

## SERMON CXVII.

WE have taken an Account of what is done Externally by the Spirit of God in order to *Effectual Calling*, viz He makes Offers of Christ, to the man, in the Gospel. But we are not to think this to be all that he doth in this great Work; though some have, very mistakingly called it, Grace sufficient. The Gospel Offer, though it is a great favour, is yet common; and there are more that neglect than imbrace it. This is intimated in, *Mat. 20. 16.* It is not sufficient to make a blind man to see, for one to hold a Candle before him; but his eye-sight must also be restored to him. The state of spiritual Death, under which the Word of God assures us all natural men to be, tells us, that outward moral suasion is not enough to draw them to Christ, but there must be something done, which may restore them to life again. Hence, although the Spirit of God hath chosen externally to apply himself to men by the Gospel, yet when and where he will render this Call effectual, he doth something more in and for them.

Here therefore,

II. *THERE is something that is done Internally in these.* Whiles by the ministry of men, in the administration of the Gospel-Ordinances, the Spirit applies himself to mens ears, and treats with them as rational creatures, insinuating himself into their minds, and giving such efficacy as he sees meet; but for which, all the other endeavours, would be lost upon men, as to any saving Work.

NOW in this *Internal Work* the Spirit applies himself to the Soul, principally to the superiour Faculties of it: To the Understanding, and there peculiarly to the Conscience: And to the Will, and by that also to the Affections, which are the immediate instruments of it. We may take a brief account of each of these.

I. *HE inwardly applies himself to the Understanding.* And this is the first in order of Nature, and for the most part, of Time too. For although the Spirit of God can, if he sees meet, do the work together and at once, yet he doth not ordinarily so do. But as he applies himself in the means to men, as *Causas by Counsel*, so he proposeth things to them, and works them up to make a deliberate choice, which is not wont to be instantaneous. Though still, the new Creature, which is the product of this application is formed at once in the man, it being a work of Creation, immediately wrought by God himself in the man. But in his treating with men, he applies himself suitably to them; and that must be by informing their Understandings. How else should the act of Faith, which is an exerting of this new nature, be the act of a rational Agent? Now there are two Things in which the Spirit applies himself to the Understanding, in order to the bringing the man to believe in Jesus Christ.

1. *By way of Conviction.* He convinceth the man of his *Sin and Misery.* And here let it in general be observed, that under this head of Conviction, our Catechism comprizeth all that which is by Divines wont to be called *Preparatory Work*; which therefore must be looked at in the laying of it open. Only, before I proceed to particulars here, it may not be amiss to speak something of the *Nature, and Necessity* of this Conviction, or Preparation.

I. *TOUCHING the Nature of it:* The great Inquiry here is, *Whether it be a Common, or Special & Saving Work?* And though there was a Touch given at this before, yet I find it needful to remove some mistakes, to add a few words more to it. Now we call that a Common work, which may be found in the Reprobate, as well as in the Elect; & consequently hath nothing in it of evidence to distinguish one from the other: And that Special and Saving Work, which is wrought only in the Elect, and is either essential to Salvation, or at least an infallible antecedent of it; or which *accompanies Salvation*, as the Apostle expresseth it, *Heb. 6. 9.* In sum, that which brings the man under the assurance of the promise of Eternal Life. Give me leave to essay at the Resolution of this so much disputed Case in the following Propositions,

1. *THAT there is doubtless an internal Operation as well as an external Application of the Spirit, which is Common.* We are not to limit the Addresses of the Spirit to the Non-Elect, to the outward proposal of the Gospel by the Word and Ministry, and suppose that all the impressions made thereby on the minds and Consciences of such, to be nothing else but the exercise or improvement of their own rational powers. He indeed applies himself to those powers, and makes use of them; but yet he comes in and with the means, and excites such operation in them. Whence else is it, that the same Word at one time moves on them, which at another time stirs them not? Certainly, it was not then Christ's merely speaking that word to the adulterous Jews, that left such a sting in their Consciences, as made them so act, *Joh. 8. 7, 8, 9.* Or why have men that caution given them, *1 Thes. 5. 19. Quench not the Spirit:* were there no inward suggestions of his kindled in them?

2. *THAT the first special work wrought by the Spirit in any, is the ingenerating of the New-Creature in Regeneration.* Whatsoever are the secret purposes of God concerning men, it is certain that there is no saving gift bestowed on them, before he works the saving Change in them, in which all the Graces of the Spirit are produced. *Effectual Vocation* it self, is the first saving gift applied to men: in which men are put into Christ. And we are told, *2 Cor. 5. 17. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are past away, behold, all things are become new.* So that we must either suppose the man to be Converted antecedently to this Conviction,

or that the Conviction it self is Conversion, or else allow it to be a Common work. There is no promise of special Grace, but requires Faith in us to imbrace it, in order to the conveying of a title to the good in it to us; and there can be no Faith exerted, where there is not a principle of saving Grace implanted.

3. *THAT there is nothing done in an Elect person before this, but what may be done in a Reprobate.* Not only is the Spirit of God, who is a Spirit, as able to come home to the Consciences of men, by touching of them, as to their senses by the means; but unregenerate men, in their natural state are capable of receiving all these impressions on them, without any saving Change wrought in them. Their Understandings and Consciences, need no new habits to be put into them for this work; but it may be done by the awaking and exciting of those that are in them. A Pharaoh may be convinced of sin, and made to confess God to be righteous in his punishing him, *Exod. 9. 27.* A Hypocrite may be so apprehensive of God's terrible Wrath, as to be afraid of it, *Isai. 33. 14.* Nor is there any difference in that which is excited in the one before Conversion, either as to the manner of it, or as to the degree; so distinguish it from what may be in the other.

4. *THAT all those works comprized in this Conviction, may be found in those that afterwards totally and finally Apostatize.* It is a received Truth among the Orthodox, and plentifully confirmed by the Word of God, that none in whom there is a saving Work wrought, tho' never so small, shall ever totally or finally fall away from it: Grievous backslidings indeed, they may be drawn into, as *Peter* was, but not deadly. I shall not here particularly inquire, what is comprized in those several expressions, in *Heb. 6. 4, 5.* but it is beyond dispute, that all these Convictions are included in it; and yet the Apostle supposeth such in hazard of an irrecoverable fall. Nor doth he mention it as a meer problem or supposition, which may never be; but as that which he gives them notice of, and expresseth better Charity for them, as supposing them built on a stronger foundation, *ver. 9.*

5. *THAT many Elect Persons have had the beginnings of these Works in them, which they have outgrown.* There is many a true Convert, that can make report of this upon his own Experience, that before the Spirit came to do the Work effectually in him, he had many an Awakening, many a strong Conviction, many a deep prick in his Heart, which put him upon thinking, purposing, and practising too, which yet he out-grew, and wholly wore off, and grew to the old pass again. And though it be often otherwise, yet it is frequently thus, with such as have lived all their time under the Ordinances. And God will hereby let Men know, whom they are beholden to for their Conversion.

6. *THAT yet these Convictions begun, and carried on in the Soul, afford no small hope, so*

*and of those that have them.* As long as persons remain secure, senseless, unconcerned under all the cries and calls of the Gospel, it seems to be lost on them, or to have a contrary operation, and to be a *jaavour of death* to them; though God often suffers it to be so, the more to magnify his mercy on them afterwards. But when once the man is awakened, the terrors of the Lord put him in fear, and he is made to apprehend himself a vile & undone Sinner, and to cry out, *What shall I do to be saved?* Now there is hope in *Israel* of such an one, that *he is not far from the Kingdom of Heaven.* And that, because this is the Spirit's way, in which he brings Sinners home to Christ. For such therefore are those gracious encouragements laid in, *Isai. 41. 17. Jer. 31. 18, &c.* And the Invitation, *Mat. 11. 28.*

II. *AS to the Necessity of this Conviction or Preparation,* Let us observe these following Conclusions,

1. *THAT this Conviction hath no causal influence into Passive Conversion.* All the Necessity that can be urged on that account, is only that of concomitancy. The Spirit of God hath done this in such as were not capable of Conviction under and by the means. Judicious Divines judge that *Jeremiah*, and *John the Baptist* were Converted before they were born. And it is to be believed that Elect Infants dying in their Infancy, have the new-Creature formed in them, without which they could not be saved. *Jon. 3. 3. Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* And possibly this Work is done for others that live, before we are aware of it, who have given evidence of their seriousness from their Infancy. However, the man can no more Convert himself upon these Convictions, then he could before, nor is it easier for the Spirit to do it now. Whenever it is done, it must be by a creating Power, in which God useth no Instrument, but acts immediately.

2. *THAT yet, the ordinary season in which the Spirit is wont to do this Work, is while he is applying of himself to them, in and with the Word.* At what article of this Conviction the Spirit pleaseth to work this glorious Change, is not for us critically to determine. But in his Converting of men under the Ordinances, while he is morally applying to them, both outwardly and inwardly, he steals in his Grace unawares to us, and draws forth our Souls unto gracious actings. Thus while *Paul* was preaching, *Lydia* is moved, &c. *Act. 16. 14. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.* Thus *Ephraim*, while he is looking on, and bemoaning his unworthy carriages, is made able to take hold on God by Faith, and call him his own God, *Jer. 31. 18. I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke:*

turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. And how often do burdened, sinking despairing Souls under Conviction, in one instant find their hearts encouraged to hope and trust in God?

3. **THAT** the end or design of the Spirit's working the grace of Faith, in passive Conversion, is that we may actually believe in Christ. All habits are properly designed for acts suitable to the nature of them; and then they attain their end, when they are exerted in such acts. The Gospel invites men to believe in Christ, and for encouragement promiseth Salvation to them that so believe: And because no man can believe of himself, or till he be renewed in the image of his mind, the Spirit of God produceth this renovation in him, and that not to be a sleeping power in him, but a new life, that he may live according to it. The Apostle therefore urgeth the adornings of Grace upon Christians, from the consideration of their having the habits in them, Gal. 5. 25. *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.* And God tells us what is the design of the new Creation, Isai. 43. 21. *This people have I formed for my self, they shall shew forth my praise.*

4. **THAT** this Faith is drawn forth, and exerted by us, as the act of a cause by Counsel. Though the Spirit puts into us a power of believing, without any, either consent or dissent of ours, yet he doth not draw forth this power into action without us, nor contrary, but intirely according to the nature which God had put into us. We are so drawn, that we follow voluntarily, and not by force, or unaccountable instinct. Cant. 1. 4. *Draw me, we will run after thee.* And that we may do it voluntarily, we must do it knowingly: or our Understanding must be eyes to our Will, and entertain the reason for our so doing. The Treaty therefore between God and us must be carried on in this way; though there be such a powerful alteration made in us, to render it capable of being so.

5. **THAT** the Spirit of God in his treating with us, presents Christ to us, as the Object for our Faith to rely upon for Salvation. It is certain that Christ is in the Gospel offered to men as a Saviour, and we are commanded to believe on him as so. We are therefore said to believe to Salvation, Rom. 10. 10. *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* Thus therefore the Spirit with the Gospel, persuades us to look upon him. And that is the great Argument to move us to embrace and rely upon him, because he is such an One, and there is none else, *Alti. 4. 12. Isai. 45. 22. Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.* And further to stimulate us, he assures us of the compleatness of sufficiency there is in him for this end, *Heb. 7. 25. Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.* And what is all this for, but to draw us to believe in him?

6. **THAT** we may be drawn to close with him as such, we must apprehend our need of him. All motions offered to a rational Agent, that are accommodated to move on him as such an one, must not only descry an excellency in the Object proposed, but also a suitableness in it to the subject treated withal. What avails it to commend a man for his excellent skill in Physick, to one that is sound, and feels no malady? *Mat. 9. 12. They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.* It is indeed, excellent good news, that Christ is a mighty Saviour, but to whom is it so, but those who are miserable, and need Salvation; it will not allure any else to make use of him. Men therefore must apprehend themselves to be in such a condition, before they go out of themselves to Christ, that they may be saved.

7. **THIS** will not be without such a Conviction as this is. The natural man is secure and self-conceited, and not acquainted with his true state: like them, *Rev. 3. 17.* But the Spirit of God in this work, reads them such a Lecture; and makes such impressions on their Consciences by it as puts them off from that security, and becomes a potent argument in them to excite their faith, when he reveals Christ in them. This helps them to prize Christ above all, and put an inestimable value on the reports and offers made of him. Thus Paul expresseth himself, *1 Tim. 1. 15. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.*

IT now follows that we proceed to a more particular Inquiry into this Work of Conviction. Under which we are to consider, not only the bare Convictions or Discoveries themselves, but all the Operations and Effects of such a discovery, as are wrought in the natural Conscience thereby. Only let this Caution be here entred, viz. *That there are some Convictions of sin and misery, which do necessarily suppose a principle of saving Grace in the heart, or a saving Illumination on the mind, and the genuine effects whereof, are the discoveries of Faith already wrought in the man.* And these belong not to our present Inquiry, but only such as are wrought by the Spirit on a natural Conscience. Here then we may consider, 1. The Convictions themselves. 2. The Effects which the Spirit works by them on the Consciences of Sinners.

1. **FOR** the Convictions themselves: And these are two, viz. *Of Sin & Misery.* Of which in Order.

WE have before been acquainted that the fall brought Mankind into a state of sin and misery; where we took a summary Account of both. Now these are the things to which this Conviction refers; and therefore need here to be but briefly glanced at.

1. **HE** convinceth them of Sin. This our Saviour plainly asserts, *Joh. 16. 8.* And here let us observe,

(1.) **THAT** there are those Principles in the

Consciences of natural men, by the application of which they are able to judge of this or that to be Sin. The light of nature is not so extinguished, but that it may by searching find out many fragments of the Law engraven on the Conscience, by which comparing himself, he must needs charge himself with Sin. This is manifest by that, in Rom. 4. 14, 15. *For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect. Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.* A man's own reason tells him, thus he ought to do, and this to avoid, in a multitude of Cases. And if men did not imprison the truth in unrighteousness, but set their moral powers on work, they should find more. Hence the Morals of the Heathen Philosophers.

(2.) THAT there is an historical credit or assent to the truth of the Scriptures, as being the Word of God, which the mist that are educated under the Gospel do give. This our Saviour acknowledgeth to those carnal Jews, Joh. 5. 39. *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.* Though they have no love to the Word of God, yet their Consciences say that it is true, and they expect to find them to be so another day. Now the Law given to man for his rule, is one part of this Word; and the Apostle hath that assertion about it, Rom. 7. 7. *What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin? but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.* And 3. 20. *Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.* So that if men will but set themselves to study, and acquaint themselves with the Scriptures, they must needs know a great deal about Sin, and acknowledge it too.

(3.) HENCE, The Spirit coming in with these Truths, and setting them home on the Conscience with power, works this conviction of sin in the Man. He awakens these principles in the Man, and sets him to think of them, who was apt to forget them: He confirms his credit of them, by making his Conscience to set a new subscription to them; and he makes him to compare himself by them; & to discover how he is declared to be a sinner by them, and so causeth his Conscience to condemn him for sin, or conclude himself to be guilty of it. He makes him to acknowledge, that he owes Obedience to God as his Lawgiver and Sovereign; that this is the Law by which he is obliged, that he hath transgressed it, and is thereby proved to be a sinner.

(4.) THIS Conviction is extendible, so far as either the light of Nature, or the Law of God, declare him to be under Sin. There are some things which the remains of nature's Light in fallen Man do not of themselves bear witness to; but yet the Word of God plainly asserts: And the same assent which subscribes to the truth of the Word, must yield to these

on that ground; so that though the man may not see through the reason why it is so, yet he cannot but acknowledge that it is so, because God, who cannot lye, hath declared it to be so. So that though the malignity in men's hearts, riseth up against these truths, yet the influence upon their Consciences, makes them confess them to be true for all. And such was the Conviction that was upon them, Acts 7. 54. Here then to draw to some particulars,

[1.] HE convinceth them of Actual Sin. And ordinarily Conviction begins here. Sometimes they here this or that Sin laid open to them in an Ordinance, and reprov'd; and the Spirit of God toucheth Conscience, and makes it to say, *Thou art the Man.* Sometimes God suffers them to fall into some notorious Sin, and then makes their hearts to smite them, and testify against them. And by this he leads them from one Sin to another, and shews them an innumerable company of them, both omissions and commissions, how they have broken the Law from step to step. Job. 36. 9. Now Conscience saith, at this time, and that time &c. till it goes beyond count.

[2.] HE convinceth them of many Aggravations of Sin. Makes them to see, not only that they have broken the command, but have done it boldly, impudently, against the light of Nature, or the knowledge of the Word of God; against the checks of Conscience, against Mercies obliging them, Warnings given them &c. Solomon therefore chargeth Shimei, 1 Kings 2. 44.

[3.] HE convinceth them of Original Sin. How far the light of Nature may be improved for this, I shall not now inquire, though doubtless it will say a great deal on this account: Notwithstanding the Heathen Moralists, who have spoken much of actual Sin, have observed very little about their original Sin; though sometimes something that looks that way; especially as to Man's impotency. Whence Plato complains that the Soul hath broken her wings, and such like. But the Word of God is full for this, Gen. 6. 5. & 8. 21. Rom. 5. 12. and elsewhere. And usually, the Spirit leads men from actual Sin, up to original Sin, as the fountain from whence the other streams, and makes Men to find and confess; that the very bias of their Nature inclines and forceably leads them that way. Thus David runs up his Sin, Psal. 51. 5. He makes Sinners to feel that their very hearts are prejudiced at, and rise up with malignity against the Law of God, as a thing contrary to them. As a Medea could say

————— *Video meliora probog;*  
*Deteriora sequor* —————

[4.] HE convinceth them of their Interest in Adam's Sin by Imputation. This seems to be above the reach of the light of Nature in fallen Man; and therefore this Conviction is made by the application of the Word of God. For though there are many that deny this,

this, and the carnal reasonings in the depraved minds of Men, have a great deal to say against it; yet the Word of God, by which, all that acknowledge it to be his Word, are to judge of things, is so full and clear for it, that when the Spirit of God comes to set it home, on the Conscience, the Man is made to acknowledge that it is verily so. he cannot withstand the plain truth of the Scripture, *viz.* that *in Adam we all sinned*, according to, *Rom. 1. 12.* And that thereupon we are chargeable with the Guilt of it, so as by it to be exposed to all the evil consequents of it, even all the fruits and effects of the wrath of God, which were introduced by it; which puts him upon the expectation of being called to an account for it, and bear the penalty of it. *Thus He convinceth Men of Sin.*

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## SERMON CXVIII.

2. **HE** convinceth them of Misery. This