

SERMON CXXI.

WE have considered what is done by the Spirit of God in a man, in order to the empowering and inclining of him to *Believe*, which is the thing mainly pointed to, in the *Answer* before us. Here we have the habit of Faith, together with all other Graces produced, in which we are passive. But *Effectual Calling* is not compleated in us, till we have answered the Call given us by the Spirit, which is done by actual Believing: in which also there is his agency or co-operation; which is intimated in that we are told, not only that he *Enableth*; but also that he *perswades us to Embrace* an offered Saviour, i.e. to believe in Christ. Under which perswasion, we before observed, is contained, both a disposing or inclining the man to do so, and a drawing forth of that inclination into act. The *former* of these is already spoken unto; the *latter* now comes under our Consideration.

TOUCHING the *Nature* of saving Faith, our Catechism will afterwards call us to a distinct account of it. Our present business is to take notice, *How the Spirit of God draws it out into act in Effectual Calling*. And here we may first observe something in *general* referring to actual Conversion, to which this belongs: And then more *particularly*, to the exertion of this Grace of Faith, in the Souls *embracing* of Christ, on the free offer & invitation given it.

I. IN the *General* Consideration of Active Conversion, let these things be observed,

1. **THAT** *there is an active as well as a passive Conversion*. Indeed that was properly designed for this. The principles of saving Grace are put into the man on purpose that he may be enabled to exercise such Graces as are required of him. The Spirit's drawing, and our running have a connexion. Cant. 1. 4. *Draw me, we will run after thee*. Man was made actively to serve God, without it he loseth his end. Hence that, *Isai. 43. 21 This people have I formed for my self, they shall shew forth my praise*. And the *Apostle's* way of arguing, Gal. 5. 25. *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*. Grace would be in vain put into us, if it should not be exercised.

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2. **THAT**



2. **THAT** when the Spirit hath done the first work, there is now an active Principle in the man. He was before dead, but now he is quickned, *Eph. 2. 1.* It is of the very nature of that Work, to make the man alive again, who before had no spiritual life in him. It puts an ability into him to perform gracious actions: For *Grace in the habit, is a power of acting graciously.* He now hath strength, who before had none. Hence that, *Phil. 4. 13. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheth me.*

3. **THAT** all the actions of this Conversion, are truly and properly done by the man himself. The new Creature is not a lifeless Instrument; but his gracious actions are done by a living Agent, exerting an inward principle of life, that is its own. Though the ability is from God; yet it is an ability that he hath infused into the man, and made his. God therefore acknowledgeth these acts to his People. And *Paul* could say, *I live, Gal. 2. 20.*

4. **THAT** yet these actions cannot be done, without the efficiency of the Spirit. No true Convert can act graciously, without his help. There is a dependance of all the activity of our Grace on his co-operation. He doth not only give Grace, but also helps it in its work. What else is intended, in *Joh. 15. 5. Without me ye can do nothing.* There could be no improvement of our spiritual life, but for him, *Gal. 2. 20.* Indeed, the Creature depends on him, as to all its natural actions. The fire burns not, &c. but by his concomitant influence, *Act. 17. 28.* And if it be so, in actions purely natural, can it be otherwise in those that are spiritual and supernatural?

5. **HENCE,** There is the Operation both of the Spirit of God, and of the man himself, in the acting of these Graces. And this is one main difference between the first and second Conversion: in that the Spirit only was active, and the Soul passive, but here, both are active. In that the power was given, in this it was exerted, not only in, but also by the man. And therefore, though the efficiency be attributed to the Spirit, in regard of his necessary co-operation; yet the formality of the action is ascribed to the man himself. The Spirit helps us to believe, to repent, to pray, &c. but it is not he that believes, &c. but we. These two are therefore put together, *Phil. 2. 12, 13. Work out your own salvation with fear & trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

6. **THAT** the Spirit, & the man, do not act in Co-ordination. This is warily to be observed. They do not act as two joynt efficient, dividing the work between them, as being equally concerned in it; and so take each his part to do: or, as if we were to do what we can, and the Spirit were to do the rest. But there is an entire subordination in this affair. We work out our own Salvation, and yet he works, *Phil. 2. 12, 13.* And let it be well observed, that the Spirit works as the principal Agent, and first mover, and we as the less principal,

who being moved, do move. They offer a great affront to the Spirit of God, that align him only the place of an adjuvant efficient, working under us. The beginning of every gracious action in us, is of God, he sets us on work: when he moves them, then our Graces do move. So *David* understood, *Psal. 119. 32.* Why else is it, that if he leaves us, we do not act our Graces, but our Corruption? *2 Chr. 32. 31.*

7. **THAT** these actions are not diverse, but the same, in which each of these, acts in his order. We are not here to enquire what of the Work is done by the Spirit, and what of it is done by the Convert, from the principle of Grace in him, so as to align this part to the one, and that to the other. But it is the same act, whether of Faith, or of Love, &c. in which both are efficient. True, there is corruption mixing with the best actions of God's People, which is neither to be ascribed to the Spirit, nor to the Grace in them, but to their remaining concupiscence, *Rom. 7. 20.* But their gracious actions belong entirely to both; to the Spirit as the principal, to the man with respect to his Grace, as the subordinate efficient. Hence he is said to work *all our works in us, Isai. 26. 12. Our works,* i. e. the works that we do, he doth them too: the same, and not other. Only let us observe this difference, He is only an efficient, whereas the Convert is an efficient and a subject too: the Work is wrought in him, as well as by him, and so the effect belongs to us attributively, and not to him, i. e. it is not He that is converted, but we, for he doth not work it upon himself, but upon us. He improves the Principle that is in us, which by his concurrence exerts itself.

8. **THAT** though the actions produced are the same, yet the actions of the Spirit, & of the Convert in them are diverse. For they are two distinct Agents, and they act in a different order. There is therefore something that the Spirit doth of himself, and something that the man doth by the help of the Spirit. So that tho' they concur in the same action, yet their Agency is not alike. Here then let us observe,

1. **THAT** in the bringing of the Habits of Grace into act, there are three things more specially done by the Spirit.

(1.) **HE** upholds the Principle of Grace which he hath wrought in us. He no sooner hath ingenerated it in us, but he puts an Everlasting Arm underneath to support and preserve it. The habit of Grace would die as soon as it is made to live, if he did not keep it alive. But his influence falleth upon it in the moment of its production, and never leaves it. Hence that, *1 Pet. 1. 5. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.* And this sustentation is never withdrawn. Hence that is one title put upon Believers, *Jude 1. — Preserved in Jesus Christ—.*

(2.) **HE** excites these Graces to their act. He not only keeps the principle in life, but prompts it to its actions. There is a second band

hand of the Spirit set to the work of Conversion, for the drawing forth of Grace into act, and that is done firstly by excitation; as there is a quickning in regeneration, so there is one after it, which David so often prays for, in *Psal. 119.* and elsewhere. And this excitation is both *moral* and *physical*. He invites, and useth Arguments with the man, and so it is moral; but he withal puts in his finger; and makes a powerful impression. And this is the first thing wherein the Soul discerns the special Grace of God.

(3.) HE assists these Graces in their act. The man being thus excited, exerts that grace so prompted; but still there is a continuance of the influence of the Spirit, which runs not, only to our *willing*, but our *doing* too, *Phil. 2. 13.* but for which, this act would never be produced. Paul disowns sufficiency for a thought that is good, *2 Cor. 3. 5.* The action would die in the birth, if he did not carry it through.

2. THERE is that also, which is done by the Convert in this Affair, viz. that he acts as a rational, voluntary, self-moving Instrument of the Spirit. Though all beings have their dependance upon God for their activity, yet he hath put a life into some, as a principle by which they act under him. There is also in some Creatures, reason, and will, deliberation, and election; and certainly the Creature hath its activity in such actions; how else could the same action be counted *righteous as from God*, and charged as *wicked on the Instruments*, as *Acts 2. 23.* Here then observe,

(1.) THAT the man, in Converting of himself, acts but as an Instrument of the Spirit. We have observed, that he acts not in co-ordination, but subordination. Now all subordinate Agents, are either adjuvant; or instrumental. That he is not an adjuvant, helping the Spirit in his work, is certain; for the Spirit helps him, and not he the Spirit: nor doth the Spirit need his help. What he doth, he doth it of himself. It remains therefore, that we can be only instrumental.

(2.) THAT though he be an Instrument, yet he is a living Instrument, he hath a principle of spiritual life in him. He lives, and so hath a power of self motion in him. For spiritual Life is a power of spiritual Actions. And it is not only a moving, but a rational life that he hath. Every faculty being Converted, and having suitable principles infused into it. Paul saith, *I can do, &c. Phil. 4. 13.*

(3.) HENCE the Grace in him readily entertains the Applications of the Spirit, and embraceth them. The Spirit cometh in the Word, speaks in the Soul by it, sets it home, and the Soul entertains it, and by an act of its own, reflects it back again. *Psal. 27. 8. When thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.* God helps him, but it was his heart that said it. So, *Cant. 1. 4. Draw me, we will run after thee.* He engageth by an act of his own: and this is the saving act, because it flows from a saving principle.

(4.) HE now accordingly puts forth the Grace that is in him, to the doing of the act it self. The Spirit excites and assists, and in this strength, he sets about & doth it. Job saith, *I repent in dust and ashes,* Job 42.6. And this is the same act which the Spirit wrought in him, which he also works, as being moved and acted by the Spirit of God. And this is the manner of *active Conversion.*

II. WE proceed to consider the Particular Exertion of the Grace of Faith, in the Souls Embracing of Christ on the free offer and invitation given it. And there needs the less to be said of it, because it is only an exemplification of that one Grace, in compliance with the Gospel call, bidding of us to believe in Christ for Salvation, which is doubtless drawn out after the same manner, with all the other Graces of the Spirit that are put into us. Here then let a few things be taken notice of.

1. THAT the Spirit of God having wrought a new Principle in the Soul, holds Christ as the Object of Faith before it, in all his glorious Sufficiency, inviting him, and encouraging him to believe on him. There is a general Invitation given to all to whom Christ is recommended in the publication of the Gospel. But there is a more special and peculiar Invitation presented to some, in whom the Spirit of God hath been at work, to prepare and dispose them for it. Such is that, *Mat. 11. 29. Take my yoke upon you, & learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* The Spirit indeed makes the offer to such as have no inclination to embrace it; but he continues it to such on whom he hath been at work, to enable and incline them to it, that so, having wrought the Will, he may also work the Deed. He therefore comes in and with the Word, holds the glass before the man, and sets home upon him all those Arguments by which he may be moved, as a Cause by Counsel, to give a welcome entertainment to the offer made.

2. THE renewed Understanding improves the Conviction and Illumination wrought in it, to give in its verdict for Christ, and commends him to the Will as a suitable Object of Faith. The man was before blind, but now he hath eyes, and he can see: and the Spirit, together with holding the Object before him, excites him to turn his eyes upon it, and gives him such a sight of Christ, as draws forth a compleat assent of his Understanding. And now the former Conviction of his sin and misery abiding on his Conscience, keeps in him a lively apprehension of his absolute necessity of Salvation by one that is able; and being entirely persuaded that Christ is such an One; discerning his glorious Excellencies, every way adapted to afford compleat Salvation to the miserable Sinner: he comes to this firm Conclusion, that Christ, and he alone, is an Object to be trusted in for Eternal Life. As they, *Joh. 6. 68. Lord, to whom shall we*

go: thou hast the words of eternal life. And because the Understanding is the Wills Counsellor, it recommends this result to the Will, for the determination of its choice. It saith, here thou must rest. *He is able, &c. Heb. 7. 25.* And *there is Salvation in no other, &c. Act. 4. 12.* It saith, Accept of Christ, and thou shalt be happy for ever. *Psal. 36. 8.* He is offered to thee, take him, and he shall be thine; and thou shalt never repent of it, but be satisfied in it, *Psal. 63. 5.*

3. *THE Will hereupon finds in itself a mighty Inclination, and Irresistible, to cast itself upon Christ for Salvation.* There are indeed many fears, doubts, reluctancies, fomented by the carnal part in him; and though they may be, in the very instant stirring, and disturbing of him, yet there is a prevalency of the Power and Grace of the Spirit, which draws out the Heart after Christ; he is now willing to forsake all his other trusts for him. It is a sudden Change, the Will is faced about at once. He that refused Christ before, now longs for him, and is ready to receive him. As, Cant. 6. 12. *Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.* And to forsake all for him, *Psal. 45. 10.* He now resolves, he must have Christ, or he dies; if he have him not, he must perish, and if he comes to him and be rejected, he can but perish: And this is the Conclusion that he fixeth upon, and he cannot be moved from. Christ is the *Pearl of price*: and he resolves to sell all for him, and let Satan, and the World, and his own corrupt part say what they can to beat him off from it, he remains unmoveable.

4. *THE Soul hereupon accepts of the Invitation, and consents to the Call.* The force of this Inclination is drawn forth into act, and to the Assent given by the Understanding, is settled with the Consent of the Will. And there are more especially these things in it.

(1.) *IT receives the Testimony that is given of Christ, and acquiesces in it.* It is of the nature of all Faith, that it receives a report upon the credit of the Author of it. Now, the great things that concern Christ as a Saviour, are of Revelation. God hath declared them to us in the Gospel; and the Spirit is the witness of them, in the Hearts of those that cordially entertain them. And this is the foundation of the Souls acceptance and consent. This therefore John commends as a noble act of faith, John 3. 33. *He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal, that God is true.* The Understanding commends Christ, according to the Gospel discoveries made of him, acted upon it with a powerful suasion; and the Will saith, *I receive it, and dare to adventure for Eternity on the truth of it.* And this is that which the Apostle so commends in those whom he writes unto, *1 Pet. 1. 8.*

(2.) *IT embraceth the Promise of the new Covenant, in which Salvation is engaged on believing.* As God in the Gospel discovers the

sufficiency of Christ to save, so with it he proposeth the terms of a Covenant, in which, together with commanding us to believe, he engageth Salvation to us, upon our so doing; which Promise is the handle which Faith hath to fasten its hold upon. Now Christ hath said, John 6. 37. *All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me: and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.* This is the Souls encouragement to come, and it takes him at his word: It saith, I am persuaded, that as he is able, so he is faithful, and never did, nor ever will deceive those who dare to adventure upon his word: I am satisfied, that upon believing on him, I cannot miss of obtaining the crown of Life.

(3.) *IT hereupon adventures itself on Christ as a Saviour.* Christ invites him, and holds forth the Promise to him, and the heart being moved by it, moves to him, and embraceth him. He saith, *Come to me, cast thy burden on me, take me for thy Salvation:* And the Soul replies, *Behold I come;* and in coming to him, it lets go and utterly relinquisheth every other reliance that it had. It saith as, *Hos. 14. 4.* It sees that there is no help to be had in any other object; and now it concludes that he shall be its Object, as, *Psal. 142. 4, 5.* And this Adventure is an act of Faith; it is the full result of the Will, and by it the Soul enters into Christ, and takes possession of him, as his habitation, and rock of safety. And indeed it is beyond the power of nature to make such an adventure, as a Soul perishing doth, when under the deepest sense of Sin and Unworthiness, it casts itself upon Christ.

(4.) *IN this Adventure it freely commits itself to Him for Safety.* Hence that of Paul, *2 Tim. 1. 12. I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep them which I have committed unto him against that day.* He now puts his very Life and Soul into the hands of Christ. As he, *Psal. 31. 5.* He resolves that Christ hath a mighty Arm, that is able to secure him from all danger; that in him there is security against all the Curses of the Law, against all the endeavours of the roaring Lion that seeks to devour him, that he is an high Tower, and a munition of Rocks. He therefore makes himself over unto him, puts himself into his Hands: Saith as, *Psal. 62. 5, 6. My soul wait thou only upon God: for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved.* He gives himself up to Christ as the high Priest, Prophet and King of his Salvation; resigns himself up to be justified by his Righteousness, directed by his Spirit, and governed by his Laws, and depends now intirely upon him for all that conduct whereby he may be brought to enjoy the purchased Possession: And saith as he, *Psal. 73. 24. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.*

(5.) *AND now it takes up its stand, & rests here forever.* He had been wandering from mountain

mountain to hill, but now he is gotten into his Rock, and there he will abide, *Pfal. 12. 7, 8.* He makes an absolute choice of Christ, without any reserves; gives himself up to him in *an everlasting Covenant never to be broken*; resolving *to be for him, and for no other* hence forward and forever. Thus the Spirit draws, and thus the Soul follows, and so enters into *the rock of Ages*, where he shuts the door, by *trusting in the Name of the Lord, and staying himself upon his God.*

U S E I. LEARN hence, *How few there be that are Effectually Called, and how vain the pretence of the most is, to a title to Salvation.* It is certain, that none shall be saved but such as are gotten into Christ by a saving Faith, and all that are so have not only had the outward Call of the Gospel given them, inviting them to come to him, or the inward Motions of the Spirit, striving with them, for of such Christ saith, *Mat. 20. 16. Many be called, but few chosen.* But they have been drawn, won, powerfully persuaded; they have forsaken all other objects of trust, discovered the excellency, glory, sufficiency of Christ, and chosen him for their Prince and Saviour; they have accepted of the terms of the new Covenant, and complied with them, taken him for their *Wisdom, Righteousness, &c.* their Lord, and their God, and their all. And now they are for him and no other. Would you not then be deceived in your hopes, take heed of building on a sandy bottom; see that this thorough Change be wrought in you; that you are turned from Sin, Flesh, and World, and gotten into the Lord Jesus Christ by a living Faith: Else all your other pretences will deceive you, and you will be found among the *workers of iniquity.* You see what it is to be a Believer. And remember what is the solemn Seal of

the Gospel, *Mar. 16. 16. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

U S E II. LET me offer a Word of Consolation to all those that are thus *Effectually Called.* Have you found the efficacy of the Grace of God in you, making Sin *an evil and bitter thing* to you; discovering to you the glorious Excellency of Jesus Christ in his Person and Offices, and been won thereby to come away from all other vain Objects, on which you sometimes leaned the weight of your confidence, and upon his Invitation and Promise, have cast your selves upon him, for pardon of Sin, for peace with God, for safe conduct, and direction and influence, to lead you on your way, and make you *meet for the Inheritance*: and rest here; resolving to go no where else? You are then Called; the Everlasting Covenant between him and you is Sealed. And let this be your Consolation, that this trust shall never fail you. You may say as he, in *Psal. 20. 7, 8. Some trust in chariots; and some in horses: but we will remember the Name of the Lord our God. They are brought down and fallen, but we are risen and stand upright.* And with the *Apostle, Rom. 8. 38. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Here is the foundation laid, which shall be certainly built up. And you see the indissoluble connexion, *ver. 30. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

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