



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.

[NOVEMBER 23. 1697.]

SERMON CXVI.

WE have taken a summary Account of the Work of *Effectual Calling*, or *Passive Conversion*, in which the Soul is put into a posture, for the Embracing of Christ with a saving Faith. We have also taken Notice of the several things that are done by the Spirit in the bringing of this about, whether it be in a common and preparatory, or in a saving Work. It now follows that we make a more particular enquiry into these things; and consider what is done in each of them, and how this blessed effect is produced by them. And here,

1. *THERE is something that is done Externally, and in common to them that are effectually called, and them that are never so, who yet are under the treaty of Peace; and that is, He offers Christ to them in the Gospel.* He opens to them the way of Life, and makes overtures with them about it. Here two or three things may be observed,

1. *THAT the Gospel is a medium made use of by God, for the bringing of Sinners to Faith in Christ, and so to Salvation.* For this reason we have that encomium put upon it, Rom. 1. 16. *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.* Because the power of God insinuates itself in and with it, into the Souls of all those that are made Believers by it. By the Gospel we are to understand, the whole discovery of the way in which fallen man may come to obtain Salvation by Christ; and all the means that are used by it to bring this about. Which, what they are, will follow to be taken notice of. And here let us consider,

(1.) *THAT God in treating with Sinners, deals with them as reasonable Creatures: i. e. He applies himself to those Faculties which he hath put into them, whereby they may be led as Causes by Counsel in their accepting of Christ.* It is true, he doth that in them by an immediate and creating efficacy, which restores to them a gracious power of so doing; but this is done while he is outwardly treating them with

with the means, and inwardly moving upon their minds and Consciences. He therefore offers that to them, which may convince their reason, and move upon their affections; which is the way in which man is rationally drawn to the exerting of humane actions. And on this account he is said to *perswade men*. Gen. 9. 26. *God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.* See, 2 Cor. 5. 11. *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we perswade men.*

(2.) *THAT* hence, *Faith in Christ must be built upon the Knowledge of him.* If ever a Sinner be perswaded to venture himself upon Christ for Life, it must be upon a discovery that is made to and in him, and that Christ is such an object as is every way fit for him to do. The Act of the Will cannot be called an humane Act, any further than as it follows the dictates and directions of the Understanding. Faith indeed is a Confidence, but it is ever built upon Knowledge, so that till there be a discovery made of Christ to the Man, by which he apprehends him to be able to save him to the uttermost, he will not cast himself upon him for Eternity. *Paul* therefore hath such an expression, 2 Tim. 1. 12. *For I know whom I have believed, and I am perswaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

(3.) *THAT* this Knowledge must be by Revelation. There are but two ways in which Men can come by the Knowledge of any thing, viz. by the Improvement of natural Reason, or by Revelation from God; the former can extend no further than to such Rules or Principles as are rooted in the nature of things, and there to be discerned by the light of nature; such therefore as have no rooting there, but depend upon the Divine Pleasure, can be no otherwise known, than as God sees meet to declare them; and such is the Knowledge of Christ, both as to his Person, Natures, and Offices. *Paul* therefore ascribes this Knowledge of his to this fountain, Gal. 1. 15. Hence that, 1 Cor. 2. 13. *Which things also we speak, not in the words which mans wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

(4.) *THAT* God hath chosen the Gospel to be the Instrument in and by which this Revelation is made. If we speak of the matter of the Gospel, that is the Revelation itself, it being nothing else but those Truths wherein fallen Man's Religion is contained. But if we consider the Gospel as it is written and published in the Scripture, so it is an Instrument of this Revelation, and this is of God's appointment. Hence that, 2 Tim. 1. 10. *But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, through the Gospel.* So that in and by it, God proclaims to Men the glad tidings of Peace. There were those that were immediately inspired to record these things, and Christ hath appointed an order of Men to preach them to

Men, but it is the Gospel or Word of God that is to be preached, 2 Tim. 4. 2, 3, 16, 17.

(5.) HENCE ordinarily, *There are none called, but those to whom the Gospel is brought, in the external Dispensation of it, i. e.* either the written Word of God, or the publick Preaching of it. For although God's Power is not to be called into Question, yet if he hath seen meet to restrain the exciting of it to such a way, his declared Will ought to let us down, nor can we have any other Rule to judge by. The Apostle therefore speaking of this matter, declares himself plumply, Rom. 10. 14, 15. Nor can we name that People in the World, that ever received the Knowledge of Christ in any other Way.

(6.) *THAT* God brings not the Gospel ordinarily, to any People, but where there are some to be Effectually Called by it. It cannot be instanced, where the Gospel offer was ever made to Men, merely for Condemnation. God knows who are his, according to the Purpose of his Grace, before they are so called, where they live, and accordingly orders, either the Gospel to come to them, or them to come to it: And his Providence hath been very remarkable on this account. We are told, what is the direct end of it, Act. 26. 18. It is therefore for the sake of such whom he intends it to have this efficacy upon, that he over-rules the dispensations of it.

2. *THAT* in the Gospel, God makes Offers of Christ, and Salvation by him, to all that it comes unto. Here let us observe,

(1.) *THAT* God sends the Gospel to men, by Men, whom he employs for that end. The Gospel is presented to men in the way of an Embassy, and God hath made choice of men like our selves to be the Embassadors of it. This title *Paul* assumes to himself and the other Gospel Ministers, 2 Cor. 5. 20. And herein he both puts a great honour upon those whom he so employs; *Paul* mentions it as so, Eph. 3. 8. and also greatly favours men, in that he sends to them by such, who may say to them as *Elihu* to *Job*, Job 22. 6, 7. *Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee.* God might have employed Angels, and they would have gloried in it, as an high honour put upon them. But he hath chosen this way, and it is for his own Glory too. 2 Cor. 4. 7. *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

(2.) *THAT* this Errand is to publish the glad tidings of Peace, and invite men to accept of it. That therefore is used as a periphrasis of the Gospel Ministry, Isai. 52. 7. *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that published peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!* The Gospel is called, the Gospel of Peace, because it is an Instrument of making Reconciliation & Peace between God and man. Sin had

had made them enemies, but Christ came to make up the breach, *2 Cor. 5. 19.* And having removed that out of the way which obstructed this Peace, now he sends this Message to men, and the Errand is, not only to declare that there is a way opened to it, but to use all utmost entreaties with Sinners to accept of and embrace it, *ver. 20.*

(3.) *THAT their Commission is to all, that come within the bearing of them, without restriction.* Remember that their Errand is to declare that there is Salvation to be had by Christ for Sinners, who are under Condemnation; to make offers of it to men, to invite them seriously to accept of it, and to warn them on their peril, that they do not reject it. Now in all this they are to act according to their Commission and Charge, and neither to go beyond, nor come short of it. As to the secret purposes of God, they are not acquainted with, nor can, nor may they meddle with them. But as to God's revealed will, they must declare that. Now the Charge which Christ gave his Disciples, which also extends to all the Gospel Ministers, in their station, it comprehends all that they preach to, without exception. See, *Mar. 28. 19. Mar. 16. 15.* They are to tell every one, that there is Christ a Saviour who came into the World to save Sinners; that there are no Sinners but may be saved by him, if they accept of and come in to him for it. That they come in his Name, and have Orders to bespeak them, and tell every one of them, that Christ by them, asks their Consent, and offers all his Grace and Salvation to them: That nothing can hinder their being saved by him, but only their wilful putting him away from them. Hence the general terms that are used in this invitation, *Isai. 55. 1. Rev. 22. 17.*

3. *THAT in the Gospel these Offers are made upon Terms, which are therein opened.* There is not only an offer made, but also a treaty proposed in the Gospel unto Sinners. And here,

(1.) *THERE is not only Salvation to be had by Christ, but there is also a way appointed by God, in which it is to be had.* God hath not only ordained Men to be saved, but hath likewise determined how they shall be, and this is as firmly fixed as the other. And notwithstanding the absolute certainty that some shall be saved, it is true, that none shall be saved in any other way but this. We are therefore told of *the way of Peace, Rom. 3. 17.* And Christ gave order to his Disciples to preach the Gospel on these terms, *Mar. 16. 16. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* If ever God brings any to eternal Life, it shall be through the way in which he hath designed it. Hence that, *Tit. 3. 5. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the holy Ghost.*

(2.) *IN this way there is something to be complied with by them that will be saved.*

Man is not carried in this way as a senseless, or a merely sensitive Creature, but as a rational Agent: And as he is endued with an humane will, capable of making its own election, so God applies himself to it accordingly. *Tho' it is he that draws us, yet we must run after him, Cant. 1. 4.* As God will save no man against his will, so he will lead no man in the way of it, by a forcible compulsion, but by a spontaneous, or voluntary consent. Hence that, *Psal. 110. 3. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.* They shall chuse the good, and refuse the evil.

(3.) *THAT men may comply with this way as reasonable Creatures, the terms of it must be opened to them.* An humane choice, though it be an act of the will, yet to render it humane, it must be guided by the practical understanding; nor can it otherwise be denominated an election. That therefore men may be capable of making such a choice, they must be acquainted with, that so they may have the knowledge of that about which it is to be made. Hence we have that expression, *Psal. 9. 10. And they that know thy name, will put their trust in thee.* The man must apprehend the thing to be good, in order to his closing with it; whereas, that which he knows nothing of, he can neither determine to be good nor evil, and so cannot exert an act of his will about it. That therefore is reckoned as no small part of the natural man's misery, *Rom. 3. 17. And the way of peace have they not known.*

(4.) *FOR this end, God in the Gospel, proposeth these terms in the way of a Covenant.* The Gospel treaty is frequently in the Scriptures, called a Covenant; and the reason is, because in it God deals with men in a way analogous to a Covenant among men. God therefore, together with making offers of eternal Life by Christ, declares to men the way in which it is to be had. And in the Gospel he shews to them what is required of them if ever they hope to be saved, and would not be ashamed of, or have those hopes to perish. Hence that, *Joh. 3. 36. He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not on the Son, shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him.* And in this regard it is, that the Promises of the New-Covenant are connected with those Precepts which require a conformity to them, in order to our partaking of the good promised; as is every where to be observed.

4. *THAT in the Gospel, God useth all means suitable to persuade men to accept of this Offer on these terms.* He not only proposeth the terms, but he urgeth them with earnestness, and accommodates the pleas used to move upon them. And here,

(1.) *THE natural man knows not the need he hath of Christ or Salvation by him.* Man under the power of Unregeneracy, is ignorant of his own misery. He is *poor, and wretched, & blind, &c.* and knows it not. He thinks, &c. *Rev. 3. 17. Because*

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. He labours under that grievous error, which makes him miscall good, evil, and evil, good; and being in a deep sleep of security, he can hear of Christ, and his glorious Excellency, and the Salvation that he is Author of, and not at all concern himself about it. Let those that need it, seek it, as for him, he hopes to do well without it. Our Saviour Christ tells us, Mat. 9. 12. *They that be whole need not a physician, but they that be sick.* And such an one is he: and for that reason he concerns not himself to seek an interest in this precious Saviour, but he may carry his Salvation to whom he pleaseth for him.

(2.) *NAY, There is in him a natural averfeness to compliance with the way of Salvation by Christ.* Not only doth he not know his need of it, but the terms or proposals of it are grievous to him. The way of life opened in the Gospel, being suited on purpose for the exaltation of the free Grace of God, is directly cross to the inclinations of the proud nature in fallen man: so that the very offers of it do stir up this malignity to give opposition hereto. We are told, Rom. 8. 7. *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* And by that law we may understand, the Rule of Life which is revealed to fallen man. And indeed, none but an humbled Soul can ever comport with it. Man would have a righteousness of his own, and cannot tell how to stoop to go to Christ to be covered under his. He must find and know himself miserable indeed, before he will give his consent to this. How was it with the Jews, Rom. 9. 31, 32. *But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it, not by faith, but as it were by the Works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling stone.*

(3.) *HENCE, he must be persuaded to this in order to his compliance.* And there must be strong persuasions used, to prevail with one who hath no inclination to, but hath a deeply rooted aversion and prejudice against a thing; for if he do make choice of it, his consent must be gained; and for that he must change his mind, which cannot be an effect of force, but must be done by persuasion. Unto which it is absolutely necessary that he be made to take up other sentiments about these things, than he before had of them. For, while he not only despiseth, but hates them, he will never cordially embrace them. For the heart of the natural man is exceeding tenacious of the way that it is in. According to, *Fer. 8. 5.*

(4.) *GOD to this end in the Gospel, useth all Arguments suitable for this persuasion.* A suitable persuasion is built upon such rational considerations offered to the person, as may convince his Judgment or Conscience, that the

thing proposed to him is good, or necessary, or some way profitable for him; and the neglect of it will be hurtful to him; so as thereby to work upon his affections, by which the whole man is set on going. And such a course as this the Spirit of God useth in his treating of Sinners by the Gospel, in which he urgeth his Invitations upon them.

[1.] *BY shewing them their absolute necessity of Christ to be a Saviour to them:* That they are undone, & must needs perish everlastingly without him. He, by clear evidence, & irrefragible demonstration lays before them the truth of that, Act. 4. 12. *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.* That if God had not sent his Son into the World to work our Redemption for us, we had been left for ever; and that if we now do not close with him upon the terms proposed, we remain hopeless. And there can be no Argument more forcible, than what is urged from necessity. When the man's condition is reduced to one way of help, and if that fail, there is none other left, all objections are hereby answered, all doubts silenced. What course he useth to evidence this, will afterwards be considered, when we come to consider the Internal work of the Spirit. But the truth of this is asserted and proved in the Gospel.

[2.] *BY discovering the fulness of sufficiency, and suitableness there is in Christ, to be a complete Saviour.* He makes it to appear that he is every way furnished for this work, and that there is nothing wanting in him, for the delivering of us from all misery, and crowning us with perfect blessedness; and so demonstrates the truth of that, Heb. 7. 25. *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.* He lays open the fulness of Christ, and the inexhaustible treasures that are stored in him, fit to answer all the ends of fallen man. So that *all they must needs be blessed, that put their trust in him,* Psal. 2. 12. Which how he doth will also in its place come to a distinct Consideration.

[3.] *BY setting before them the readiness there is in Christ to save them on these terms, not only that he is able to save, but that he is willing to receive all that thus accept of him.* Hence in the Gospel, he sets before them, all the precious Covenant-promises, that are made to all that so do; all the earnest Invitations that are given to Sinners to come to him; all the Complaints that he makes of their obstinacy in refusing to come; and how infinitely he is pleased with those that hearken to his Call, and come in upon it; together with the Welcome that all such do find with him. And what can be more urgent or persuasive?

5. *THAT all to whom the Gospel is sent, do not come up to, and accept of these Terms.* That this is so practically is undeniable. And would we know whence it is, observe.

(1.) *THERE*

(1.) *THERE* are none that will comply, so long as they hope to do well enough without Christ. That is the language of secure Sinners, Job 21. 14, 15. *Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us: for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him? None ever came to him till necessity drove them. Nor is it to be wondrous at, if we consider the security, pride, and enmity, that is in the natural man.*

(2.) *THE* Gospel Ambassadors can but Offer and Entreat. This they must do, else they will incur guilt, and be called to answer for blood, Ezek. 3. 17, 18. But though they are faithful and skillful, and spare for no pains, yet sinners may die in their sins. Only they save their own Souls. God will never charge them with the death of such. We see how it is in this respect, *Isai. 49. 3, 4. And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain, yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.*

(3.) *YEA*, the Gospel it self proves to some eventually a favour of Death. It is not effectual on all unto Life. And hence the preaching of it, is an occasion of the hardning of some, as well as the softning of others. What saith the Apostle? *2 Cor. 2. 15, 16. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other, the savour of life unto life.* Yea, such was the errand of the Prophet, *Isai. 6. 9, 10. And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear, ye indeed, but perceive not, and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes: lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed.* Many despise these offers, and many presume, and abuse the Grace of it to their own utter undoing.

(4.) *THE* Elect of God are mixed with others, for whose sake the Gospel comes among them. God will call his own whom he knows. They dwell in the midst of wicked men. It is by the Gospel that he will bring them home to himself. He sends this Gospel by such as know not who they are, but are to invite all. And Christ hath said of his own, *Joh. 6. 37. All that the Father hath given me shall come to me.* Though of others he makes that complaint, *Joh. 5. 40. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*

(5.) *THAT* God will be as well glorified in them that resist Christ, as in them that embrace him. Though the primary design of the Gospel was not men's damnation, yet, if men that enjoy it, do not hearken to the Call given, but refuse to entertain the Salvation set before them, God will recover honour upon them in this respect. And for that reason we have Christ himself so menacing, *Mat. 11. 21, 22. Wo unto thee Chorazin, wo unto thee Bethsaida:*

for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre & Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth & ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, then for you.

6. *THAT* hence, there is a further efficacy requisite, to make the Gospel powerful to Effectual Calling.

For,
(1.) *THE* reason why men are not perswaded by the Gospel, is not for want of sufficiency in the arguments used in it. They are the same by which some are perswaded, which move not others, but harden them to their own destruction. The same Text of Scripture, the same Sermon, hath this contrary event, &c.

(2.) *THE* reason of this difference is not in the different natures of the Subjects to whom the Gospel is offered. They are all of one kind, have the same sort of faculties, and powers in them: the same dispositions & inclinations to sin; the same aversion from good; there is not one better than another, *Rom. 3. 9.*

(3.) *HENCE*, the making the Gospel effectual to Conversion, depends on an Omnipotent Agent. The Gospel is an Instrument of this, but none can use it to effect but the Spirit. Man indeed hath rational powers in him, and must therefore be so treated; but all gracious qualities are lost: and these must be restored, before he can use these powers graciously; which none but God is able to do in and for them. *Phil. 2. 13. Eph. 2. 8.* And there is no contradiction between God's treating men as rational agents, and yet supplying their defects and impotency of acting graciously, by renewing his Grace in those powers. And this brings us to the Consideration, of the Internal Operations of the Spirit.

U S E. *LET* this, then advise us, as to be very thankful for the Gospel, so to be exceeding careful what Entertainment we afford it. God is to be praised for this favour. All have it not. And they that are without it perish. But by it, we have advantage to be instructed in the way of life, and treated with about the things of our peace. Nor have we better deserved it than those who enjoy it not. But let us rejoyce with trembling; considering, that if we despise the Offer made, and refuse to comply with the Terms of the Treaty, that are proposed to us, we shall not only miss of Eternal Salvation, as all those that never heard the Gospel shall do, but it will be a most astonishing Article, in the Indictment that shall be brought in against us, that God sent his Ambassadors of Peace to us, and by them proclaimed the Gospel of Peace to us, and with much Entreaty, and long Patience waited upon us; but we would not answer his Call, but wilfully withstood him. Tremble at the thoughts of having this to be accused for, before his great and terrible Tribunal.

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