

Monergism



THOMAS MANTON

Born Again

SERMONS UPON 1 PETER 1:23

Monergism



THOMAS MANTON

Born Again

SERMONS UPON 1 PETER 1:23

Born Again

SERMONS UPON 1 PETER 1:23

by Thomas Manton

Table of Contents

[Sermon I. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever,"](#)

[Sermon II. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,"](#)

[Sermon III. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,"](#)

[Sermon IV. "By the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever,"](#)

SERMON I

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.—1 PETER 1:23.

IN the context the apostle presseth to holiness, and in the immediately preceding verse to the love of the brethren; he enforceth both from regeneration.

First, Holiness. They that have a new birth should have a new life; for another principle doth necessarily infer other manner of operation.

By the natural life, which consisteth in the union of the soul with the body, a man is enabled to move, speak, reason, and discourse, and do such actions as are consistent with that life; so by the spiritual life, which consists in the union of the soul with Christ, a man is enabled to act suitably; therefore if christians would walk answerably to their new birth, they should be holy.

Secondly, Love to the brethren or fellow-saints.

1. There is ground and reason to love them, for they are brethren; not in respect of the first birth, which is from the flesh, but in respect of the second birth, which is from the Spirit. Φιλαδελφία and ἀγάπη are joined together by the apostle Peter: 2 Peter 1:7, 'And to godliness, brotherly kindness.' All are brethren or our own flesh, as coming from the same stock; but there is another relation, which is spiritual. Saints are brethren, as children of the same Father in heaven. If we be born again, it is but reason that we should live in love with the rest of our Father's children.

2. The new birth doth not only yield us a reason to love them, but an inclination, heart, and power to love them. It begets this love, as well as enforceth it: 1 John 5:1, 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.' The same new nature that inclineth us to love our Father doth incline us also to love his children, which bear his image; for there are the same inducements for the one as for the other. Therefore, 'See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently; being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.'

In these words observe—

[1.] The state of believers; they are 'Born again.'

[2.] The instrumental cause or means used to bring them into this estate, 'Not of corruptible seed, but by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.' Where the instrumental cause is laid down,

ἀντιθετικῶς καὶ ἐξεγητικῶς, both by way of opposition and by way of explication.

(1.) By way of opposition to other births: 'Not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible;' alluding either to the seed of fruits, to which the word of God is compared, Mat. 13:19, or else to that seed by which we are born after the common course of nature; that is, corruptible, perishing, and defiled with sin: Job 14:2, 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one;' John 3:6, 'That which is born of flesh is flesh.' A frail and polluted creature. But the second birth is from incorruptible seed, spiritual, clean, and holy: 1 John 5:18, 'For we know that whatsoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not.' The fruit of that birth is immortal.

(2.) It is set forth by way of explication; for the apostle explaineth himself what he meaneth by incorruptible seed, 'The word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.' Only mark the difference of phrase; it is ἐκ σπορᾶς, of seed, but διὰ λόγου, by the word; for the word of God is not the matter of spiritual regeneration, but the instrumental cause of it. And he commendeth the word of God by a twofold property—(1.) That it liveth; and (2.) That it 'abideth for ever.'

(1st.) Its actusivity and durability; or from the constructure of the Greek phrases, the two attributes may be thought to be given to God, διὰ λόγου ζῶντος θεοῦ καὶ μένοντος, 'by the word of the living God,' and 'abiding for ever.' But by the following verses, which are a quotation out of the prophet Isaiah, it appeareth plainly that they are to be applied to the word. Only by the way observe how the same attributes that may be given to God may be given to his word also; as Heb. 4:12, 13, 'For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart: neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, for all things are naked

and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.' God's word is like himself. These titles are elsewhere given to the word. It is said to be 'living,' because of its efficacy; it quickeneth us, and begets a life in us that cannot be quenched. It is ζῶν καὶ ἐνεργῆς, Heb. 4:12, 'living and powerful;' 'Thou hast the words of eternal life,' John 6:63; and it is called 'the word of life,' Acts 5:20; and Phil. 2:16, 'Holding forth the word of life,' and elsewhere. The word of God is a living word, not a dead letter.

(2d.) The word 'abideth for ever.' The word dieth not when we die: Luke 21:33, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away;' Ps. 119:89, 'For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in the heavens.' It is an eternal truth. The word abideth in the effects of it upon the regenerate. The sum of the words is this, that life which we have by natural generation is a mortal, frail life, but that life which we have by being born again is eternal.

The first point is, Those that do truly believe in God through Jesus Christ are born again.

Such are spoken of in the context; and of such the apostle saith, 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.'

I shall inquire—(1.) What is regeneration, or what it is to be born again? (2.) The necessity of such a work, if we would be Christ's disciples, or truly believe in him.

First, What is regeneration? It is a notion often used in scripture: John 3:3, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' And baptism is called λουτρὸν παλυνγενεσίας, 'The laver of regeneration,' Titus 3:5; and a godly man is said to be born of God, and that his seed abideth in him, 1 John 3:9. The occasion of the expression might be, that the Jews were wont to call their proselytes recens natos, men new born. But whatever the occasion were, the expression is solemnly consecrated by the Spirit of God to note our

first implantation into Christ, and doth not barely signify outward profession, nor yet naked faith, or persuasion of the truths of the gospel, as appeareth by the dialogue between Christ and Nicodemus, who came to him and owned him as a teacher sent from God; yet Christ presseth it upon him to be born again. Let us see then what is the true importance of this notion in the christian faith. It implieth such a work of God upon the heart as carrieth proportion with the outward and first birth, as appeareth by all the places where it is used. And it is that work of God whereby a new spiritual life and nature is communicated to us. The analogy may be supposed to stand in these things—

1. A child is not born without some pain more or less, so neither is this change carried on without its pangs. The first work of the Spirit is to give us a sight of our own vileness and sinfulness, and to work in us the fear of deserved wrath; therefore called a 'spirit of bondage;' Rom. 8:15, 'We have not received the spirit of bondage, again to fear.' The Spirit worketh according to the covenant that we are under. In our sinful estate we are obnoxious to the first covenant, unable to perform the duty, and liable to its curse; so the Spirit maketh us sensible of it. Those converts in Acts 2:37 'were pricked in heart;' they had their pangs and troubles; and still this is the ordinary way of coming to the new birth, by sorrow and brokenness of heart, as the child cometh into the world by the sorrows of travail.

2. It is not a birth when there is nothing brought forth, though there be never so much pain; so convictions, qualms of conscience, and pangs of legal sorrow, terrors wrought in us by the spirit of bondage, will never prove a man regenerate unless the new creature be brought forth. There is in many some deliberation and trouble about the ways of God, yet no actual choice; as the young man went away sad when he heard the terms, Mat. 19:22; he was sorry because he could not have heaven in his own way. Some anxious thoughts they have, but go not further. They have some throes, and give over.

3. A new creature is brought forth entire and whole; so it is when the birth is regular; but in the new birth it is so always. No new creature is born maimed, but of perfect shape, because that is the immediate work of the Spirit, who cannot miscarry in his operations; and a defect in parts cannot be supplied by after growth, and it is fitted for the sight of God. Therefore here is a new creature brought forth, not a new substance of soul or body, but the faculties renewed and purified, and fitted for God's use and service, by certain infused qualities or graces, which is called the 'inward man,' 2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 3:16, 'That he would grant unto you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man;' and the 'hidden man of the heart,' 1 Peter 3:4. And it is entire; a new mind, heart, conscience, will, and affections; new thoughts, new desires, comforts, and contentments. It is all perfect as to parts, though not degrees. In the natural birth, from little beginnings there is a going on to perfection; so in the new birth, from the stature of a child there is a growing up to a perfect man in Christ Jesus, as they get more knowledge, more grace, and more experience.

4. The child so born cometh from a place of darkness and confinement into a state of light and liberty; so doth the new creature. The terminus a quo, term from which, is darkness and bondage, figured by the state of the child before his birth; and the terminus ad quem, term to which, is a state of liberty, of light, and the knowledge of God in Christ: 2 Cor. 4:6, 'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' And they are called into the liberty of God's children, or freedom from the slavery of sin, and subjection to wrath: Rom. 8:2, 'For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.' We are freed from those manacles of corruption wherein we were wrapped before.

5. The new creature brought forth is living, endued with properties, inclinations, and dispositions agreeable to the nature that begat it; so there is in us a principle of a new life that carrieth some measure of

resemblance and conformity with the life of God. The effects of every perfect generation are life and likeness. Likeness is not enough to constitute a generation. An exquisite limner may draw a perfect picture of his son, yet this picture is not said to be begotten or born of him, but made by him. The products of art have likeness, but not life. Again, life is not enough; in equivocal generations there is life, but not likeness; as frogs and worms and putrid creatures breed out of the slime by the heat of the sun; these are produced, but not born. Both must be; as when a man begets a son in his own image and likeness, there is both: so here, when we are born again, there is life and likeness.

[1.] Life. There is another manner of life than we lived before. We live the life of God, from which we were alienated before, Eph. 4:18, as appeareth by new actions, desires, and delights. So there are other manner of principles and operations than came from life natural. It is now a living unto God: Gal. 2:20, 'The life that I live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God.' As life natural is a living to itself, to its own ends and interests, so is this. Take end and principle together, it is a living to God. All the acts of the natural life are overruled to nobler ends: 1 Peter 4:6, 'That they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.' They are quickened by the Spirit to live a life of purity and holiness.

[2.] Likeness: 2 Peter 1:4, 'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature.' A restitution of the image of God lost at first. And because many duties imply inferiority and subjection, and many necessities are introduced by the fall, therefore we are not only conformed to God, but to Christ, or God in our nature: 2 Cor. 3:8, 'But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' That is the great work of the Spirit by the gospel; there is a nature put into us, that of all things in the world cometh nearest to the nature of God himself.

6. Upon the new birth there ariseth a visible relation between the child born and his parents; so, besides change of disposition, there is a change of state, a relative change, and a real change; from a child of the devil he becometh the son of God through faith: John 1:12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.' And from a child of wrath he is made an heir of salvation, accepted for one of God's family, and hath a right to all the privileges depending thereupon.

Secondly, The necessity of this work of regeneration.

1. With respect to grace and glory.

[1.] As to the work of grace, a man is unmeet for God's use till he be purified by this work of God upon his heart. There is something that doth hinder, nothing doth further this work. Something doth hinder: 2 Tim. 2:21, 'If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and made meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.' There is a mass of corruption which remaineth as a clog upon us, which maketh us averse and indisposed for the work of God; all this must be done away. As a man that would build his house exactly regular and uniform must not patch up the old building, but raze it to the very bottom, that he may lay a new foundation, so doth God take away the old rubbish of corruption, wholly demolish Satan's work, purge the soul from those lusts which inclined it to carnal vanities, before it is meet for his spiritual service. Nothing to further; and so you cannot serve God till you are born again: Eph. 2:10, 'You are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.' Every creature hath faculties suitable to those operations which belong to that creature; so man must be a new created and formed creature, that he may be prepared, fitted, and made ready for the Lord. You cannot expect new operations till there be a new life. Here the business sticketh with man. This should be looked after and desired first, as a peculiar branch of the spiritual life. We expect strengthening grace before we have received renewing grace. This is like little children, that attempt to run before they can

go. This is as if a man complained of an aching tooth when a mortal disease hath seized on his vitals, of a cut finger when at the same time he is wounded at heart, of wandering thoughts in prayer when at the same time the heart is habitually averse and estranged from God. They complain of want of quickening grace when they want converting grace; as if we would have the Spirit blow to a dead coal. They confess only the infirmities of soul, when they should bewail the misery of an unregenerate and carnal estate. They complain of incident weakness, when we should first see that our habitual aversion from God be cured.

[2.] As to the privileges of grace, you have no interest and title to them till you are born again. Nothing avails to establish your interest in Christ but a new creature: Gal. 6:15, 'For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.' It is not being of this or that party or opinion, though some more strict than others; not doing this or that particular thing, submitting to this or that ordinance, praying or hearing the word. This is only an evidence in our consciences of our justified estate and union with Christ: 2 Cor. 5:17, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things are become new.' Every one that is an adopted son of God must have a new birth and a spiritual being: John 1:12, 13, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name; which are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' A change of disposition. God adopts otherwise than men; they take as they find, they cannot put in new qualities. To be the people of God without regeneration is as impossible as to be the children of men without generation; for we are born God's enemies, and must be new-born his sons, or else remain enemies still. No hope of glory: 1 Peter 1:3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.' Children only can look for a child's portion.

2. As to glory. It is said, John 3:3, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' I know 'seeing' is put for 'enjoying;' yet the phrase is emphatical: he shall not have a glimpse, or be suffered to look within the veil. A stranger cannot lay claim to the inheritance, but a son; and sons we are not till we be regenerated. As I said before, we are incapable of blessedness; there is no suitableness between us and it. The apostle speaketh of being 'made meet,' Col. 1:12, meet for the enjoyment of God. Man neither knoweth his true happiness, nor careth for it, but followeth his own lusts. By nature man is opposite to the kingdom of God, being corrupt and fleshly in all the faculties of soul and body; hath no spiritual sense, disposition, motion, and inclination towards heavenly things. In short, our frail bodies must be changed before they can be brought to heaven: 'We shall not all die, but we shall be changed.' If the body must be changed, how much more the soul? If that which is frail, much more that which is filthy; if bare flesh and blood cannot enter into heaven till it be free from its corruptible qualities, certainly not a guilty soul till it be freed from its sinful qualities. Think again and again of the necessity of this.

Use 1. To exhort you all to look after this work, to be new-born. And let me direct it to all sorts of men, young men and old.

1. You that are young, you have been born in sin: Ps. 51:5, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me;' Gen. 5:3, 'Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his own image.' Sinful man begets a sinful child. You must be born again. God provided a laver for us as soon as we were born. Baptism is the laver of regeneration, Titus 3:5; and little ones were circumcised, Deut. 30:6. There is filthiness in you, and it is lusty and strong. It is good to begin with God betimes; they glorify God more, and enjoy him sooner. They glorify him more: Eph. 1:12, 'That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.' They that get into Christ before others bring more honour to God than they that are brought in after: Rom. 16:7, 'Who also were in Christ before me.' Old men may be ashamed when little ones get the start of them. The

sooner you close with Christ, the work is done the more easily, before you are accustomed to a slavery to Satan, and your lusts are rooted in you. You enjoy him more. Christ calleth little children: Mark 10:14, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.' He is willing to take them into his arms. You cannot come before you are welcome. The great God will deign to dwell in the hearts of little ones.

2. You that are old, oh, it is high time for you to be born again; you are as good as dead already: Heb. 11:12, 'Therefore sprang from him one, and him as good as dead.' Chimneys long foul, if they be not swept, will be fired at length. You have long lived or died in the world: 'A sinner of a hundred years old shall be accursed,' Isa. 65:20. He that liveth unreclaimed and unrenewed, though his life be never so much prolonged, shall die an accursed wretch. You never begin to live till you live in Christ; you have but told over so many summers and winters. All that time is lost that is spent in your unregenerate estate; as a man may be a long time at sea, and yet make but a short voyage, get but a little ground though long tossed upon the waves. Oh, bethink yourselves before your hoary heads go down to the grave in sorrow. Say not, as Nicodemus, 'Shall a man return into his mother's womb, being old?' This is a spiritual work which must pass upon you. God promiseth to pour out his Spirit upon old ones, Acts 2:17. A ruinous heap of stones, that is ready to drop in pieces, God can raise up to himself a temple for the Holy Ghost to dwell in. Submit to this work before it be too late.

Secondly. Let me speak to the poor and rich.

1. To the poor and them of low esteem in the world, to be born again, and this will ennoble your blood; to be of God's family, heirs of the kingdom: James 1:9, 10, 'Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; and the rich, in that he is brought low;' James 2:5, 'Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?' You are indeed honourably descended; you are begotten of God, not of

corruptible seed: John 1:12, 13, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' And honourably provided for, heirs of a kingdom. Though you cannot reckon up a long pedigree of famous ancestors, nor entitle yourself to such great families as others do, yet you are born from above; there is your genealogy. You can speak of a descent from heaven. It was one of the works that Christ produced to declare that he was sent from God: Mat. 11:5, 'The poor have the gospel preached unto them,' πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται, the poor are all to be gospelled.

2. The rich are exhorted to look after this. It is no great glory to be born of the froth of the blood and the will of man: John 1:13, 'Not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' It is better to be a new creature than to be the son of nobles, yea, kings and princes. It is not the dignity of men's rule, but the quality and frame of their hearts, by which they are judged before God. Omnis sanguis concolor—all blood is of a colour. The great men of the world shall one day be cast out as the scum and off-scouring of all things if they be not born again of the Spirit.

Thirdly, Let me speak to men as profane or as civil. Every man must be born again, be he to appearance better or worse. The state and frame of the heart must be changed, be he an epicure or carnal man, a gross sinner or a painted pharisee.

1. The profane. Surely it concerneth you to be born again. You that can savour nothing but carnal things, and wallow in all manner of filthiness, you are to change heart and life; but first the heart, otherwise you build without a foundation. Nature beginneth first with the heart, as the fountain of life. It is the painter that only draweth an outward shadow, that beginneth with the external lineaments and outward proportions first. Now you who declare your sin as Sodom, surely you must be changed. You cannot expect to go from Delilah's lap to Abraham's bosom. The new heavens and new

earth are provided for new creatures; there are no dirty swine can enter there. Oh, submit to this change: 1 Cor. 6:9, 10, 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.' Meditate on that scripture, 'Know ye not?' It is an appeal to conscience. And 'be not deceived,' for the worst are full of confident presumptions. You are travelling west; that is not the way into the eastern parts. You set your faces against heaven and happiness.

2. The civil and ingenious, that have been well educated and brought up, need also to be born again: Mat. 5:20, 'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Who more exact than they as to external conformity? There is a strait gate that you are to pass through, and that is of repentance and the new creature, Mat. 7:14. Oh, how many are deceived with this common error, that sin and holiness is nothing but moral virtue and vice, spiritual regeneration nothing else but good education and philosophical institution, godliness nothing but honest behaviour, christianity nothing but a well acquired civility! These have no change of nature. Alas! these differ as the shadow and substance. The earth bringeth forth grass and baser flowers of itself, but it must be tilled to bring forth corn and finer flowers. There is a work of the Spirit, with respect to the two covenants, carried on. You must be born again, or you cannot see the kingdom of God. Regeneration signifieth such a change, that a man, not only of vicious becometh virtuous, but of carnal becometh spiritual. I gather that from John 3:6, 'That which is born of flesh is flesh.' A man by nature is carnal, yea, very flesh itself. He is so when he inclineth to things pleasing to the flesh, seeketh them only, and savoureth them only, affecteth them only. This is a natural man, that hath not the Spirit of God: Jude 19, 'Sensual, not having the Spirit.' Nor receiveth the things of the Spirit, 1 Cor. 2:14. Acteth but as a nobler and better-natured animal. He only liveth an animal life,

common to us with the beasts. All his thoughts and cares run that way, void of spiritual life, ignorant, mindless of another world or the way that tendeth thither, desireth it not. Now, though they be not profane, do not wallow in divers sins and wickedness, whereby others dishonour human nature, yet because they do not look after a better life, and have no desire of better things fixed upon their minds, they are carnal. But now he is regenerated when he that only before sought after carnal things, breathed after carnal things, contented himself with this lower happiness, afterwards desireth spiritual and heavenly things, and really endeavoureth to get them. This nature can never do; water riseth no higher than its fountain. That which carrieth us to God must come from God.

To quicken the exhortation, I shall give you two arguments or motives—

1. From the danger. Better you had never been born if you are not born again. Many have cursed the day of their first birth, but never any cursed the day of their new birth. Better to be a toad or a dog, because his misery endeth when he dies; but your misery then begins. You think, perhaps, that the God that made you will save you; as his creatures, he will have pity on you. No: Isa. 27:11, 'It is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will not have mercy upon them, and he that formed them will show them no favour.' God hath set up another rule; his delight is in his workmanship, in Christ Jesus. The unregenerate will curse the womb that bare them, and the paps that gave them suck.

2. Better you had never been baptized if you be not new-born. A carnal christian is worse than an infidel: 1 Tim. 5:8, 'If any man provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.' Such know nothing of sin and righteousness with respect to a covenant, nothing of virtue and vice as a perfection or blemish of nature. They are baptized indeed, but have no benefit by it. It is not the laver of regeneration to such: John 13:8, 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part

in me.' Better scalding oil had been poured upon your heads than the water of baptism. It is a witness of thy breach of vows, for thou art by baptism engaged to be a new creature.

SERMON II

Being born again, not of corruptible, but incorruptible seed.—1

PETER 1:23.

I HAVE pressed you to seek after this work by divers arguments suited to all sorts of persons.

But you will say, To what end is this exhortation? Is there any help in the hands of man? Can men work this regeneration in themselves, and so change a carnal sinful heart into a holy and new heart, or cause themselves to become new creatures?

I answer—No; surely regeneration is the proper work of an omnipotent God. But yet the exhortation is not in vain. I shall prove both the parts—(1). That regeneration is the work of God; (2.) Yet this exhortation is not in vain; and then go on with the exhortation.

First, That regeneration is the proper work of God, and the sole effect of his Spirit—

1. From the state of the person who is to be regenerated. The object of regeneration is a sinner lying in a state of defection from original righteousness, averse from God, yea, an enemy to him; prone to all evil; weak, yea, dead to all spiritual good. And how can such an one renew and convert himself to God? It is true man hath reason left, and may have some confused notions or general apprehensions of things good or evil, pleasing or displeasing to God; but to choose the one and leave the other, that is not in his power. They may have loose desires of spiritual favours, especially as apprehended under the quality of a natural good: Num. 23:10, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.' So that excellency which

they discover in these spiritual things is apprehended in a natural way: John 6:34, 'And they said unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.' These desires are neither truly spiritual, nor serious, nor constant, nor laborious; so that to apprehend or seek spiritual things in a spiritual manner is above their reach and sphere. So man is represented as blind, perverse, rebellious; blind in his mind, perverse in his will, rebellious in his affections, so as he cannot know: 1 Cor. 2:14, 'But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them.' Cannot believe: John 6:44, 'No man can come to me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.' Cannot obey: Rom. 8:7, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' You cannot think: 2 Cor. 3:5, 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.' Cannot speak: Mat. 12:34, 'How can ye, being evil, speak good things?' Cannot do: John 15:5, 'For without me ye can do nothing.' This is necessary to be considered; for conversion beginneth in a sense of our impotency, and the first step to regeneration is a sense of the naughtiness and corruptness of our hearts. When men only dislike their evil actions, and are not humbled for their evil nature, they rest only in a moral reformation, and do not look after a spiritual change.

2. From the nature of that work by which this change is to be accomplished. It is a new birth. There is no more power in any man to work this change in himself than there could be imagined to be in him to beget himself at first. It is ascribed to God: James 1:18, 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth;' 1 Peter 1:3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead;' 1 John 5:1, 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.' It is the infusion of a new life; and to give life is God's prerogative: John 5:26, 'The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.' Therefore called the 'life of God,' and the 'seed of God;' a principle of doing that which is

savingly good according to the will of God. Christ bringeth it as a proof of his own Godhead, to be a fountain and cause of life; for it is the prerogative of God alone. It is also called a 'resurrection,' or a quickening of the dead: Eph. 2:1, 'And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.' Man's will is no co-worker with God; it is his power, and such a power as raised Christ from the dead: Eph. 1:19, 20, 'And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.' It is a new creature: Eph. 4:24, 'And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;' Eph. 2:10, 'For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.' A new creature: 2 Cor. 5:17, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' Creation is a work of omnipotency. Vicious qualities are subdued, and contrary virtues and graces planted in their stead. In the beginning God made something out of nothing, and some things ex inhabili materia, out of such matter as was wholly unfit and indisposed for those things to be made of it; as when God made Adam out of the dust of the ground, and Eve out of the rib of man, Gen. 2:7, 22. Just such a work is this; he maketh those that were wholly indisposed to good, and averse from it, yea, perverse resisters of all motions towards that which is godly and holy, to be lovers of holiness and walkers in it. God, that made man at first, must renew him, and restore him to that image which he lost: Col. 3:10, 'And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.' Therefore we must hold this, and not so enforce exhortation as to weaken prayer; it is the Lord's work, and he will be acknowledged in it.

Secondly, The exhortation is not in vain, for these reasons—

1. Because the object of regeneration is the reasonable creature, upon whom God worketh, not as upon a stock or a stone, but maketh use of the faculties which he hath, and dealeth with reasonable creatures in a reasonable manner; draweth them with the cords of a man, not only by invincible grace, but by doctrine and persuasion. He worketh

not on us as on senseless blocks, but as reasonable creatures: Hosea 11:4, 'I drew them with cords of a man, with the bands of love.' First showing man his lost estate by the law, and in the gospel revealing Christ, and the possibility of salvation to all those that will come to God by him; and then by the preaching of the gospel sweetly inviteth them to receive Christ, that he may pardon their sins, and sanctify their natures, and lead them in a way of holiness unto eternal life, upon which followeth the powerful operation of his Spirit, infusing life into them, and conforming them to Christ.

2. It is not in vain, that man may own his duty and be sensible of the necessity of the change of his estate, who would otherwise be altogether careless and mindless of such a thing. In the name of God we may require you to believe, repent, turn to God, though God giveth you all these things. So likewise we may exhort you to be regenerate, to put off the old man, and to put on the new: Eph. 4:22–24, 'That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' To warn you of your duty: Eph. 5:14, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' To point out to lost sinners what is their duty, namely, to turn to God, and set about the duties of holiness, flowing from the principle of a new life; which is enjoined by God to sinners, not that it is in their power, but because it is their duty so to do; yea, such a duty as must be speedily and earnestly gone about, if they mean to be saved; for our utter inability to help ourselves, or to do anything acceptable to God, contracted by Adam's fall, doth not weaken or abolish God's sovereign right and dominion over us; and though we be not able to do his will, yet he may justly require and exact it of us. It is a demanding of God's right, and a making of the creature sensible of what he must look after.

3. Because by such exhortations and commands, as by an outward means, the Spirit of God doth effectually work that in them which he

requireth of them: 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,' Rom. 10:7. There is no power in us, or principle of life in us, whereby we can quicken ourselves or bring ourselves from nature to grace; yet by the exhortation, as by the means, God infuseth this power and principle, conveying thereby the effectual working of his power, and so giveth what he requireth. As it was not in vain said to Lazarus, 'Come forth;' there was a power went along with the words, 'Lazarus, come forth,' John 11:43. Christ in using his omnipotency doth not look upon things as they are in themselves or seem to be to us, but in speaking and commanding giveth life and strength to do what is commanded. So he 'calleth things that are not as though they were,' Rom. 4:17. He speaketh to him as one living, and ready to come forth on a call; because of this very word he puts life into him to hear and to obey. So when God by us calleth upon lost dead sinners to get life and grace, who knoweth but that the blessing may go along with the exhortation, and he may work what he requireth?

4. The exhortation is not in vain, because there are some things to be done before regeneration. In order thereunto, the preparative dispositions that lead unto regeneration must be distinguished from regeneration itself. They are not *gradus in re*, parts of regeneration, but *gradus ad rem*. When Adam was created, the matter was prepared, and the body organised and fitted to receive the soul before God breathed that spirit of life into him, and in ordinary generation there is a disposing of the matter before it be quickened. Now though God be not always tied to this course, yet he would have man tied to them in the use of external means, so that by these preparative exercises he may come nearer than he was before: Mark 12:34, 'And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he saith unto him, Thou are not far from the kingdom of God.' These preparations in regard of conversion are like the drying of the wood to the kindling of it or setting it on fire. The dryness of the wood is not the firing of the wood, or any degree of it, only a preparation of the matter, that it may take fire when it is put to it; or like the heating of metals before they are melted, and are cast into the mould to be

fashioned. Such kind of preparations there are to regeneration; as when a man by the study of the law hath a discovery and anxious sense of his miserable condition out of Christ, and doth seriously deliberate what to do, and hath a desire and purpose to make use of all good means for the escaping of God's wrath, as to hear, read, meditate, confer with others about the things that belong to regeneration. We may require you to use all these godly exercises, and to be diligent therein, that you may be in some readiness, and lie near at hand for God's work, which is better than to be afar off. So these preparations are as the drying of the wood, though it be not fired; the heating of the metal, though it be not melted; and in these we feel some common operations of the Spirit at least; and they that refuse these preparatives are without excuse, and it is a sign they slight reconciliation with God and regeneration by his Spirit. Thus you see why we are to exhort, and you to look after it, that you may lie fair for God's work.

5. The exhortation is not in vain, that men may not hinder this work, and obstruct their own mercies. This a man may do two ways—(1.) Either by neglecting the means which God hath appointed; or, (2.) By refusing the helps which God vouchsafeth to prepare and mollify the heart.

[1.] By neglecting the means. Though God doth renew men by his Spirit, yet he hath appointed the means by which man is to be subservient to such a work; the which if he will not try, and use the means, the blame is in himself, not God. If we are unwilling to take pains in seeking it, it showeth that we have no desire to find it, and shall at the last day be reprov'd as the 'wicked and slothful servant,' Mat. 25:26. His pleading he had no power, and that God requireth brick where he giveth no straw, will be of no use to him. He had no heart, no will to the thing, and shall be answerable for the contempt of God's word. But is it not folly to use the means, since it is not in our power to effect it? No; for if there were no hope of success, yet in obedience to the command we should be doing: Luke 5:5, 'Master, we have toiled all night, and have taken nothing: howbeit, at thy

word I will let down the net.' And if ever we look for the effect, it must be this way; we are bound, though God is not bound. It is not in man's power to beget a rational soul, yet none abstaineth from marriage for that reason, because the soul must be created by God; so regeneration is God's work; but therefore we must not neglect God's prescribed course, but be diligent in the use of means, waiting for this effect. What the means are I shall show you by and by.

[2.] By refusing the helps which God vouchsafeth us. So man may render himself more unapt to be changed; as, for instance, some preparative excitation of conscience; either by the word, as Felix: Acts 24:25, 'Felix trembled,' ἔμφοβος γενόμενος; he was in an agony; or by some notable affliction, when conscience casts up their sin: Gen. 42:21, 'We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.' Many such involuntary impressions there are, and strong motions to good, that come upon us without any endeavour or forethought of ours, by which the soul is awakened as out of sleep; and these are a closer offer on God's part to help us out of the estate wherein we are. Now so far as we are acted by God, we are to carry forth this work, and when the waters are stirred, to put in for cure; for otherwise we hinder and set back ourselves so much as we slight this common grace, or offer wrong to conscience. As water which hath been heated on the fire congealeth the soonest after it is taken off and removed from it, so they that have felt the motions of God's Spirit freeze soonest in the dregs and lusts of the flesh, and their hearts are most hardened, and they grieve God's Spirit that he ceaseth the work, or to continue his former motions: Isa. 55:6, 'Seek the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.'

6. The exhortation is not in vain, because upon our use of the means usually God cometh in with success, and it is a hundred to one if it be otherwise. I cannot say to every one that plougheth, infallibly that he shall have a good crop; but this I can say to him, It is God's use to bless the diligent and provident. I cannot say to every one that

desireth posterity, Marry, and you shall have children; I cannot say infallibly to him that goeth forth to battle for his country's good that he shall have victory and success; but I can say, as Joab, 1 Chron. 19:13, 'Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people and the cities of our God, and let the Lord do what is good in his sight.' I cannot say infallibly you shall have grace; but I can say to every one, Let him use the means, and leave the success of his labour and his own salvation to the will and good pleasure of God. I cannot say this infallibly, for there is no obligation upon God. And still this work is made the fruit of God's will and mere arbitrary dispensation: James 1:18, 'Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth;' Titus 3:4, 5, 'But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, 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.' Let us do what God hath commanded, and let God do what he will. And I need not say so; for the whole world in all their actings are and should be guided by this principle, Let us do our duty, and refer the success to God, whose ordinary practice is to meet with the creature that seeketh after him; yea, he is with us already; this earnest importunity in the use of means proceeding from the earnest impression of his grace. And therefore, since he is beforehand with us, and hath not showed any backwardness to our good, we have no reason to despair of his goodness and mercy, but rather to hope the best.

Well, now, let me go on with my exhortation. Since we are to labour after that which God will give, let me persuade you earnestly to desire, and carefully to endeavour after, this great benefit. But what is it that we are to do? (1.) Something to prepare for this work; (2.) Something that doth more immediately concern the work itself.

1. By way of tendency and preparation thereunto.

[1.] Observe what God doth to awaken your hearts, either by the touches of his providence or the motions of his Spirit. It is our great advantage to observe God's approaches: Isa. 55:6, 'Seek the Lord

while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.' He is nearer sometimes than at other times. There is a time of finding, if we have the skill and heart to take hold of it. Don't lose such an advantage as you will not lightly have again, when by your frowardness and negligence you let it pass out of your hands. Take heed, then, of carnal shifts and delays, and putting off God when he doth so fairly draw nigh unto thee, lest he be gone and never come more. As he biddeth his disciples shake off the dust of their feet against such as would not receive them when they tendered themselves to them: Mat. 10:13, 14, 'And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet;' Acts 13:46, 'Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word should first be spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the gentiles.' So God may take his leave when you will not suffer him to go on with his work in thine heart. Take heed of curing the evil spirit with an instrument of music.

[2.] Somewhat you must do yourselves besides this involuntary impression from without. I shall not instance in reading, hearing, or the general means, but only such as concern a closer application. The want of such is the main reason why men, though there be such a necessity upon them, do not look after the new birth, and they are consideration and examination.

(1.) Consideration. Reason with yourselves: For what end were you made? and what shall become of you to all eternity? Ps. 119:59, 'I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies;' Ps. 22:27, 'All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindred of the nations shall worship before thee. Men go on in a senseless security, never thinking of God, nor of their own salvation, nor dreaming of any other world but this which they now enjoy, wherein they place their happiness, without desire or hope of a better estate. Oh, but if men would rouse up themselves,

and consider that all the world are going to heaven or hell, and that in one of them there must be their long home or final abode, and that within a short time, they could not but be more serious, and see whether they are qualified to enter into the kingdom of God, yea or no. Oh, then, bethink yourselves how dangerous and woful will your condition be if you should be as Adam left you; if you should not be born again, and become a new creature; for new creatures are the only inhabitants of the new Jerusalem.

(2.) Examine and reflect upon thine own estate, whether indeed thou art born again, yea or no. What you have to depend upon; a duty which God often presseth us to: 'Let a man examine himself,' 1 Cor. 11:28; and 'Commune with your own hearts upon your beds,' Ps. 4:4; 'Search and try your ways, and turn to the Lord;' 'Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye he reprobates?' 2 Cor. 13:5. A man that hath a conscience may reflect upon his own ways, and say, How is it with me? is the image of God formed upon me? But men are loath to examine, for they are afraid of raising such spirits as they cannot easily lay again; and being intoxicated with the sweetness of carnal peace, and being impatient of labour and trouble, will not deal seriously with their own hearts. And therefore, here the work sticketh in their hands; either they do not examine, or else break up the court before things come to a full hearing and decision. All is quiet now; they make no question of the love of God, and have no scruple about their condition; and why should they trouble themselves? they shall but open the door to fears, and scruples, and perplexities, and weaken their confidence in God; for so they call the security of the flesh. They have a mind to sleep securely in their sins, and have many pleasing dreams of their own good condition, and the devil lets them alone. Foolish creatures will not remember that they are in danger of a more severe search when God shall lay open the secrets of men's hearts.

2. With respect to the work itself.

[1.] You are with brokenness of heart to bewail your corruption and the wretchedness of your natural estate: Luke 18:13, 'Lord, be merciful to me, a miserable sinner.'

[2.] Beg grace of 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; thou art the Lord my God.' You can pray literally, though not spiritually. 'Take with you words, and call upon the Lord,' and put a natural fervency into them (as the new birth concerneth his happiness), though you have not a spiritual affection to the thing itself.

[3.] Wait for it.

(1.) With patience: 'Of his own will begat he us,' James 1:18. God's time is not yet come: John 3:8, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' God acts with liberty, as the wind bloweth when and where it listeth. The wind bloweth freely, but not at the command and beck of any creature. Some lay at the pool for many years; others had cure sooner. We are not to limit the holy One of Israel, but wait upon him, without throwing up duties, or saying, 'Why should I wait upon the Lord any longer?'

(2.) With hope. There are absolute promises of taking away the heart of stone: Ezek. 36:26, 27, 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh, and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them;' Jer. 24:7, 'And I will give them a heart to know me that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; and they shall return unto me with their whole heart;' 'And I will put my laws into their mind, and write them upon their heart,' Heb. 8:10. These are not only promises to grace, but of

grace. These encourage us in the constant use of means, especially considering how willing God is to give out grace when the hearts of his creatures are set upon it; and you lie as fair for them as any others.

[4.] Observe the secret illapses of his grace: Acts 10:44, 'While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.' It is not impossible for a spiritual man to feel the very first illapse of the Spirit into the soul. It may sometimes bring that sense with itself, though it is not so always; for the giving life and the giving sense are distinct things; they go not always together; yet observe the stirring of the waters. When he draweth, you should run, Cant. 1:4; when he knocketh, we should open, Rev. 3:20. Sometimes you may feel that he knocketh loud; observe the impulse. When the wind bloweth, then let loose the sails, John 3:8; when the waters are stirred, put in for cure, John 5:4. Our great duty is to obey the Spirit's sanctifying motions, and before they cool or cease, set about the business.

SERMON III

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed.—
1 PETER 1:23.

USE 2. Is trial; are we born again, or have we been truly acquainted with this work of God upon our hearts? To this end let us see—(1.) What regeneration is; (2.) How it may be discovered that such a work hath passed upon us.

First, What it is. I shall proceed here both negatively and affirmatively.

1. Negatively; and here—

[1.] It is not our visible inauguration into the company of Christ's people by baptism; for many that are baptized may never enter into

the kingdom of God. Baptism indeed is the outward sign and seal of it, and therefore called the 'laver of regeneration,' Titus 3:5. But we must distinguish between the outward sign and the spiritual effect. There is signum and res terrena, the sign and earthly matter; and there is signatum and res cœlestis, the heavenly work signified. The sign is water; the thing signified is the Spirit renewing and fashioning us according to the image of God. Now a man may be born again of water, and yet not born again of the Spirit. Both are necessary: John 3:5, 'Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' Simon Magus was baptized, Acts 8:13, but Simon Magus was not regenerated or born again, being as yet in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. It is not submission to outward ordinances, but the efficacy of the Holy Spirit that worketh this work in us. As in Christ's baptism the Holy Ghost descended upon him. What was then done visibly must be done spiritually in every baptism, or else it is of little comfort to us; for without this God will not own us for sons, as he then owned Christ: 'Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' Well, then, it concerneth us to see that we have the effect of baptism, or otherwise we may be miserable for all that, yea, the more miserable: 1 Cor. 10:2–5, 'And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.' And these things happened to them, ὡς τύποι, as types and pledges of that everlasting destruction which abideth for them that rest in their outward admission into the church of God, and never take care to be of the church of the first-born, or to fulfil their baptismal engagement; that glory in external privileges without internal grace. Therefore, if this be all you have to say for yourselves, that you were baptized, or visibly washed in the laver of regeneration, your very plea maketh for your condemnation; for you do but glory in your breach of vows, and do not look after a gracious change. You forget that ever you were baptized or washed from your sins: 2 Peter 1:9, 'He hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.' You neglect

and undervalue the prime benefit of it. Therefore it is a vain plea to say, We are christians; we are baptized in the name of Christ, and dedicated to his service. This is but a vain plea—

(1.) Because there is more need that you should be born again, that you may receive the effect and fruit of your baptism, that it may not be an idle ceremony. Because they had 'put on Christ,' the apostle biddeth them 'put on Christ,' Col. 3:10, 12; and again, because 'risen with Christ,' therefore 'set your affections upon things above;' and because 'dead,' therefore 'mortify,' Col. 3:3, 5. We are more engaged to look after regeneration by our profession and covenant sealed in baptism. If you have put on Christ sacramentally, then put him on really. That putting off and putting on, Eph. 4:22, 24, relateth to baptism. So Rom. 6:11, 12, 'Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof.' However God may deal with infidels, be sure it will not fare well with you. If you mock God with an empty formality, and put him off with baptismal regeneration without a real regeneration, if you put on Christ in profession, and do not really put him on, and know his grace in truth, you can never speed well at last. There is a common necessity upon all mankind of seeking after the reconciling and renewing grace of the Redeemer, but especially those that live in the church, because of their covenant vow and profession: Rom. 6:3–5, 'Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that, like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life: for if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.'

(2.) In baptism you were entered by others: Deut. 29:11, 'Your little ones.' In grown years you must enter yourselves disciples to Christ. There is required a personal act of all that come to age, that they may stand to the covenant, and own what their parents promised for them, and subscribe with their own hand to the God of Jacob: Isa.

44:5, 'One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.' As they grow up they must engage themselves to the Lord. As the parents of the blind man said, 'He is of age, let him speak for himself,' John 9:21; so when persons are of age, then the renouncing of Christ's enemies, profession of faith in Christ, and the resignation of ourselves to God, should be made with our own mouths when we are able. Therefore Christianity is called a 'confession,' Heb. 3:1; and every christian is a confessor: Rom. 10:10, 'For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.' You may openly own Christ. There must be a 'professed subjection to the gospel of Christ,' 2 Cor. 9:13.

(3.) This personal consent must not only be outwardly professed, but the heart must be renewed, and the bent of it set towards God; for we have not only to do with men, but with God; and God will not be mocked: 1 Peter 3:21, 'The like figure whereunto even baptism doth now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ;' Rom. 6:13, 'But yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.'

[2.] It is not a moral reformation or a change of life, but regeneration or a change of nature. Many change their manners and course of living, and yet are far enough from the new birth, which signifieth the infusion of a principle of spiritual life into the soul. To change our actions whilst our hearts are unchanged will never bring us to heaven; for God requireth not only good fruit, but a good tree, and maketh actions to be the fruit of a new life: Ezek. 11:19, 20, 'And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them an heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them.' A man may change his course, as he that was lewd before may become sober, and yet his nature may be the same, a

carnal wretch for all that; as a sow that is washed is a sow still. O christians! let not this seem a paradox to you. The scripture doth everywhere distinguish between the old man and his deeds and the new man and his actions, the nature and the fruits; and therefore do not deceive yourselves. Holiness of life floweth from a renewed heart, and the Lord's method is first to infuse the principles of the new life, or gracious habits or powers into the soul; next to actuate those powers, making them actually to do those things that are spiritually good: Gal. 5:25, 'If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.' Spiritual motion and action presupposeth a principle of spiritual life, as a thing previous unto and different from it. Therefore you do but delude yourselves to think to alter your course and way, or do anything pleasing to God, without a principle of life. Therefore it is not enough to look after a change; is it a spiritual change, a passing from death to life, so that you are born again?

[3.] It is not a slight tincture and superficial gospel change. Some have good moods, pretend to religion for a while, which may produce some notable reformation; as those that 'have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' These may cleanse their outside, and yet be worse than they were before the change; never renouncing their secret lusts, though forbearing some acts of sin. These have real inclinations to be happy, some slight tincture of holiness, but not a new creature. The carnal nature will return to its old bias again.

[4.] It is not an internal, transient motion. Some are affected at times, as an assumed body by an angel is moved and carried up and down for a time. It is not a transient motion by which the soul is a little moved, as fire is excited by the bellows; but an infusion of true life, as a principle of operation. Not an actual motion, but an habitual mutation: 'He that is born of God, the seed of God remaineth in him,' 1 John 3:9, which cannot be understood of transient actions, but true and permanent qualities: John 4:14, 'But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.' The Spirit doth not only work on them, but dwell in them by virtue of

those permanent and fixed habits which he hath wrought in the soul. This is not a stream or a pond, but a well, always springing and bubbling up in holy actions; and by this a renewed man differeth from another, that he hath abiding in him the seed of God, or a gracious principle which liveth and groweth more and more. There may be a transient operation in carnal men: Num. 23:5, 'The Lord put a word into Balaam's mouth;' Num. 24:15, 'And Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are opened hath said;' and Saul: 1 Sam. 10:10, 'The Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them;' as the air enlightened by the sun retaineth that light no longer than the sun shineth into it, because it hath no fountain of light in itself. There are some acts the Holy Ghost worketh as a passenger, not as an inhabitant; but a regenerate man hath the 'anointing abiding in himself,' 1 John 2:27. Well, then, it is not to have some fleeting motions, as Herod had his joy, and Jehu his zeal, and Felix his trembling, and Balaam and Saul their prophetic fits and starts; but the Spirit of God doth dwell with us. It is true he doth not act always at the same rate; and therefore a christian is sometimes enlarged and sometimes straitened, according to the measure of actual influence; but still there he is, there is still an indwelling principle of life. The life of God doth not appear with a like activity, but it abideth with us.

2. Let us see what it is, or wherein it consists. It is the infusion of a new life. You may conceive it thus—

[1.] We are united to Christ by the Spirit of sanctification. There is no fountain of life but God alone, and no means to convey it to us but Jesus Christ: John 5:26, 'For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;' John 14:6, 'Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me;' Col. 3:3, 'Your life is hid with Christ in God.' From God, as the fountain of all grace, it cometh out through Christ by the Spirit. There is an inseparable union by the Spirit, often called 'the beginning of the creation of God,' Rev. 3:14.

[2.] The Spirit that thus worketh in us dwelleth in us, or giveth us that habitual power which enableth us to do all things spiritually. An habitual power I call it, because there is no fitter name to express it by; for it abideth constantly in them that receive it, as habits do in those that have them. Notwithstanding it differeth, because habits are partly and wholly acquired by use and often practice; whereas this is not gotten, but infused. Or you may call it a spiritual principle. But for the name there is no such great matter as for the power. This new principle is not a new faculty added to those which are in men by nature. A man that is regenerate hath no more faculties in his soul than he had before as unregenerate; only those faculties which he had before are improved, and receive a further strength to act spiritually, as before they did naturally. As our bodies in the resurrection from the dead shall have no more nor other parts than they have at present, only those which are now natural shall then be made spiritual: 1 Cor. 15:46, 'Howbeit, that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual.' Or as those natural and sensitive faculties which we have in common with the beasts; what they (having no higher principle than sense) use sensually, we, having the same faculties under the command of a rational soul, use rationally; so that understanding, will, and affections, which were formerly under the command of reason, and so could produce nothing but rational operations, now being under the guidance of the Spirit of Christ, work spiritually. Therefore a regenerate man is said to 'walk after the Spirit,' Rom 8:1, in opposition to fleshly interests; to be led by the Spirit, Gal. 5:18; to 'walk in the Spirit,' ver. 25.

3. This habitual power or spiritual principle, as it worketh forth towards several objects, and in several kinds and ways of operation, hath divers names; as faith, hope, love, meekness; all which are called so many graces or fruits of the Spirit, but indeed are but the various discoveries of the same principle of spiritual life, according to the several uses for which it serveth. Or if you will distinguish them for clearness, there is, first, a spiritual principle; secondly, spiritual habits; thirdly, actual operations and motions according to those

habits; the spiritual principle of saving grace flowing in a regenerate man from Christ, his head, by the Spirit of God.

This habitual grace with relation to various objects is called charity, faith, hope, temperance, &c.; all which are but the diversification of the actings of that spiritual principle. These are much increased and strengthened by the use and much exercise of them.

But you will say, How cometh it then to pass that christians excel more in one grace than another?

Ans. Because the spiritual principle is more exercised and drawn out that way, as most suitable to their temper; Abraham for faith, Timothy for temperance, Moses for meekness, and Job for patience.

Out of all we may gather, that regeneration is not the improving what was in us before, nor the strengthening of what was weak, but the bestowing of something that we had not before; a vital principle or habitual power.

Secondly, How we may discover that such a work hath been wrought in us. There are ways of knowing it—(1.) By the manner of working it; (2.) By the effects of it.

1. Sometimes it may be evident by the manner of working, because this work hath certain preparations which lead thereunto, and are very sensible, as terrors and agonies in the heart, by a sense of our miserable condition. Now if we consider when we felt these terrors and awakenings, and how we came out of them, a man may go near to trace the way of God with him, and to observe his passage from death to life. Now because regeneration, though for the most part (yet is not always) evident to sense in the way and progress of the work, yet it may be evident in the discovery and fruits of it; and it may fall out with some as it did with the blind man in the 9th of John, who, when they asked him what Christ did to him, how he opened his eyes, answered, I cannot tell; but this one thing I know, that whereas I was born blind, I now see; so how or when Christ was

formed in me, when the immortal seed was sown in my heart, I cannot tell, but I am glad to find him here. Therefore I shall in the second place see what are the effects of this work.

2. There are such effects left upon us as are—

[1.] Answerable to baptism, which is the sign and seal of it: Titus 3:5, 'He hath saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' Then they did ἀναθεματίζειν ἑαυτοῦς τῷ Θεῷ as Justin speaks, solemnly dedicate themselves to God. That is our first solemn implantation into Christ's mystical body. The spiritual life beginneth in an entering into covenant with God, or a dedication of ourselves to him; for the first impression left upon the soul is a tendency towards God; and therefore, as soon as grace entereth, we devote ourselves to his use and service: 2 Cor. 8:5, 'But first gave themselves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God;' Rom. 6:13, 'Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.' And that is the meaning of being baptized into the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Mat. 28:19. We take Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be our God, and heartily and really profess ourselves to be his people. God the Father to be our sovereign lord and everlasting portion, God the Son to be our redeemer and saviour, and God the Holy Ghost to be our sanctifier, guide, and comforter. We take God to be our sovereign lord, to obey his will, to please him in all things, and also to be our everlasting and all-sufficient portion; reckoning our happiness by his love and favour, and preferring it above all the delights of sense, and the pleasures, honours, and profits of the world. If this be the frame of our hearts, we are regenerated: Ps. 73:25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee;' Ps. 63:3, 'Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.' To his judgment we must finally stand or fall; if we take Christ for our redeemer and saviour, who only can reconcile us to God, and repair the ruins of the fall, and maintain God's interest in our souls: 1 Peter 3:18, 'For Christ also hath suffered for sin, the just for the unjust,

that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit;' John 14:6, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me.' Therefore, continuing in well-doing, we may venture our souls in his hands, and by him come to God, depending upon his merit, righteousness, and intercession, and taking his promises for the ground of our faith and hope. And we must give up ourselves to the Spirit, to sanctify and guide us in the ways of life, and to perfect the image of God in us, and prepare us for glory. The Spirit is as necessary to keep all right between us and Christ, as Christ between us and God. This being the great necessary vital act, I would pitch the evidence here: If you have God for your God, then you are regenerated; if Christ for your redeemer: 1 John 5:12, 'He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life;' if the Spirit for your guide and sanctifier. Take either of the notions, for one implieth all, though it be good to be distinct in them.

[2.] To enter into covenant with God doth imply a renouncing of other lords and masters which are opposite to Christ and the Spirit. These are the devil, the world, and the flesh; for these are enemies of that salvation to which God of his infinite love would bring us, through the merits of Christ, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit. One trinity is chosen and another renounced. The devil is an enemy; for therefore we are rescued out of the power of darkness, whereby is meant the devil: Col. 1:13, 'Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.' The world is an enemy: Gal. 6:14, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' The flesh is an enemy: Rom. 8:12, 13, 'We are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh; for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.' The devil by his suggestions would tempt you to atheism and disbelief of the promises, that all the glory of the other world is but a fancy, and it is best to seek your happiness here by courting the world, and gratifying and contenting the flesh, and doing everything it craveth at your hands. Now this is grievous and burdensome to the renewed soul; therefore it watcheth, striveth, and

resisteth Satan: 1 Peter 5:8, 9, 'Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, steadfast in the faith;' James 4:7, 'Resist the devil, and he will fly from you.' The world allureth and enticeth us from our duty, and by a secret witchery enchanteth our hearts, and so the love of God is lessened, and the care of salvation jostled out: 1 John 2:15, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;' James 4:4, 'Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.' A man is not sincere till he taketh his affections from these things, and placeth them upon God and heavenly things, from the pleasures, profits, and honours of the world, that he may mind, choose, and seek after better things. The flesh must be renounced, lest we hearten our enemy: 1 Peter 2:11, 'Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.' Whosoever is under the dominion of his lusts and fleshly desires, and doth gratify rather than mortify them, will soon mind the things of the flesh above the Spirit, and will soon prefer the satisfaction of his lusts above the will of God, and so cannot be sincere and upright with him. In our natural estate we were under the power of all those, as it is set forth in one place: Eph. 2:2, 3, 'Wherein in times past ye walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, that worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom we had our conversation in times past in the lust of our flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.' The custom and corrupt course of the world, that was their rule; the prince of the power of the air, that was their guide; and the flesh, or the bent of corrupt nature, that was their principle. While we are in our corrupt estate, the devil doth powerfully rule us, and the example and common practice of the world encourage us, and corrupt nature within doth incline us to sin against the Lord. Well, then, these enemies must be renounced, that we may have another rule, another lord, and another principle. Another rule,

which is the law of God; another lord, Jesus Christ; another principle, his Spirit dwelling in us.

2. Such as is answerable to the notion of regeneration; for surely the Holy Ghost would speak intelligibly, and so as to beget a right apprehension of this thing in our minds, when he useth this term. Now of every perfect birth, and so of regeneration, there are two effects—life and likeness, of which by and by. Now suitably to these principles thus laid down, I shall frame a few questions to be seriously put to conscience.

[1.] Do you not think that you were sometimes unsanctified, and in a state of wrath and condemnation? If not, then you are not of the offspring of Adam, nor of human race; for all mankind have corrupted their way, and involved themselves in sin and misery: Ps. 51:5, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me;' Rom. 3:23, 'We all have sinned, and are come short of the glory of God;' Eph. 2:3, 'Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.' If not, then you need no saviour, no redeemer, are wholly unconcerned in redemption by Christ, which is a recovery out of our lost estate; for 'the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost,' Luke 19:10. Have we had a sense of our lost estate, wherein we were by nature? Usually it is with fear, shame, and grief: Acts 2:37, 'They were pricked in their hearts.' Fear; for nature hath a quicker sense of danger than anything else. Then shame, because of our folly and filthiness; and grief and sorrow, because of the unkindness of sin. A drunken man that layeth himself asleep on a rotten plank on a bridge over a deep and rapid water, and there walloweth in his vomit, is in great danger, but is not sensible of his danger till he be awakened; then he is first afraid, and then ashamed of his beastliness; when he cometh to himself, and the wine is gotten out of his head, then he is sorrowful that he should so much forget himself. So while we are in an estate of nature, we are without remorse, and go on with delight in sin, and think no harm or shame

of it. But when a man is awakened from sleep, Eph. 5:14, 'Awake thou that sleepest,' then he is ashamed of the folly of his former course: Ps. 73:22, 'So foolish was I, and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee.' Or if he be given up more to an inordinacy of the filthiness of it, then he is troubled what to do; he groweth unsatisfied with his estate: I must run a new course; and crieth out, What shall I do? Now were you ever acquainted with such a work so as to groan under the burden of your sins? Mat. 11:28, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest;' and with brokenness of heart seek God's favour. That is one part of the change, to take away the heart of stone. Before sin is made a light matter; but when the soul beginneth to feel it to be of such a weight as will sink us to hell, then it groweth weary of it, and desireth to come out of this condition. There is many a man that hath weak and waterish notions about the evil of sin, and will coldly confess that he is a sinner, but when he comes to feel it indeed, and it sets close to his heart, and he saith, If I die in this condition I shall be damned eternally: O foolish creature! that I have lived thus long in this danger, and never thought of it! oh, what shall become of me? wretched man that I am! how shall I escape? Now hath thy heart been broken, that it may be ploughed and sown? Jer. 4:3, 'Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.' Hast thou been broken in heart with the apprehension of sin? Ps. 51:17, 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.' Have there ever been such workings of spirit (as somewhat to this purpose there will be in all that are converted), since this was the first occasion of your more intimate acquaintance with God? There is a step towards the knowledge of your estate: What manner of entrance hath it had? though I do not pitch it wholly upon that.

[2.] Is there any change wrought in us? A man that is renewed is not the same man that he was before, they differ as light and darkness: Eph. 5:8, 'Ye were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord.' As much as an old man and a new, Eph. 4:22–24, as if he were not the same man; a dead man and a living: Eph. 2:1, 'And you hath

he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.' As it is true of Christ, 'He was dead and is alive,' Rev. 1:8, so it holdeth good of every man in Christ; he was dead and is alive: Luke 15:24, 'This my son was dead and is alive.' There is not only a difference between them and others, but between them and themselves. They live by another rule, and have another aim and tendency; not according to the fashions of the world, but according to the will of God. They do not say with the pharisee, *Ego non sum sicut cæteri homines*, but *Ego non sum ego*: I am not as other men, but I am not as myself; I am not what I was; as if another soul dwelt in the same body. It is not enough to be differenced from others by a change of life, but from ourselves by a change of heart. When Onesimus was converted, Philem. 11, 'Before unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and me.' He was quite another man; before loose, vain, carnal, doting upon the vanities of the world; now strict, serious, spiritual, taken up with the things of God; before pleasing the flesh, now pleasing the Lord; before the mind was blind, now the eyes are opened by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation; he hath another sight of divine things than ever he had before. Before the conscience was stupified or terrified, now it is tender, and has some sense of the love of God. Before the will was obstinate in evil, changeable and fickle in that which is good, now it hath some freedom towards God, is more settled in a holy course. Before the affections were unmortified, unbridled in carnal things, dead and cold to things spiritual and heavenly; now the strength of them runneth out in another channel: now they have other desires, delights, fears and joys; before idle, now hard at work for God. Before you merely minded your own things, now unfeignedly study and mind how to glorify God, and serve him with the best advantage.

[3.] Is it such a change as doth amount to conversion or regeneration? Every change will not serve the turn, but such as doth induce a new life and likeness unto God.

First, The infusion of a new life or vital principle is the great thing in regeneration. Is it so indeed that you begin to live in Christ? Life is

known by sense, appetite, and motion.

(1.) Sense. They that have another life have another sense of good and evil than ever they had before. Another sense of evil. The soul as soon as born is sensible of the injuries of that life he hath; so the new creature is sensible of the hurt of the life of grace. They feel their corruptions, groan under the burden of them: Rom. 7:24, 'O wretched man that I am I who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' More troubled with the relics of sin and the opposition of the flesh. They had but notions about these things before, now they have a feeling of them; but superficial apprehensions before, but now sin is as great a trouble to them as pain and sickness to the life natural.

(2.) Appetite. They have another gust and savour. The new creature longeth after the means appointed to feed it: 1 Peter 2:2, 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.' Such as the food is, such is the life. A carnal man liveth a carnal life, when his secret thoughts and inward affections are set upon carnal delights: Luke 12:19, 'And I will say unto my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, eat, drink, and be merry.' He cheereth up himself with these things. They have other supports, other comforts, as Christ, and grace, and eternity, and the promises of the good word: 1 Peter 2:3, 'If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' They find these things sweet; so the new creature hath its tastes and distastes; a promise set home upon the soul, it is sweeter than honey to the taste, Ps. 119:103.

Now you that come to Christ's table for the food of the new creature, have you no appetite, no gust? New creatures are welcome. This banquet was provided for them, and they will come with most gust and desire. There is a suitableness of Christ without and Christ within us. Christ within helpeth us to live upon this food. Fleshly minds find no pleasure in the things of God; somewhat else doth please them better.

(3.) By motion or action. If there be life, it will be stirring. A man cannot have fire in his bosom, and not feel it. 'I will give you a new heart, and you shall walk in my ways.' Now the vital principle is discovered—(1.) By the uniformity of our actions; (2.) By the tendency of them.

(1st.) The uniformity. Natural actions are uniform. Fire doth always ascend and a stone descend. That is casual which is but now and then. A wicked man sinneth constantly, frequently, easily. It is preternatural if he doeth good; it is only by fits and good moods; it is casual, not natural; whereas a godly man maketh religion his business. It is true, there is a fleshly nature always at work, opposing and thwarting the Spirit or new principle; therefore the uniformity of our motion is known by this, what advantage the Spirit hath over the flesh, or the flesh over the Spirit? Gal. 5:16, 'Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' Now, briefly, do you maintain the motions and directions of the renewed part, or the new man of grace in the heart, so as to keep under the motions of the flesh or the corrupt part? Though inbred corruption be not totally suppressed, yet the motions of it shall not be fulfilled.

(2d.) The tendency, the inclination and bent of the soul is turned. He that giveth himself to God must live to God. Our dedication is known by our use, our scope by our work, our making covenant by our keeping covenant with God. Our life must show the reality of our first consent. We are his: 'He hath bought us with a price,' 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; and therefore we must live to him: Rom. 6:4, 'So we also should live in newness of life;' 1 Peter 4:1, 2, 'For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.' You must make it your main business to be what God would have you to be, and to do what God would have you to do. The spiritual principle is carried to God; a living to God. The new nature came from God, and worketh towards God or for God. God is the centre of the soul, and the ancient strength of the soul was made for God and towards God. So when it is renewed and restored, it is for God: Rom. 7:4, 'Ye

are dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead; that we should bring forth fruit unto God.'

Secondly, The next effect is likeness: Gal. 4:19, 'My little children, of whom I travail in birth till Christ be formed in you.' His image portrayed, drawn upon the soul; so that a christian representeth Christ and expresseth his life in all that he doeth; discovereth his Spirit working in him. The image of Christ is darkened in many as to purity and holiness: 1 Peter 1:15, 16, 'As he that hath called you is holy, so be holy in all manner of conversation; for it is written, Be ye holy as I am holy.' We should be like Christ in meekness and self-denial: Mat. 11:29, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.'

SERMON IV

By the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.—1 PETER
1:23.

DOCT. The instrumental cause of regeneration is the word of God: James 1:18, 'Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth.' There is the principal efficient, 'He;' the moving cause, 'Of his own will;' the instrumental cause or means, 'By the word of truth;' and the final cause is for his own glory and service. So 1 Cor. 4:15, 'For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel;' where we have the author, 'Christ;' the subordinate instrument, 'I,' Paul; the means, 'The gospel.'

1. Let me explain the point.
2. Confirm it by reasons how and why.

First, How the word concurreth to regeneration.

1. There is a twofold operation upon the soul—physical and moral. The physical operation is the infusion of life; the moral operation is in a way of reason and persuasion: both these ways are necessary, not of any need in God, but mere love to us. God worketh strongly like himself, and sweetly, that he may attemper his work to our nature, and suit the key to the wards of the lock. Both these ways are often spoken of in scripture: John 6:44, 45, 'No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him. And they shall all be taught of God: every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' They are both taught and drawn; so taught as also drawn and inclined; and so drawn as that also taught; as it becometh God to deal with men. And therefore sometimes God is said to 'create in us a new heart,' Ps. 51:10, and to 'create us to good works,' Eph. 2:10, to note his almighty power. Sometimes to persuade and allure: Hosea 2:15, 'I will allure her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her;' Gen. 9:27, 'The Lord shall persuade Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem.' By fair and kind words draw men to a liking of his ways. The soul of man is determined to God by an object without and a quality within. The object is propounded with all its qualifications, that the understanding may be informed and convinced, and the will and affections persuaded in a potent and high way of reasoning. But this is not enough to determine man's heart without an internal quality or grace infused, which is his physical work upon the soul. There is not only a propounding of reasons and arguments, but a powerful inclination of the heart, and so by a strong hand we are plucked out of the snare of death. Well, now, as to the physical or powerful operation, the word is not the instrumental cause, but God worketh immediately; for the word written and preached, voice, letters, syllables, are not subjects capable of receiving spiritual life to convey it to us. I say, there is not any such virtue in the sound of syllables and sentences of the word, but the Spirit doth this work immediately. But as to the moral operation, in a way of argument and persuasion, so the word is the instrument. There are other occasional helps, but this is the instituted means. Word and sacraments are instrumenta quondam tenus moralia, in a sort moral instruments; the word to beget grace,

and the sacraments to confirm it. We are born again of the word, but our growth and increase we have from the sacraments.

2. Though the infusion of life be God's immediate work, yet because it is done in concomitancy and association with the word, therefore the effect is ascribed to the word as well as to the Spirit. So the law of God is said 'to convert the soul,' Ps. 19:7; and the gospel is said to be the 'power of God to salvation,' Rom. 1:16, that is, God doth not ordinarily work any other way; and hath tied us to depend upon him in the use of this means for such an effect. As the stars shed abroad their influences by air and clouds to make the earth fruitful, and insinuate their effects by other natural causes; so doth God convey his power in a concomitancy with the word, though not by the word; that is, there is not any natural force put into it to produce such an effect.

3. In the moral way the word hath a double operation. First, it prepareth to receive the gracious principle; secondly, it exciteth the gracious principle newly infused to actual believing and turning to God. The one is ordinarily done by the law, the other by the gospel, Moses may bring to the borders, but Joshua leadeth into the land of Canaan. It is true, God may make use of any part of christian doctrine to strike the first blow, but the work issueth itself into this method, that first a man is sensible of his misery, and then cometh to God by Christ for a remedy. A sense of wrath is the effect of the law: Rom. 4:15, 'Because the law worketh wrath.' And hope of grace is the fruit of the gospel. Therefore I say, he maketh use of the law to prepare us to begin the pangs of the new birth; and of the gospel to excite and allure the soul into his bosom. Because this is of great consequence, I shall a little enlarge upon it.

[1.] The word doth prepare the heart to receive the gracious principle, as it informeth us of our duty, and so taketh from us the pretence of ignorance; and showeth our guilt in the neglect of duty, and so taketh from us the conceit of our own righteousness; as it convinceth us of our impotency to satisfy the law, and free ourselves

from this estate whenever we get out of it, and so taketh away the presumption of our own sufficiency; so that the sinner is laid at the feet of God as a lost and undone creature. As ground is ploughed up to receive the seed, so by this preparative work is the heart of man ploughed up, Jer. 4:3, broken, and humbled, and perplexed, and rendered capable to receive the immortal seed. When the sinner is cast down with the sight of sin, and a sense of God's wrath due to him, he is broken and fitted to receive the new birth.

[2.] It exciteth the gracious principle, newly infused, to actual believing and turning to God. This is done by the gospel revealing the way of reconciliation, peace, and life, as tendered by God himself to self-condemning and penitent sinners through the mediation of Jesus Christ. For the understanding of this, know that when we are acted by God, we act under him: Cant. 1:4, 'Draw me, we will run after thee;' Phil. 3:12, 'We apprehend that for which we are apprehended by Christ.' When his grace layeth hold upon us in effectual calling, we having the principles of a new life infused into us, do bestir ourselves in a way of holiness; for as there is a passive reception of Christ by the Spirit, so an active by faith. The acts on our part are made three, with respect to the trinity of persons in the Godhead—a turning from the creature to God, from self to Christ, and from sin to holiness, or a free and cheerful subjection to God, that we may be happy in the enjoyment of him. Now to all this the word serveth to quicken and excite this voluntary act on our part; for the gospel showing the possibility of grace by Christ, yea, his readiness to give life and righteousness to every one that cometh to God by him, yea, by powerful arguments and sweet invitations calling upon us to look after Christ for these things, the renewed heart is excited earnestly to seek after Christ, and doth vehemently desire to be united to him, and doth cheerfully receive him, and embrace him as offered in the gospel, and wholly give himself to seek and serve him by the Spirit in the way of new obedience; so that in all this part of the work of conversion wherein we are active, the word is of great use.

4. This word that has such an use is not only the word written, but the word preached, as the context here will inform us: 'He hath begotten us, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, which is the word of God;' ver. 25, 'And this is the word which by the gospel is preached to you.' It is not enough to look upon the written word as the seed and principle of our spiritual being, and accordingly to esteem it, but also we ought to have the same good esteem of the particular messages from and according to that word by the Lord's servants, or those portions of truth which the Lord carveth out to them by the messengers that he sendeth to them; for the word preached hath a singular efficacy, and ministerial subserviency, over and besides the word written to explain, apply, and excite the hearts of men to their duty. And therefore we are called *σὺνεργοι*, 'Labourers together with God,' 1 Cor. 3:9; and 2 Cor. 6:1, 'We then, as workers together with him, do beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.' We are workers together with God, not by an immediate producing of spiritual effects, but by the external application and inculcation of the counsels and doctrines of the word, which being solidly explained, forcibly pressed, and closely applied, have a notable subserviency to God's work of grace upon the hearts of his people; and therefore our ministry is called the ministration of the Spirit unto life, 2 Cor. 3:6, 8.

But you will say, This is true indeed of the apostles, who were infallibly assisted, and had the power of miracles to evidence their mission and call. I answer—The ordinary ministerial teaching is Christ's institution as well as that of the apostles: Eph. 4:11, 'He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.' This is done *pleno jure*: Mat. 28:19, 20, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;' by virtue of that authority given him by God. They are in the same commission grounded on his plenary authority, and have a promise of the same presence and Spirit as to the substance of the work, and they do the same things. Though they be not immediately called, and miraculously gifted, and infallibly assisted and sent out to all the world yet as to the substance of the work it is the same. Apollos as

well as Paul and Cephas are but ministers of God by whom ye believe, 2 Cor. 3:5.

5. Though the blessing of this preaching cometh wholly from God, yet he usually joineth the strongest influences with the most lively means: Acts 14:1, 'They so spake that a great multitude of Jews and Greeks believed.' 'They so spake.'

Quest. Doth the faith of the hearers lie in the power of the speaker?

I answer—No; but usually God accommodateth his operation to the means which he uses. That doctrine that is most pure, most clear, most pressing and persuasive, is most like to succeed; for God worketh congruously. He that hath a gift of rightly dividing the word of truth, and applying it prudently with force and strength, is more apt to edify than another of slower gifts or a weaker understanding in spiritual things; as darts that are cast forth by art out of engines, and fitted with feathers, are more apt to fly faster and pierce deeper than those that are thrown casually, or than those that fall by their own weight; and so, though the word of God be the word of God, from whose mouth soever it cometh, or however discovered, yet when it is well and properly enforced with distinctness of language, vehemency, and vigour of spirit, and prudent application, it is more conducive to the end; and therefore doth God bestow such gifts that he may more plentifully dispense his grace. 'They so spake,' with such clearness, evidence, and persuasiveness.

6. This influence of grace is given out at the time of hearing, or afterwards: Acts 10:44, 'While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word;' in the very speaking: Luke 24:32, 'Did not our hearts burn within us when he talked with us by the way, and opened to us the scriptures?' Sometimes at the rebound, when we go aside and meditate. As the spouse thought of Christ's words when he was gone: Cant. 5:6, 'My soul failed when he spake;' which she slighted while they were speaking: ver. 2, 3, 'Open

to me, my sister. I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on?' and so the effect is accomplished.

7. God in working by the word doth not work necessarily, but voluntarily: James 1:18, 'Of his own will begat he us.' The effectual working of his Spirit doth accompany it when and where God pleaseth; for the wind bloweth as it listeth, John 3:8. The wind is not at the command of any creature; so the Spirit is a free agent, working where and on whom, when, and in what measure, he pleaseth, and will be hindered by none. The word works not necessarily, as fire heateth, or water floweth, but at the will of God, when he will join his assistance. Thus Lydia's heart was opened by God when others were shut, Acts 16:14; and many scoffed at Peter's sermon, which notwithstanding converted three thousand souls, Acts 2:41; and Acts 17:34, 'Howbeit, certain men clave to him and believed,' when others mocked; so that the connection between the word and the power of God is not natural, necessary, and perpetual. The works of nature do naturally produce their effect, but that is natural to them; whereas this is supernatural. God doth not tie himself absolutely to the means, yet we are tied in the use of them. We are bound, but God will be free.

Secondly, Why—(1.) The word is used as a means and instrument; (2.) Why the word preached.

1. Why the word? The main reason is God's pleasure: 'It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save some,' 1 Cor. 1:21. The same reason is given for salvation by Christ, Col. 1:19. As vain a course as we think it to be, yet the Lord hath chosen to work this way. But because all God's works have a reason in them, and are designed with excellent wisdom, let us see what may be observed in this institution. God is pleased to make use of the word as the instrument of regeneration—

[1.] Because there is nowhere else such a discovery of God. The main end of regeneration is conformity to God's image, or to make us

'partakers of a divine nature,' 2 Peter 1:4, to work such a change in us as may make us like unto God in wisdom, righteousness, and humility, and pity to poor creatures. Now what fitter instrument to be used in such a work than the word, which is the fairest draught and copy of God that ever was, and so a fit pattern whereby the new creature may be framed? It is for God's honour that he should be expressed as fully and exactly as may be. Now where can this be but in God's word? Not in the doctrines of men; they know little of him, and they cannot set him out as he doth deserve. And men are more apt to transform God into an idol of their own fancy, and turn his glory into a lie, Rom. 1:25, than to give us any true mirror and glass wherein he can be represented. God's own works do discover his wisdom, power, goodness, but not so evidently his holiness. They do but half discover God, and cannot give us such a distinct knowledge of his nature and will till we see them altogether in the whole contexture, and then but darkly; we need the commentary of his word to interpret them. David was fain to go into the sanctuary before he knew what to make of providence, Ps. 73:17. Otherwise he could not understand the holiness and righteousness of God's actions. It is true, his works praise him. They show him in his tender mercies, and mighty power, and Godhead, and justice in rewarding and punishing; but they never express him so distinctly, nor in that fulness and latitude as his word doth, and therefore cannot affect the heart so deeply. But now here we 'behold the glory of the Lord as in a glass, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory,' 2 Cor. 3:18. The image of God is most exactly expressed in the word, the perfect draught of his face; and therefore a fit stamp whereby to leave an impression upon the new creature, as the seal well engraven doth upon the wax: 2 Cor. 4:4, 'Lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine upon them.' Christ is the image of his Father's glory, and the gospel the lively image and representation of Jesus Christ. As God the Father shineth forth in the Son, so the Son in his glorious gospel. So that here is a happy way for us to recover again our lost image of God in which we were created, and which by the fall was defaced in us. In the face of Jesus Christ is to be seen the glory of God; and Jesus Christ is to be seen in the glass

of the gospel, according to which the new creature is formed and fashioned.

[2.] Because nothing is so likely to sway the heart of the creature, nor to come with such authority and power upon the conscience, as the word of God. Man's heart would be hardly brought to stoop to any power but God's alone, whose voice prevaieth upon the conscience and imaginations of the heart, which the voice of no man can do, and therefore is able to shake our hearts. God appointed some to go in his name, and with evidence commending themselves to the consciences of every one, to challenge man of his duty. 'Where the word of a king is,' saith Solomon, 'there is power,' Eccles. 8:4. We reckon not of the words of a private person, but of a king we do; so ought we much more of God.

[3.] No means are so accommodate for this purpose as the word, so suitable to man's nature. It is such a doctrine as the conscience doth require. No doctrine is so fitted to humble, to comfort, to persuade us to holiness.

(1.) To humble us, by working in us a sight and sense of our misery and natural filthiness. It is a glass wherein we see God's face and our own: James 1:23, 'If a man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass.' A light by which we see every sin in our own bosoms. The new nature is never sought after but by them that are dissatisfied with their old estate. And now when a man hath a sight of his natural face, what a deformed, loathsome creature he is, he beginneth to abhor himself, and to look after another state and frame of heart.

(2.) No doctrine so fit to comfort and revive the broken heart with hopes of mercy as the gospel, that revealeth the way of life upon gracious terms. It is the charter and grant of Christ and all his benefits from God to every one that will receive him: Ps. 19:8, 'The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.' This doth the heart good to think of it.

(3.) To persuade to holiness in a high and potent way of reasoning, by pure precepts and strict injunctions, by high patterns and examples of being perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, holy as he is holy; by fit inducements from the rewards and punishments, strict precepts requiring not only external practice, but a right disposition of heart towards God; notable encouragements from the love of God, the purchase of Christ Jesus: 2 Cor. 5:14, 'The love of Christ constraineth us.' Powerful inducements from the punishments; the wrath of God, that shall seize on the soul as well as the body in this life, and the flames of hell. Men that require an ordinary conversation outwardly threaten only, and promise some outward and temporal good or evil; but he requires regeneration upon eternal good or evil.

[4.] The word is suited as a proper cure for the diseases of men's souls. The diseases of men's souls are ignorance, slightness, and impotency.

(1.) The first disease is ignorance, set forth by the notions of darkness and blindness: Eph. 5:8, 'Ye were sometimes darkness;' 2 Peter 1:9, 'He that wanteth these things is blind, and cannot see afar off.' Though they have a natural power of understanding, yet no spiritual discerning, 1 Cor. 2:14, no saving knowledge of the things which pertain to the kingdom of God. This is the great disease of human nature, worse than bodily blindness, because men are not sensible of it: Rev. 3:18, 'And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.' Because they look not for guides to lead them: Acts 13:11, 'And immediately there fell on him a mist and darkness, and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.'

(2.) Slightness; they will not mind these things, nor exercise their thoughts about them: Mat. 22:5, 'They made light of it;' Heb. 2:3, 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' It is a long time ere we can bring them to ask, 'What shall I do to be saved?'

(3.) Impotency and weakness, which lieth in the wilfulness and hardness of their hearts. Our non posse is non velle. Our inability lies in our unwillingness: Ps. 58:4, 5, 'They are like to the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the charmer, charming never so wisely;' Mat. 23:37, 'How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not?' Luke 19:14, 'His citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.' Now what more proper cure for all these evils than the word of God? Teaching is the proper means to cure ignorance, for men have a natural understanding. Warning of danger and mindfulness of duty is the proper means to cure slightness. And to remove their impotency (which lieth in their obstinacy and wilfulness), there is no such means as to beseech them with constant persuasions. The impotence is rather moral than natural. We do not use to reason men out of bare natural impotency, to bid a lame man walk, or a blind man see, or bid a dead man live; but to make men willing of the good which they rejected or neglected; in short, to inform the judgment, awaken the conscience, persuade the will: yet it is true the bare means will not do it without God's concurrence, the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit; but it is an encouragement to use these means, because they are fitted to the end, and God would not appoint us means which should be altogether in vain.

2. Why the word preached by those whom God hath sent for that work? This hath a further subserviency, that God hath authorised some to interpret scripture as well as explain, to draw the arrow to the head, by earnest and copious exhortations to inculcate what is more briefly delivered in the word. Scripture possibly may be laid by as a neglected thing; therefore some that should be Christ's spokesmen must be sure to call upon us, and put us in mind of our eternal condition, must bring the word nigh to us, Rom. 10:5. This institution speaketh much of the wisdom and goodness of God.

[1.] His wisdom. Death entered by the ear, so doth life and peace. Seeing is in heaven, but hearing in the church. God will try the world

by his ordinary messengers. We would have visions, oracles, and miracles, Luke 16:30; some to come from the dead; but God hath sent some to deal with us more rationally, by external applications in the way of a man, and not rule us by strong hand and mere force.

[2.] His goodness and condescension. He sends men of the same mould: 2 Cor. 5:19, 'And committed unto us the word of reconciliation.' Men subject to the same affections. As the fowler catcheth many birds by one decoy, a bird of the same feather. He dealeth with us as by men of the same nature, subject to the law of the same duties; men with whom we may have ordinary and visible commerce; not by angels that might affright us, but our fellow-creatures, who are concerned in the message as much as we are; men that know the heart of a man by experience, our prejudices and temptations. If they deceive us they deceive themselves, whose fidelity in other things we have experience of, that are to confirm their message by their practice, yea, with their suffering and their blood if need be.

Use 1. Is to inform and instruct us in the nature of the word's concurrence, that we may keep even between the Pelagians on the one hand, who give all to the word, so that they shut out the Spirit, and the Swenfeldians or familists on the other, that cry up the internal word or Spirit, to shut out the external use of means, and look for rapt motions from the Spirit without the word. Though the word can do nothing without the Spirit; the word, say they, is a dead letter; yet it may be called the 'power of God to salvation,' and 'the ministration of the Spirit,' 2 Cor. 3:8; 'Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believe?' 1 Cor. 3:5. Though the pen can do nothing without the hand of the writer, yet it is the instrument of writing; so is the word the instrument of regeneration, and Christ died that we might be sanctified upon these terms: Eph. 5:26, 'By the washing of water through the word.' These are the prescribed appointed means, without which we cannot look for any such thing as a work of grace upon us. Therefore let us not jostle out external means with the familists. Then, on the other side, we must

not idolise the means to shut out the work of the Spirit, without which all ministry is dead and ineffectual. All depends upon that blessing which God hath annexed to a lawful ministry. It is true that all human callings and manual arts have their efficacy from God's blessing, without which our toil and labour is in vain, Ps. 127:1, 2. It is in vain to watch, to build, to labour in ordinary callings. Many labour without God, and therefore cannot produce natural and human effects, to which yet they have a certain proportion and natural aptitude. But there is more of God required to bless the ministry, by which, by man's labour and natural discourse, you expect spiritual and supernatural effects; as the enlightening the eyes, and turning from darkness to light, and turning from the power of Satan to God. This production, though it goeth in concomitancy with man's discourse, yet it is solely from God: 1 Cor. 3:7, 'It is God giveth the increase,' by an immediate course, though he useth our labour as an external means. The miracles which the apostles did were performed by certain rights and ceremonies, as laying on hands; they were not the natural effect of these ceremonies, though done in concomitancy with them; so doth God by our ministry.

2. It informeth us what cause we have to bless God for the word, which God hath blessed throughout all generations to the saving of many souls. If there be such great effects accomplished by it, it is a great mercy that he hath given us his word in writing: Hosea 8:12, 'I have written to them the great things of my law.' It is a great benefit to mankind to have a public standard to confute the objections of every idle conceit upon our faith, and one so exact as this. And then when the word is preached, to have it quickened and actuated by a lively voice for the greater good of mankind, that they might be minded of their duty, and have drop instilled by drop. Surely the ministry of the word should not be looked upon as a burden, but a great favour. In the day of Christ's royalty he gave his gifts to the church, Eph. 4:11, 12; and will you count it a burden, and throw it in his face?

3. It informeth us of the woful estate of all such congregations as live without the word of God in the life and power of it. They sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. This is the greater misery, because many people are little sensible of it; and others that thirst after it cannot have it. Now let us think of this; partly that we may not be accessory to their guilt, who have cast away and thrown out a lively, savoury ministry, and so brought a famine of the word upon the land. This is to do the devil's work; for the hindering of the gospel is the work of the devil and his instruments: 2 Cor. 4:4, 'In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine upon them.' And partly that we may pray for the redress of this evil: 2 Thes. 3:1, 2, 'Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you, that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for all men have not faith.' Pray for God's sake that the word would work mightily for the gathering of souls into the kingdom of God. Pray for Christ's sake, who had compassion over souls, and has bid us pray, 'That the Lord of the harvest would send forth labourers into his harvest,' Mat. 9:38. There was a visible face of worship kept up then. How many congregations in the kingdom are without a shepherd, or furnished with an idle shepherd, when many of God's faithful servants are thrust into corners! Pray for souls' sakes that God would 'give them pastors after his own heart, to feed them with knowledge and understanding,' Jer. 3:15. Pray for the land's sake. Never shall we get rid of those wasting and destroying judgments till God's ark be brought home. God only gives an heart to bring back again his outcasts. Now the physicians of the nation are met together, help by your prayers that they may not prove physicians of no value.

4. It informs us how much they are out who think there is too much preaching. Is there too much converting souls to God? They think if preaching were not so common it would be the more revered. This is the popish plea, that ignorance is the mother of devotion. Indeed that is the way to keep up devotion to men's interest. Excellent things, the more common and the more discovered, the

more glorious, as the sun the more it shineth forth. There is something contemptible in them that must keep at a distance, and seldom come in view, to feed reverence. True worth, the more it appeareth, the more it excelleth. Things gilded over, their lustre wasteth away with use; but gold, the more it is used, the more it shineth. When men hear the word out of curiosity, they are soon glutted; but this is an adulterous affection to holy things. If they hear it out of respect to their soul necessities, they prize it not only when new and fresh, but the more they are acquainted with it.

Use 2. Is exhortation.

1. To ministers to rouse up themselves.

[1.] Get love to souls. Are we co-workers with God? Oh, then in zeal to God's glory, and in compassion to souls for whom Christ died, put on the bowels of Christ. Surely if we knew the worth and weight of souls, we could not be so cold and careless in such a ministry and dispensation. Ob, let us never leave inviting, exhorting, pressing, till Christ be formed in them, Gal. 4:19, Col. 1:27, 28, as unwilling to be refused, hungering and thirsting for the salvation of them that hear us. This will put an edge upon the doctrine we deliver, otherwise there is no savour in the finest words.

[2.] Preach with life, and diligence, and authority. God's words should not be delivered in a faint and languid manner and way. Thou art casting abroad thy immortal seed that is to beget souls to Christ, and shall we do it in a drowsy fashion? Let us pick out words that have some force and strength in them, that the truths of God may be represented convincingly and with liveliness: Eccles. 12:10, 'The preacher sought to find out acceptable words.'

[3.] Let us look to the Lord for the fruit and success, not attributing any efficacy to the warmth of our frame, clearness of our understanding, or liberty of speech. Oh, let us look higher, praying that the effectual operation of his Spirit may accompany it: 1 Cor.

2:4, 'And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power;' that it may come in with power.

2. To people to attend upon the word, waiting for the influence and illapse of his Spirit.

[1.] Attend upon the word with diligence. Without grace you cannot be saved, and without the word ordinarily you cannot have grace. Therefore say, I will wait: Prov. 8:34, 'Blessed are they that wait at wisdom's gates.' Wait, then, though you find not presently what you wait for. God's means in God's time will prove effectual; as he that lay at the pool, John 5. Cast out the net. Wait though you find nothing, somewhat of God's work will appear. Many conceit themselves to be converted already, have no need of such diligence. Oh, no; see James 1:18, 'Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth;' wherefore 'Be swift to hear.' Take heed of despising prophesying, 1 Thes. 5:19, 20. No such means to quench the Spirit.

Arguments.

(1.) That of the text, it is immortal seed. If wisdom be sown in your souls, it begets a life there which shall never be quenched. Though all have immortal souls, yet the natural estate of all shall be shortly dissolved. The eternal life of wicked men is an eternal estate of corruption and perishing; Mat. 16:26, he shall lose his soul; not in a natural, but legal sense: Gal. 6:8. 'He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption;' that is, eternal perdition; for corruption is here opposed to eternal life. The state of the wicked after death is a state of corruption. It is not the corruption of our being, but of our happiness; where, though the substance of their soul and body shall not be annihilated, but upheld to all eternity by the mighty power of God in the midst of unutterable torment: Mark 9:49, 'Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;' yet all their carnal happiness is then consumed, and they themselves do languish and

pine away under the wrath of an highly provoked and irreconcilable God.

(2.) It is a living word. The word is lively as to its lively influence and powerful effects upon the soul. It is the word of life, John 6:63. It will comfort and revive you in all your afflictions, yea, in death itself: Ps. 119:50, 'This is my comfort in my affliction, thy word hath quickened me.' Now never leave till thou findest it to be a living word to thee, till thou findest some kind of life in it, and receive not only light but life by it. It is not enough to seek truth in it, but seek life in it.

(3.) It abideth for ever as to the effects—(1.) In the execution of wrath on the wicked, it is the word of God that keeps them for ever in hell: Mark 16:16, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.' (2.) As to the enjoyment of everlasting blessedness: John 6:40, 'And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.' It is the charter and grant by which we hold heaven to all eternity.

[2.] Look out still for the influence of the Spirit. Doth it come in power? You want a notable argument against atheism and scepticism in religion till you feel it. Some deny the power, shut it out, will not let it break in upon their hearts: 2 Tim. 3:5, 'Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.' They have a map of truth, but never look after the power in changing the heart. Others do not look after the power of the word, and then want a testimony: 1 John 5:8, 'There are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood.' Oh, therefore say, what power of the word of life have we felt in our own souls? There are usually three effects of the word upon the heart—humbling, changing, and strengthening or comforting the heart.

(1.) It humbleth. Those that feel least feel this work many times. Felix trembled when Paul was discoursing of judgment to come, Acts 24:24. What startlings of heart do you feel? Lose not that work: Acts

2:37, 'They were pricked in their hearts.' There is such a power in the word; will you only be a stranger to it? Jer. 23:29, 'Is not my word as fire, and as an hammer to break the rock in pieces?' To break, melt, and make it capable of any form.

(2.) To change the heart from sin to holiness. Is the temper and frame of your heart altered? John 15:3, 'Ye are clean through the word that I have spoken to you.' Doth it set you a—purging and working out sin? Ps. 119:9, 'Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.' Doth it work in you an hearty subjection to God?

3. Doth it comfort you? Did it ever revive thy distressed and wounded spirit? Rom. 15:4, 'That we, through comfort of the scripture, might have hope;' Job 33:25, 'His flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth.'

MONERGISM BOOKS

Born Again, by Thomas Manton, Copyright © 2022

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By payment of the required fees, you have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the express written permission of Monergism Books.

ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions July 2022. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068