerned with, if we be rigid here.

2. *THAT there are many debates among the Orthodox, about Preparatory Work.* Whether there be any such Work; and if there be, whether it be a common or saving Work; or whether there be any saving dispositions put into the Soul before Faith. But I hope these Controversies are for the most part, rather about the terms, than the thing. Give me leave then here to offer a few things to Consideration, which may possibly be helpful to reconcile those differences, and give a right state of the Affair.

(1.) *ALL the Orthodox consent, that there must be a new power put into the man, in order to his believing in Christ.* That a man can no more of himself come up to the terms of the New-Covenant, then keep the law of the first Covenant. They that deny this, are unacquainted with the efficacy of the Apostasy, or energy of *Original Sin* in man. Philosophy tells us, that life-Actions requires life in the Agent. And spiritual Actions must derive from a spiritual Life; gracious Actions must flow from Grace. Call this an habit, or a virtue, or a principle; it must be an ability to do these things, which it had not naturally, but must be given it. Hence that, Gal. 5. 25. *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.* And, Mat. 7. 18. *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit: neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*

(2.) *THAT this power or ability, can be produced by no other, but the Spirit of God.* And that because it requires Omnipotency, to the producing it; and there is none Almighty but he. None but he that could make a World, bring light out of darkness, raise the dead, can do this. All of which are in Scripture made the shadows and resemblances of it. And indeed the Spirit of God in those Works, finds only impotency in the subject, but no resistance; whereas here he meets with, not only a total debility in the creature to join with him in it, but also a malignant opposition to it; there being nothing which the heart of man is more averse to, than coming to Christ, and believing in him: that being every man's disposition in himself, Joh. 5. 40. *And ye will not come to me that ye might have life.*

(3.) *THAT the Spirit of God in order to the producing of this, use, means with Sinners.* This hath already been intimated, and may be afterwards more particularly inquired into. And it is certain, that these means are not only used with the Called, to excite Faith in them to its operation, but also for the begetting of Faith in the Elect; as in the Scripture before instanced. And what doth this say, but that together with the preaching of the Gospel, and the Gospel preached, the Spirit comes, and applies efficaciously to the Soul, whereby the means become effectual to Regeneration.

(4.) *THAT in and with these means, he applies himself to men as reasonable Creatures.* When we say men are passive in Regeneration, we do not intend, that they are treated as brutes, that have no understanding: but as men that can rationally entertain the literal notions of things presented to them, and receive conviction of the truth & reason of these things, and acting as reasonable creatures hereupon. Though yet, the depravation of their natures hath disabled them from using these powers graciously. And were it not so, to what end is the Gospel written, so as to be accommodated for this purpose? or why are God's Ministers sent, to treat with unregenerate sinners about it, 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.*

(5.) *THE Spirit of God addresseth himself in these means, to others, besides those whom he effectually calleth.* He knows who are his, but Ministers know not, and so are to plead hard with all; and the Spirit with them, makes many offers to such Souls; and so they are said to resist and quench the Spirit: Though often such have contritions, compunctions, convictions, &c. which yet never issue in the new birth. Mat. 12. 20. *But he that received seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it.* Heb. 6. 4, 5. *Who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy Ghost. And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.*

(6.) *BECAUSE the Spirit doth the same things in the Elect, which in themselves & alone, are common, and to be found in others: Hence in this respect Preparatory Work is by some counted common, even in the Elect.* And who knows, but that he may begin with such things as these, and they may suppress and get over them many a time, before he comes indeed to Convert them, or before he infuseth Grace into them.

(7.) *IF by Preparatory Work we understand, the preparing and disposing the Person for actual Believing, it is doubtless a saving Work.* As it is wrought in none but the Elect, so it is itself a passive Conversion, or the new-Creation in the Soul. It is the very *passing from death to life*, 1 Joh. 3. 14. which is always in the Adult, followed with actual believing:

it being done for this very end and purpose: and questionless, it puts forth some act as soon as produced, not always so discernable by the Believer.

(8.) *HENCE, Though there may be saving Qualifications in the Soul, before the act of Faith be discerned, yet there are none before the habit of Faith is wrought.* This is in order of Nature before the other, that being an effect of this: And it is very certain, that all saving Qualifications are at once infused into the man, upon the great Work wrought by the Spirit in him, when he forms Christ in him, and endows him with the new Nature.

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SERMON CXVI.