

# The Wind of the Holy Ghost Blowing Upon the Dry Bones in the Valley of Vision

by Ralph Erskine

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit in overcoming spiritual deadness, a condition that affects even believers, and highlights the causes and symptoms of this condition.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 39:3, Isaiah 44:3, Isaiah 61:2, Ezekiel 37:9, Matthew 11:28, Luke 11:13, Romans 5:1, Romans 8:1, Galatians 2:20

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Revival"

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## Description

Ralph Erskine preaches about the necessity of the breathings and influences of the Holy Spirit for the revival of souls, emphasizing the threefold resurrection represented in Ezekiel's vision: the resurrection of the body, the resurrection of the soul from sin, and the resurrection of the church from bondage. He highlights the dismal case of spiritual deadness, the blessed remedy of the Spirit's breathings, and the end and effect of their operation in bringing life to the dry bones. Erskine urges the congregation to examine their spiritual state, seek the Spirit's influences through prayer, meditation, and faithful attendance at ordinances, and to wait on God with faith and humility for the reviving gales of the Spirit.

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## Transcript

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Come from the four winds, O breath; and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. Ezekiel 37:9.

In the beginning of this chapter, the Lord, in a vision, brings the prophet Ezekiel into a valley full of dead men's bones, quite dried and withered, and asks him the question, if he thought it possible for these dry bones to live? Thereby intimating, that although it was a thing impossible with men, yet it was easily effected by the almighty power of God. And, to convince him of it, he commands the prophet to speak to the dry bones, and to tell them, in his name, that he would make the breath of life to enter into them; which accordingly is done; for the prophet having in the name of the Lord, called upon the four winds to breathe

upon the dry bones, immediately life enters into them, and they come together bone to his bone, and they lived, and "stood up upon their feet, and became an exceeding great army." by which vision we have a lively representation of a threefold resurrection, as a late commentator (Mr. Henry) very well observes. 1. Of the resurrection of the body at the last day, and general resurrection, when God will command the earth to give up its dead, and the sea to give up its dead; and when, by the ministry of angels, the dust and bones of the saints shall be gathered from the four winds of heaven, to which they have been scattered. Or, 2. We have in this vision a lively representation of the resurrection of the soul from the grave of sin; which is effected by preaching or prophesying, as the instrumental, and by the powerful influence of the Spirit of the Lord, as the principal efficient cause of it; and the wind here spoken of is plainly said to be understood of the Spirit, (ver. 14:) "I will put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live." Or, 3. We have, by this vision, a representation of the resurrection of the church of God, from the grave of her bondage and captivity in Babylon, under which they were at present detained. And this indeed is the primary and immediate scope of the vision, as is plain from the explication that follows it, ver. 11-14. However, seeing the deliverance of the children of Israel out of their Babylonish captivity, was typical of our spiritual redemption purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, and in a day of power applied by the mighty and powerful operation of the Holy Spirit of God; and seeing it is this redemption with which we under the gospel are principally concerned, therefore I shall handle the words that I have read under this spiritual sense and meaning.

And in them briefly we have, 1. A dismal case supposed, and that is, spiritual deadness. The people of God were not only in bondage under their enemies, but likewise their souls were at this time in a languishing condition. But of this more afterwards.

2. We have a blessed remedy here expressed, and that is the breathings of the Spirit of the Lord, the influences of the Holy Ghost: Come from the four winds, O breath, &c. Now, these influences of the Holy Ghost are here described,

1st, From their nature, held out under the notion and metaphor of wind; Come from the four winds, O breath. There are three elements by which the operations of the Spirit are held out to us in scripture. Sometimes they are compared to fire: Matt. 3:11: "He shall baptize you (speaking of Christ) with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Sometimes they are compared to water: Isa. 44:3: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed," &c. Sometimes the influences of the Spirit are held forth under the metaphor of wind, as in Cant. 4:16: "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden." So here, by the wind, or breath here spoken of, we are principally to understand the Spirit: it is plainly declared to be the Spirit of God in the 14th verse of this chapter. I cannot stand to show you the grounds of this metaphor. Wind, you know, is of a cleansing, cooling, fructifying nature and virtue; it acts freely and irresistibly. It is not in the power of man to resist or oppose the blowings of the wind. So the influences of the Spirit cleanse and purify the heart; they allay the storms of conscience, "make the bones which were broken to rejoice?" They make the soul to grow as the lily, and to cast forth its roots like Lebanon;" they render the soul fruitful "like the garden of God?" and the Spirit acts with a sovereign freedom, and irresistible efficacy, as you may hear afterwards. But,

2dly, These influences of the Holy Ghost, are described, from their variety, four winds: Come from the four winds, O breath; importing the manifold influences and operations of this one and eternal Spirit. Hence we read of the "north and south wind," Cant. 4:16; and of "the seven spirits that are before the throne of God," Rev. 4:5.

3dly, These influences are described from their acting or operation, which is here called a breathing: Breathe upon these slain. By the acting of this almighty wind, our natural life was produced and formed, Gen. 2:7. We are there told, that after God had "formed man of the dust of the ground, he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and he became a living soul." Hence is that of Elihu, Job 33:4: "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." And it is by the influences of the same almighty breath, that our souls are "quicken'd, when dead in trespasses and sins," and our spiritual life is formed within us. But then,

4thly, These influences are described from the end and effect of their operation: Breathe upon these slain, that they may live; that is, that the dry bones may become living souls, that out of these stones children may be raised up to Abraham.

Now, from these words, thus briefly explained, I only offer you this one observation; namely,

DOCT. "That as the generality of a church and people in covenant with God, may be in a very dead and languishing condition as to their souls; so the breathings and influences of the Holy Spirit of God are absolutely necessary for their revival. This is the sum of what I intend from these words, Come from the four winds, O breath; and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

In discoursing upon this doctrine, I shall,

- I. Speak a little upon this deadness which is incident to a people externally in covenant with God.
- II. Upon the influences or breathings of the wind of the Holy Ghost, which are so absolutely necessary in order to their revival.
- III. Touch at that life which is effected by these breathings.
- IV. I shall apply.

I. I say, I would speak a little on this deadness which is incident to a people externally in covenant with God. And here I shall only, 1. Give you some of its kinds. 2. Some of the causes of it. 3. Some of the symptoms of it.

1. The first thing is to give you some kinds of deadness. -- Know, then, in general, that there is a two-fold death; one is proper and natural, the other is improper and metaphorical.

(1.) Death, properly so called, is a thing so well known, that it is needless for me to tell you what it is. There is none of us all but we shall know it experimentally within a little; for "it is appointed for every man once to die." -- The grave is a house appointed for all living; and therefore, with Job, we may "say to corruption, Thou art our father; and to the worm, Thou art our mother and sister." But this is not the death I now speak of; and therefore,

(2.) There is a death which is improper or metaphorical; which is nothing else but a disease or distemper of the soul, by which it is rendered unmeet and incapable for holy and spiritual exercises. And this, again, is two-fold; either total or partial.

1st, There is a total death incident to the wicked and ungodly, who are stark dead, and have nothing of spiritual life in them at all. Hence, (Eph. 2:1,) men in a state of nature are said to be "dead in trespasses and sins;" that is, under the total reigning power of sin, "in the gall of bitterness, and under the bond of

iniquity;" without God, without Christ, and therefore without hope.

2d1y, There is a partial death incident to believers, whom God has raised out of the grave of an unrenewed state, and in whose souls he has implanted a principle of spiritual life. And this partial death, incident to believers, consists in a manifest decay of spiritual principles and habits, in the abating of their wonted life and vigour, and activity in the way and work of the Lord: their faith, their love, their hope, and other graces, are all in a fainting and languishing condition; they lie dormant in the soul, like the life of the tree that lies hid in its root, without fruit or blossoms, during the winter season. Such deadness as this we find the Lord's people in scripture frequently complaining of particularly Isa. 56:3: "The son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, and taken hold of his covenant," he is made to speak, saying, "The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people:" and the eunuch cries out, I am a dry tree, wherein there is no life or sap. It is this kind of spiritual deadness, incident to believers, that I now principally speak of. The leaves of his profession may in a great measure be withered; the candle of his conversation may burn dimly, or with a very imperfect light; the flame of his affections, his zeal, love, desire, may, like that of a great fire, be reduced to a few coals and cinders. There may be a great intermission or formality in the discharge of commanded duty. The mind, which once with delight and admiration, could meditate upon God and Christ, and the covenant, and things that are above, may come to lose its relish for these things, and to dote upon the transitory fading vanities of a present world. The common gifts of the Spirit, through carnal ease, and defect of employment, may be in a great measure blasted: and, which is worst of all, the saving graces, and fruits of the Spirit, may come to be woefully impaired as to their former degrees and actings. But now, this partial death of believers, again, is twofold: there is a deadness which is felt by God's people, and a deadness which is not felt; "gray hairs are here and there upon them, sometimes, and they do not behold them." The Lord was departed from Samson, and he wist not, Judg. 16:20. But then there is a deadness which is felt, when God's people have a sense of their deadness, and are lamenting it. And it is an evidence of spiritual life, or of some revival, when the Lord's people are beginning to cry out with the church, (Psal. 85:6:) "Wilt thou not revive us again; that thy people may rejoice in thee? -- Why hast thou hardened our heart from thy fear?" Isa. 63:17. But,

2. The second thing is, to take notice of some of the causes of this spiritual deadness. I shall only name them, because your time would not allow me to enlarge.

(1.) Then, abstinence or neglect of food, you know, will soon bring the body into a pining, languishing condition: so, if the means of grace be not diligently improved, if we neglect, by faith, to apprehend and to improve Christ, and to feed upon him, whose "flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed," the spiritual life of the soul will soon languish and wither. Hence is that [declaration] of Christ, John 6:53: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

(2.) Surfeiting the soul with sensual pleasure is another great cause of spiritual death: Hos. 4:11: "Whoredom and wine, and new wine take away the heart:" they suck out the very life of the soul. What is the reason why many professors of religion have lost their wonted vigour in the way of the Lord, and are in such a languishing condition as to their soul-matters? The plain reason of it is this, they are glutting themselves with the pleasures of sense. If Samson do but sleep on Delilah's lap, she will betray him into the hands of the Philistines, and cut the locks wherein his strength lies; and when he goes out to shake himself, as at other times, he will find his strength gone away from him.

(3.) Inactivity and sloth in salvation and regeneration-work is another cause of spiritual deadness. Physicians observe, that as too violent exercise, so too much rest, or a sedentary way of living, is

prejudicial to the health of the body. This holds also in spiritual things: if we do not exercise ourselves unto godliness, and endeavour to abound in the work of the Lord, the spiritual life will soon languish and dwindle away. Therefore, "Let us not be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; and whatever our hand findeth to do, let us do it with all our might." And beware of resting upon empty wishes and desires in spiritual matters; for "the desire of the slothful kills him, because his hands refuse to labour."

(4.) The contagion of ill example, of a carnal world, and irreligious relatives, has a fatal influence this way. You know it is exceedingly dangerous for those who have the seed of all diseases in them to frequent the company of those who are infected with the plague or pestilence. A Joseph, if he stay long in the Egyptian court, will learn to swear "by the life of Pharaoh." It is true, indeed, as fire sometimes burns with the greater vehemence, and casts the greater heat, the colder the air be; so the zeal and life of God's people is sometimes rather quickened, by beholding the wickedness of those among whom their lot is cast, as Paul among the Athenians. But if we shall adventure to cast ourselves into the society of the wicked, without a special call and warrant from Providence. It will be next to an impossibility to keep ourselves free of the contagion: for "Can a man carry fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt? Can a man walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt? Evil communications corrupt good manners."

(5.) Some deadly wound in the soul, not carefully noticed, may be the cause of spiritual death. You know a man may die not only by a draught of poison, or the like, but also by the cut of a sword. While we are in the wilderness, we live in the very midst of our spiritual enemies: the fiery darts of Satan are flying thick about us; he is always seeking to bruise the believer's heel, "going about seeking to devour:" and not only so, but our own lusts also do war against the soul, so that we cannot miss to be wounded thereby. And if the filth and guilt of these wounds be not carefully washed away by the blood and Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, they cannot miss exceedingly to impair the spiritual life and health: therefore, David, after he had been wounded by murder and adultery, is so earnest that God would wash and cleanse his wounds, and purge him with hyssop, that so the joy of his salvation might be restored. But then,

(6.) A holy God has sometimes a righteous and holy hand in this spiritual death, to which the Lord's people are liable, by withdrawing and suspending the influences of his Spirit from them. For as the plant and the herb of the field wither, and languish when the rain of heaven is withheld; so when the influences of the Holy Ghost are suspended, the very sap of the soul, and its spiritual life go away. And the Lord upholds the influences of his Spirit for many reasons, As,

1st, He does it sometimes in a way of awful and adorable sovereignty, to show that he is not a debtor to any of his creatures. However, because the Spirit's influences are seldom withdrawn in a way of sovereignty, it is our part to search and try if conscience do not condemn us, as having a sinful and culpable hand in it ourselves.

2dly, Sometimes he does it to humble his people, and to prevent their pride, which makes him to "behold them afar off." If we were always under the lively gales and influences of the Spirit, we would be ready to forget ourselves, and in danger with Paul, of being lifted up above measure, when he was wrapt up into the third heaven. Upon this account, some of the saints have said, that they have got more good sometimes by their desertion, than by their enlargement.

3dly, He does it to make them prize Christ, and see their continual need of fresh supplies "out of his fulness." He lets our cisterns run dry, that we may come anew, and lay our empty vessels under the

flowings of the blessed "fountain of life," that "out of his fulness we may receive, and grace for grace."

4thly, He does it sometimes for the trial of his people, to see if they will follow him "in a wilderness, in a land that is not sown," as well as when he is feeding them with the sensible communications of his grace and Spirit; to see if they will live on him by faith, when they cannot live by sight or sense.

5thly, Sometimes he does it for their chastisement, to correct them for their iniquities. And this, indeed, is the most ordinary cause why the Spirit of the Lord is suspended and withdrawn.

I have not time to enumerate many of these sins which provoke the Lord to withdraw his Spirit; I shall only mention two or three.

(1.) Not hearkening to the motions of his Spirit, is one great reason why the Lord withdraws his Spirit; as you see in the spouse, Cant. 5: There Christ comes, and moves, and calls for entrance: the spouse does not hearken to the motion: "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" Upon which he immediately withdraws and leaves her, as you may read at your own leisure.

(2.) Lukewarmness and formality in the discharge of duty is another cause of it, as we see in the church Laodicea; it made him to spew that church out of his mouth. And then

(3.) Prostituting the gifts and graces of the Spirit to carnal, selfish, and base ends, to procure a name, or make a show in the world. This is another reason of it.

(4.) Sinning against light. Trampling upon the belly of conscience, as David no doubt did in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba; whereby he provoked the Lord so far to leave him, that he cries out, (Psal. 51:11) "Cast me not out of thy sight; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

(5.) Barrenness and unfruitfulness under the means of grace: Isa. 5: the clouds are commanded to give no rain upon the barren vineyard. And then,

(6.) And lastly, Their not listening carefully to the voice of God in ordinances and providences: this is another cause of it; Psal. 81:11, 12: "My people would not hearken to my voice; therefore, I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels." And thus you have some of the causes of this spiritual deadness. I come to--

3. The third thing, which was to give you some of the symptoms of it: and would to God they were not too visible, rife, and common in the day, and upon the generation in which we live. I shall name a few of them to you.

(1.) Want of appetite after the bread and water of life is a symptom of spiritual death. You know that man cannot be in a healthful condition that loathes his food, or has lost his appetite after it. Alas! Is not the manna of heaven, that God is raining about our tent-doors, generally loathed? The great truths of God, which some of the saints have found to be "sweeter than honey, from the honey-comb," have not that savour and relish with us that they ought to have. Are not sabbaths, sacraments, sermons, fast-days, and feast-days, burdens to many among us; so that if they would but speak out the language of their hearts, they would be ready to join issue with these, Mal. 1:13: "What a weariness is this?" Whereas, the soul that is in a lively condition is ready to say of the word, "It is better to me than thousands of gold and silver; I esteem it more than my necessary food:" and of ordinances, "I love the habitation of thy house, and the place where thy honour dwelleth;" and Psal. 84:10: "One day in thy courts is better than a thousand."

(2.) Though a man have something of an appetite, yet if he do not grow, or look like his food, it looks something dangerous and death-like. The thriving Christian is a growing Christian: "They that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. -- The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." But, alas! is it not quite otherwise with the most part? Many are going backward, instead of forward; as it is said of Jerusalem; (Lam. 1:8:) "She sigheth, and turneth backward." May we not cry out of our leanness, our leanness, notwithstanding of all the fattening means and ordinances that we enjoy?

(3.) You know, when death takes a dealing with a person, it makes his beauty to fade: "When with rebukes thou dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth." Pale death soon alters the ruddy countenance. Perhaps the day has been, O believer, when the beauty of holiness adorned every step of thy conversation; thy "light did so shine before men, that they, seeing thy good works," could not but "glorify thy heavenly Father;" but now, alas! the beauty of thy conversation is sullied and stained, by "lying among the pots" of sin. This says, that spiritual death is dealing with thy soul.

(4.) Death not only wastes the beauty, but the strength also: Eccl. 12:3: "The keepers of the house do tremble, and the strong men do bow," upon the approaches of the king of terrors. Now, see if your wonted strength and ability to perform duty, or to resist temptations, be not abated. Perhaps the day has been, when thou couldst have said with Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? for, through Christ strengthening me, I can do all things;" but now thou art ready to faint and sit up at the very thoughts of duty. The day perhaps has been, when, though Satan, that cunning archer, did shoot sore at thee; yet "thy bow did abide in its strength, and the arms of thy hands were made strong by the mighty God of Jacob;" thou wast in care to beat back the fiery darts of Satan, and to stand thy ground against the corruptions and defections of the day and generation: but now, like a dead fish, thou art carried down the stream. Does not this proclaim thy soul to be under a sad decay?

(5.) Death wastes the natural heat and warmness of the body. There is a kind of chilliness and coldness that seizes a man when death takes a dealing with him. So it is a sign of a spiritual decay and deadness, when wonted zeal for God and his glory, and the concerns of his church and his kingdom, is abated. Perhaps the day has been, when, with David, the zeal of God's house did in a manner eat you up, and you "preferred Jerusalem to your chief joy:" but now you are almost come the length of Gallio's temper, to "care for none of these things;" indifferent whether the work of God in the land sink or swim. Laodicea's distemper is too prevalent among us at this day: we are "neither cold nor hot" in the things of God; and therefore have reason to fear, lest we be spewed out of God's mouth. The day has been, when your spirits were lifted up, in prayer, in hearing, in communicating; you were "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; "you could rejoice to work righteousness, and say, in some measure, with David, "I will go unto the altar of God, to God, my exceeding joy;" but now all this holy warmth is gone in a great measure; you are become formal and careless in the concerns of God's glory.

(6.) A dead man, you know, cannot move, but only as he is moved from without, in regard he wants a principle of motion within. So it is a sign of spiritual death, even in believers, when external motives and considerations have a greater influence in the duties of religion upon them, than an internal principle of faith and love. When the believer is himself, "the love of Christ constrains" him in every duty; this is the "one thing" he desires, "that he may behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple:" but when any selfish or external motive sets him at work, it is a sign of spiritual death. Other things might be added; but I hasten to speak to,

II. The second thing proposed in the method, and that was, to speak a little of these breathings and influences of the Spirit of God, which are absolutely necessary for the revival of the Lord's people under deadness: Come from the four winds, O breath! and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. And here I would, 1. Clear the nature of these influences, in a word or two. 2. Speak to the variety of these influences, four winds. 3. To the manner of their operation upon the elect; they are said to breathe upon, the slain. 4. Speak a little to the necessity of these breathings. 5. To the several seasons of the Spirit's reviving influences.

I fear your time will cut me short before I have done; but I shall run through these particulars as quickly as possible.

1. The first thing is, to clear the nature of these breathings or influences. And what I have to offer upon this head, you may take in these few propositions: --

(1.) You would know, that the influences and gifts of the Spirit of God are of two sorts, either common or saving. As for the common influences of the Spirit, which are sometimes bestowed upon the wicked and reprobate world, I am not to speak of these at this time. All I shall say about them is, to tell you, that they are given in common to the children of men, "for edification of the mystical body of Christ," until it arrive at "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," as you read, Eph. iv.: and therefore they are commonly called by divines *dona ministrantia*, or ministering gifts. Although they have no saving efficacy upon the person in whom they dwell; yet God, in his holy wisdom, makes use of them for the good of his church in general, as we read, Eph. 4: And another thing that I would tell you, likewise, concerning these common influences, is, that they of an exceeding dangerous nature when they are not accompanied with saving grace. The man that has them, is like a ship having very large sails, and but little or no ballast at all, in the midst of the ocean; and is therefore in danger of being split in pieces against every rock. In Matt. 7:22, we read of some who had extraordinary common gifts; they prophesied in Christ's name, wrought miracles, and cast out devils in his name, and did many wonderful works, and yet Christ utterly disowns them. I do not speak of these common influences now, but of such as are saving. And therefore,

(2.) A second proposition is, that the Holy Spirit of God, considered in his particular economy in the work of redemption, as the applier of the Redeemer's purchase, is the author and efficient cause of all saving influences. It is he, I say, that prepares and disposes the soul of man for the entertainment of the things of God, which are not received nor discerned by the natural mind. It is he that ploughs up the fallow ground of the heart, and brings in the wilderness, and turns it into a fruitful field. It is he that garnishes the face of the soul with the saving graces of the Spirit; these are flowers of the upper paradise, therefore called "the fruits of the Spirit," Gal. 5:22. It is he that preserves, cherishes, and maintains, them by renewed influences: he cherishes the smoking flax, and at last turns it into a lamp of glory in heaven; for "he brings forth judgment unto victory."

(3.) Again; you would know that the elect of God are the subjects recipient of all saving influences of the Spirit of God: I say, they are peculiar only to the elect of God, and to them only upon their conversion, when they come to be united to Christ, as members of his mystical body. We must be ingrafted into this true olive tree, otherwise we can never partake of his sap, and "receive out of his fulness, grace for grace." That these influences are peculiar to the elect of God, is plain from Tit. 1:1; where we read of "the faith of God's elect."

(4.) These influences of the Spirit, are given for various ends to the elect of God. The judicious Dr. Owen, in his Discourses on the Spirit, observes, that these saving influences are given to the elect of God for regeneration, to the regenerate for sanctification, to the sanctified for consolation, and to the comforted Christian for further up-building. and edification; and establishment, until they arrive at perfection in glory. But the nature of these influences will farther appear from,

2. The second thing proposed, which was, to speak a little to the variety of these influences of the Spirit. You see they are diversified here, while they are called four winds: Come from the four winds, O breath. The apostle tells us, that "there are diversities of gifts and operations, but the same Spirit," 1 Cor. 11:4. And we read, as I was telling you, of "seven Spirits that are before the throne," Rev. 1. Here, if time would allow me to enlarge, I might tell you, that the saving influences and breathings of the Spirit are either primary, fundamental, and absolutely necessary to salvation; or they are accumulative, additional, necessary only for the believer's comfort and well-being. Some of these influences are antecedent, or preparative unto conversion; some of them are regenerating, and others are subsequent and posterior unto regeneration. But I shall not stand upon such subtle distinctions. You may take a few of them in the order following: --

(1.) There are the convincing influences of the Spirit: John 16:8: "When he is come, he will convince the world of sin." This is what I conceive we are to understand by the "north wind," (Cant. 4:16;) which is commonly boisterous, cold, chill and nipping. The elect of God by nature lie fast asleep within the tidal mark of God's wrath, upon the very brink of everlasting ruin, crying, "Peace, peace," to themselves; the Spirit of the Lord comes like a stormy north wind, blows hard upon the sinner's face, and awakens him; breaks his carnal peace and security, brings him to himself and lets him see his danger; fills him with remorse and terror. Hence, (Isa. 28:17,) the hail is said to "sweep down the refuge of lies," before the sinner come to settle upon the "foundation that God hath laid in Zion." In Acts 2:37, it is said, "they were pricked in their heart;" and then they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

(2.) There are the enlightening influences and breathings of the Spirit. Hence, he is compared to eye-salve, Rev. 3:18: "Ye have received an unction from the Holy One, whereby ye know all things," 1 John 2:20. We read, Isa. 25:7, of a "veil and face of a covering that is spread over all nations." The wind of the Holy Ghost must blow off this veil of ignorance and unbelief; and then the poor sinner comes to see a new world of wonders that he never saw before; a wonderful great God, a wonderful Redeemer, a wonderful covenant, and a wonderful holy law. Hence, we are said to be "translated out of darkness into a marvellous light. The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, even the deep things of God." And, 1 Cor. 2:12: "By the Spirit we know the things that are freely given to us of God."

(3.) There are the renewing influences of the Spirit. We are said to be "saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," Tit. 3:5. Hence, he is called "a new Spirit." He renews the will, and "makes old things to pass away, and all things to become new."

(4.) There are the comforting influences of the Spirit. This is the south-wind, as it were, gentle and easy, and refreshing; and therefore he is called the Comforter. And, indeed, his consolations are strong consolations; they put more gladness into the heart than corn, wine, and oil in abundance; fill the soul with a joy that is "unspeakable, and full of glory." And then,

(5.) There are the corroborating and strengthening influences of the Spirit. By the breathings of the Spirit the feeble are made "like David, and as the angel of God before him." It is he that "gives power to the faint,

and increases strength to them that have no might." It is by him that worm Jacob is made to "thresh the mountains, and to beat them small, and to make the hills as chaff" And then,

(6.) There are the drawing and enlarging influences of the Spirit: "Draw me," (says the spouse,) "we will run after thee." The poor believer lies many times, as it were, wind-bound, that he is not able to move one step in the way of the Lord: but, O! when the Spirit of the Lord comes, then come liberty and enlargement: "I will run the way of thy commandments," (says David,) "when thou hast enlarged my heart;" to wit, by the influences of thy Spirit. He is like oil to their chariot-wheels; and when he comes, they are as the chariots of Amminadib, or a willing people.

(7.) There are the sin-mortifying and sin-killing influences of the Spirit: "We, through the Spirit," are said to "mortify the deeds of the body, that so we may live." When this wind of the Holy Ghost blows upon the soul, he not only makes the spices to revive, but he kills the weeds of sin and corruption, making them to wither and decay; so that the poor believer, who was crying, "Wretched man, what shall I do to be delivered from this body of death!" is made some-times to tread upon the necks of these enemies, as a pledge of his complete victory at last; And then,

(8.) There are the interceding influences of the Spirit: Rom. 8:26: "The Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." He intercedes in a physical and efficient way. He makes us to wrestle and pray; therefore he is called "the Spirit of grace and supplications," Zech. 12:10. He fills the believer's heart and mouth with such a heavenly rhetoric, that God is not able to withstand it. Hence Jacob "had power with the angel, and prevailed;" for "he wept, and made supplication unto him." And then

(9.) There are the sealing and witnessing influences of the Spirit: He "witnesseth with our spirits, that we are the sons of God." He bears witness of the glorious fulness and suitableness of Christ to the soul: "The Spirit shall testify of me," John 15:26. And he is said to "seal believers to the day of redemption;" and his seal is the earnest of glory: Eph. 1:13, 14: "Ye are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of the inheritance." But these things I have not time to insist upon. So much for the second thing.

3. The third thing that I proposed here, was, to speak a little to the manner of the acting or operation of these influences, or flow it is that this wind blows upon the soul? I answer,

(1.) The wind of the Holy Ghost blows very freely; the Spirit acts as an independent sovereign, John 3:8. It does not stay for the command, nor stop for the prohibition of any creature. So the breathings of the Spirit are sovereignly free as to the time of their donation, free as to their duration and continuance, free as to the measure, and free as to the manner of their working. And then,

(2.) He breathes on the soul sometimes very surprisingly: "Or ever I was aware (says the spouse,) my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." Canst thou not seal this in thy experience, believer, that sometimes, when thou hast gone to duty in a very heartless and lifeless condition, perhaps beginning to raze foundations, and to say with Zion, "The Lord hath forsaken, and my God hath forgotten," a gale from heaven has in a manner surprised thee, and set thee upon the high places of Jacob, and made thee to cry with the spouse, "It is the voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills? --His anger endureth but for a moment: in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

(3.) These breathings and influences of the Spirit are some-times very piercing and penetrating. The cold nipping north wind, you know, goes to the very quick. The sword of the Spirit "pierces 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." Wind, you know, is of a very seeking, penetrating nature; it seeks through the closest chambers. So the Spirit, which is the candle of the Lord, "searcheth the lower parts of the belly:" he makes a discovery of these lusts and idols that sulk in the secret chambers of the heart.

(4.) The breathings of this wind are very powerful, strong, and efficacious. Who can oppose the blowings of the winds? Some winds have such a mighty force with them, that they bear down, overturn, and overthrow every thing that stands in their way. So the Spirit of the Lord sometimes, especially at first conversion, breaks in upon the soul like the rushing of a mighty wind, as he did upon the apostles, breaking down the strongholds of iniquity, casting to the ground every high thought and towering imagination of the soul, that exalts itself against Christ, with a powerful and triumphant efficacy. He masters the darkness of the mind, the contumacy and rebellion of the will, and the carnality of the affections: the enmity of the heart against God, and all the spiritual wickednesses that are in the high places of the soul, are made to fall down at his feet, as Dagon did before the ark of the Lord.

(5.) Although he act thus powerfully and irresistibly, yet it is with an overcoming sweetness, so as there is not the least violence offered to any of the natural faculties of the soul: for whenever the Spirit comes with his saving influences, he sweetly overcomes the darkness of the mind; the sinner becomes a volunteer, and content to enlist himself a soldier under Christ's banner: Psal. 110:3: "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." No sooner does Christ by his Spirit say to the soul, "Follow me," but immediately they arise and follow him. "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God." Then,

(6.) There is something in the breathing of this wind that is incomprehensible by reason: John 3:8: "Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goes," says Christ: "so is every one that is born of the Spirit." There is something in the operation of the eternal Spirit and his influences beyond the reach, not only of natural but of sanctified reason. Who can tell "how the bones are formed in the womb of her that is with child?" So, far less can we tell how the Spirit forms the babe of grace in the heart; how he preserves, maintains, and cherishes "the smoking flax," that is not quite extinguished. We may, in this case, apply the words of the psalmist in another case, and say, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known;" and that of the apostle, "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

(7.) These influences of the Spirit, are sometimes felt before they are seen; as you know a man will feel the wind, and hear it, when he cannot see it. So it is with the Lord's people many times, on whom the Spirit breathes: they feel his actings, they are sensible that he has been dealing with them; and all that they can say about it is, with the man that was born blind, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." "The kingdom of heaven comes not with observation."

4. The fourth thing proposed was, to speak a little to the necessity of these breathings. And here I shall show, 1. That they are necessary. 2. To what things they are necessary.

(1.) That they are necessary, will appear,

1st, From the express declaration of Christ, John 15:5: "Without me, ye can do nothing;" that is, without the aid and influences of my Spirit. He does not say, Without me, ye cannot do many things, or great things; but, "Without me, ye can do nothing."

2dly, It is evident from the express acknowledgment of the saints of God upon this head: 2 Cor. 3:5: "We are not," says the apostle, "sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God." It is he that must "work all our works in us and for us."

3dly, It is plain from the earnest prayers of the saints for the breathings of this wind: Cant. 4:16: "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south; and blow upon my garden." Psal. 85:6: "Wilt thou not revive us again; that thy people may rejoice in thee?" They are promised in the covenant, and therefore necessary: Isa. 44:3: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed," &c. Ezek. 36:27: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Now, there is not a mercy promised in the covenant that can be lacking. But,

(2.) To what are these breathings necessary? I answer, they are necessary,

1st, To the quickening of the elect of God, when they are stark dead in trespasses and sins. Can ever the dry bones live, unless this omnipotent wind blow upon them? It is strange, to hear some men that profess Christianity, talking of the power of their own wills to quicken and convert themselves. They may as well say, that a dead man may take his grave in his two arms, and lay death by him, and walk. "No man," says Christ, "can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." Oh! What a dead weight is the sinner, that a whole Trinity must draw! For both Father and Son draws the sinner by the breathings of the Holy Ghost.

2dly, These influences are necessary for the suitable discharge of every duty of religion. You cannot read, you cannot hear, you can not pray or praise, you cannot communicate to any advantage, unless the wind of the Holy Ghost blow upon you. It is the Lord that must enlarge our steps under us, and make your feet like hinds' feet in the ways of the Lord.

3dly, They are necessary for accomplishing our spiritual warfare against sin, Satan, and the world. We will never be able to combat with our spiritual enemies, if he do not help us: it is he only that must "teach our hands to war, and our fingers to fight, so as bows of steel may be broken in pieces by us." Without the Spirit, we will fall before every temptation; like Peter, curse and swear, that we never knew him.

4thly, They are necessary to the exercise of grace already implanted in the soul. As we cannot work grace in our hearts, so neither can we exercise it without the renewed influences of the Holy Ghost, Cant. 4:16: When this wind blows, then, and never till then, do the spices flow out. But I shall not stand on this: the Spirit's influences are necessary to all the uses mentioned upon the second head: for conviction, illumination, renovation, consolation, enlargement, mortification of sin, for assurance of our adoption.

5. The fifth thing that I proposed upon this head, was, to give you some of the seasons of these influences of the Spirit: for the wind, you know, has its seasons and times of blowing and breathing. I shall only name a few of them to you.

(1.) The Spirit's reviving influences blow, very ordinarily, in a day of conversion. This, as you were hearing, is a season when this wind breathes on the soul, Ezek. 36:26: when God "takes away the stony heart, and gives the heart of flesh." He puts his Spirit within them, when the soul is first espoused unto Christ. So Jer. 2:2: "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown."

(2.) When the soul has been deeply humbled under a sense of sin and unworthiness. When Ephraim is brought low, and is smiting on his thigh, acknowledging his sin and folly, then the Spirit of the Lord comes with a reviving gale upon his spirit. "Is Ephraim," says the Lord "my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

(3.) After a dark night of desertion, when the Lord returns again, it is a time of sweet influences. After Zion had been crying, "The Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me;" upon the back of it comes a sweet gale of the Spirit, "Can a woman forget her child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee."

(4.) Times of earnest prayer and wrestling; for he gives his Spirit to them that ask it. This is agreeable to the promise, Ezek. 36:37.

(5.) Times of serious meditation are times of sweet influences of the Spirit Psal. 63:5, 6, 8: When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches, my soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my soul followeth hard after thee."

(6.) Communion-days are sometimes days of sweet influences. Some of the Lord's people can attest it from their experience, with the spouse; that "while the King sat at his table, the spikenard sent forth the smell thereof;" and when they "sat down under his shadow, they found his fruit sweet to their taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."

(7.) The day of death has sometimes been found to be a day of such pleasant gales of the Spirit that they have been made to enter into the haven of glory with the triumphant song in their mouth, saying, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus David, "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." Thus, Simeon, thus Paul, &c.

III. The third thing in the text and doctrine to be spoken to, is the life that is effected and wrought in the souls of God's elect by these influences and breathings of the Holy Spirit. Your time will not allow me to enlarge upon this. I shall only tell you, in a few particulars, what sort of a life it is.

(1.) It is a life of faith. The apostle calls it so, Gal. 2:20, "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me; and gave himself for me." And the just is said to live by faith. The man is ever embracing a Redeemer, and the fulness of the Godhead in him; always deriving fresh supplies out of that full treasury and store-house.

(2.) It is a life of justification. The law pronounces a curse against every one that "doth not continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them." The believer gets this sentence of death cancelled: Rom. 8:1. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." And not only so, but he has the everlasting righteousness of Immanuel God-man imputed to him: so that with a holy boldness he may challenge justice, and challenge the law, what they have to say against him, as the apostle does, Rom. 8:33: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" &c.

(3.) It is a life of reconciliation with God; God and they are at friendship; which follows naturally on their justification: Rom. 5:1: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." God does not retain the least grudge in his heart against them; and he and they walk together, because they are agreed: that is, they

have fellowship one with another, according to that, 1 John 1:3: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

(4.) It is a life of holiness and sanctification: for the Spirit of the Lord is a cleansing, purifying, and renewing Spirit: he renews the soul after the image of God; makes the heart, that was a "cage of unclean birds," a fit temple for the Holy Ghost to dwell in; he garnishes the soul, and makes it like the King's daughter, all glorious within. They that had lain among the pots, become "like the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

(5.) It is a very lightsome and comfortable life: and no wonder; for his name is The Comforter. His consolations are so strong, that they furnish the soul with ground of joy in the blackest and cloudiest day: Hab. 3:17, 18: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." And the joy that he gives is deep: "Your heart shall rejoice." And it is abiding: "Your joy shall no man take from you." And it is such as cannot be made language of: "We rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

(6.) It is a life of liberty; for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." He brings us into "the glorious liberty of the sons of God." Before the Spirit comes with his saving influences, the man is in bondage; in bondage to sin, to Satan, to the law, and to the curse and condemnation of God: but the Spirit of the Lord frees from all these. Christ, by his Spirit, sets the captives of the mighty at liberty, and "delivers the prey from the terrible."

(7.) It is a hidden life: Col. 3:3: "Your life is hid with Christ in God." And believers are called "God's hidden ones," Psal. 83:3: The spring and fountain of this life is hid, namely, an unseen Christ; for with him is the fountain of life. The subject of this life is hid, even the hidden man of the heart. The actings of this life are hid, and the means of its support; he feeds upon "the hidden manna, and the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." And then the beauty and glory of this life is hid; for "the King's daughter is all glorious within." The beauty of the hypocrite's life lies all in the outside, painted sepulchres.

(8.) It is a heavenly life; they are made to live above the world: "Our conversation is in heaven," says the apostle. They look on themselves as pilgrims and strangers on the earth, and, therefore, look not so much to the things that are seen, as to the things that are not seen. With Moses, they "have respect unto the recompense of the reward;" their eyes are set upon the land that is very far off, and the King in his beauty.

(9.) It is a royal life: for they are "made kings and priests unto God," Rev. 1:6: They have a royal kingdom, of which they are heirs: "I appoint unto you a kingdom," says Christ; a royal crown, "a crown of glory which fadeth not away." They shall have a royal throne at last, Rev. 3:21. Royal robes, princely attire, "the garments of salvation;" a royal table provided for them, Isa. 25:6: "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined;" royal guard continually attending them, the angels of God, and the attributes of the divine nature, &c.

(10.) It is an eternal life: John 17:3: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The saving knowledge of a God in Christ, what is it but the first dawns of eternal glory in the soul? And where he once dawns, he is ever in the ascendant until the mid-day of glory come; for "his goings forth are prepared as the morning."

IV. The fourth thing is the use of the doctrine. And waiving other uses that might be made of this doctrine, I shall only improve it by way of examination and of exhortation.

The first use shall be of trial and examination. Oh try, sirs, whether or not these saving influences of the Spirit did ever breathe upon your souls, yea, or not. For your trial I shall only suggest these few things: --

1. If these breathings have blown upon thy soul, man, woman, then he has blown away "the veil and face of the covering" that was naturally upon your mind and understanding. He has given you other views of spiritual and divine things, than you can have by any natural or acquired knowledge. The Spirit of the Lord is called "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation," Eph. 1:17: because he reveals these things to the soul which flesh and blood is not able to receive or understand. So then, has the Spirit testified of Christ unto you? Has he "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined into your heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ?" And as a fruit and consequence of this,

2. If the wind of the Holy Ghost has blown upon thy soul, he has blown away some of the filth of hell that did cleave to thy soul, and has transformed thee into his own image: 2 Cor. 3:18: "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, thou art changed into the same image. from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." If you have the Spirit, the "same mind will be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:" for "he that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit." You will imitate and resemble him in his imitable perfections, in his holiness, meekness, self-denial, patience. He is a holy God; and wherever he comes, he works holiness, and makes the soul holy.

3. If this Wind has blown upon your souls, then it has driven you from your lying refuges, and made you take sanctuary in Christ. He has driven you from the law, and made you consent to the method of salvation through the righteousness of the Son of God: "I through the law," (says the apostle,) "am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." This is the design of all the Spirit's influences, to lead sinners off from sin, off from self, off from the law, that they may rest in Christ only.

4. If ever you felt any of the reviving gales of this wind of the Spirit, you will long for new gales and breathings of it: and when these breathings are suspended and withheld, your souls will be like to faint, as it were, like a man that wants breath. You will pant for the air of the Spirit's influences, like David, Psal. 63:1: "My soul longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;" and Psal. 84:2: "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Oh for another gale of his Spirit in public ordinances!

5. If you have felt the breathings of this wind you will not snuff up the east wind of sin and vanity: John 4:14: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." You will not thirst immoderately after things of time; no, no; you will see them to be but mere trash and vanity. You will "choose that good part which shall not be taken away from you." You will "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

6. If this wind has blown upon thy soul, then you will follow the motion of this wind: you will not run cross to this wind, but will go along with it. I mean, you will yield yourselves to the conduct of the Spirit speaking in his word; for "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

But, say you, How shall I know if I be led by the Spirit of God? I answer,

1st, If you follow the Spirit, then "you will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," but, on the contrary, you will study to "crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts." You will be ready to cut off your right hand, and to pluck out the right eye sins at the Lord's command.

2dly, Then the way wherein you walk will be a way of holiness, for he is a Spirit of sanctification; and a way of truth; for the Spirit of the Lord is a Spirit of truth, and he leads into all truth: a way of uprightness: Psal. 143:10: "Thy Spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness."

3dly, You know leading imports spontaneousness and willingness. There is a great difference between leading and drawing; between being driven by the wind, and following the motion of the wind. Sometimes, indeed, the wicked, a hypocrite, a natural man, by a strong north wind of conviction, may be driven on to duty through the force of terror. But the believer is a volunteer; he freely yields himself to the Spirit's conduct; he rejoices to work righteousness, and to remember God in his ways. Whenever he hears the Spirit whispering in his ears, and saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it," presently, he complies. When the Spirit of Lord says, "Come," he immediately echoes back again, and says, "Behold, I come unto thee; for thou art the Lord my God." Now, try yourselves by these things.

The second use shall be exhortation. Is it so, that the influences of the Spirit are so necessary in order to our revival? Then be exhorted to look up to Heaven, and cry for the breathings of the Spirit. O sirs, will you turn the words of my text into a prayer? And say, "Come from the four winds, O breath; and breathe upon these slain, that they may live?" I might enforce this exhortation by many motives: I only name them.

Motive 1. Consider, that spiritual deadness is very prevalent in the day in which we live. There is a great multitude of "dry bones" scattered up and down our "valley of vision." There are many that carry the marks of a deadly leprosy on their foreheads: their atheism, their profanity, irreligion, and other gross abominations, plainly declare to the world, that they are "dead in trespasses and sins." And, alas! May it not be for matter of lamentation, that even many of those, who, in the judgment of charity, have "the root of the matter," the principles of spiritual life, are yet under sad decays of the life of grace? Alas! It is not with Scotland's ministers and professors as once it has been. I might produce many melancholy evidences of this, if time would allow. Remember those already mentioned, the general loathing of the word, &c.

Mot. 2. Consider the evil and danger of spiritual deadness. The evil of it will appear,

1st, If you consider that it is a frame of spirit directly contrary to the command of God. God commands us to "present ourselves a living sacrifice unto him:" and, indeed, this "is our reasonable service," Rom. 12:1. Yea, it is contrary to the very nature of God; for God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth," 1 John 4:24.

2dly, The evil and danger of it appears farther from this; that it unfits the soul for every duty, and mars our communion and fellowship with God. God meets the lively Christian in the way of duty: "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness; those that remember thee in thy ways." But, for the man that comes to him with a Laodicean, dead, lifeless, and lukewarm frame of soul, he will not hold communion with that man; no he "will spew him out of his mouth."

3dly, It opens a door for all other sins, and renders a man an easy prey to every temptation. A dead man can make no manner of resistance; he is carried down the stream without opposition. Then,

4thly, It lays a foundation for sad and terrible challenges from conscience. David's spiritual deadness brought him to that pass, in the end, that he is made to cry out of broken bones, &c.

Mot. 3. Consider, that as the breathings of the Spirit are necessary for every duty, so particularly for that solemn work which you have before your hands of commemorating the death of the exalted Redeemer. I might here let you see, how the influences of the Spirit are necessary for every part of your work, if time would allow. Without the Spirit's influences of light, you can never examine yourselves to purpose: it is "the Spirit of the Almighty that giveth understanding" how to search out "the mystery of iniquity" in the heart, which is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." And then, without the Spirit you cannot mourn for sin; for it is the kindly influences of the Spirit that thaws the heart into evangelical tears, Zech. 12:10. Without the Spirit you cannot discern the broken body of a Redeemer; for it is the Spirit that testifies of Christ. "I will pour the Spirit of grace upon the house of David, and inhabitants of Jerusalem;" and then follows, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him." In a word, you cannot exercise any grace, you cannot wrestle in prayer, you cannot have any right view of the contrivance of redemption, you cannot "take hold of God's covenant," or improve any promise of the covenant, without the Spirit.

Mot. 4. Consider the excellency of these influences of the Spirit.

1st, They blow from an excellent quarter and original: the Holy Ghost is the author of them; and you know he "proceeds from the Father and the Son." So that a whole Trinity, as it were, convey themselves with these breathings.

2dly, They are the purchase of a Redeemer's blood, and therefore excellent. There is not the least grace, or the least gale of the Spirit, that is given to believers, but it cost Christ the blood of his heart. He purchased grace as well as glory.

3dly, These influences of the Spirit, as it were, supply Christ's room while he is in glory. And truly, sirs, I may safely say it upon scripture-warrant, that the presence of the Spirit with believers upon earth, is a greater blessing than the mere bodily presence of Christ: and, therefore, Christ tells his disciples by way of comfort, (John 16:7:) "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." As if he had said, "When I am gone, the Spirit will be poured out from on high, which is far better for you than my bodily presence."

4thly, These breathings of the Spirit are pledges of glory, the earnest-penny of the inheritance: Eph. 1:13, 14: "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance."

5thly, Their excellency appears from the excellent effects that they produce upon the soul. They beautify the soul on whom they fall, and make it like "a field which the Lord hath blessed." They render the soul "fruitful in every good word and work:" Hos. 14:5: "I will be as the dew unto Israel:" And what follows? "he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." Isa. 44:3: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring;" and then follows, (ver. 4,) "They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses."

Quest. What advice or counsel do you give, in order to our obtaining or recovering the enlightening and reviving gales of the Spirit?

Ans. 1. Be aware of your deadness, and mourn over it; for the Lord "comforts them that mourn in Zion." He will "give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness:" and then follows, "They shall be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified," Isa. 61:2, 3.

2. Be much upon the mount of divine meditation; for here it is that the Spirit of the Lord breathes: "While I was musing the fire burned," says David, Psal. 39:3; Psal. 63:5, 6: "When I meditate on thee in the night-watches, my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness."

3. Cry mightily to God for these influences, that he would pour down his Spirit from on high: for "if ye, being evil," says Christ, "know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke 11:13. Plead the promises of the new covenant; and, particularly, be much in pleading this absolute promise of the Spirit, Isa. 44:3: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed," &c. Ezek. 36:27: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." But still remember, that these promises are to be managed by the prayer of faith. We are to turn God's promises into prayers; for it is added, (ver. 37,) "For these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

4. Make conscience of waiting on him in all the duties and ordinances of his appointment, particularly the preaching of the word. And beware of a legal frame of spirit in your attending upon these ordinances, as if thereby you could merit anything at God's hand, or as if God were obliged to you for what you do this way; for "we receive the Spirit," (says the apostle,) "not by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith." Gospel ordinances are the usual chariots in which the Spirit rides, when he makes his entrance at first, or when he returns into the soul after absence.

5. Lastly, S

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