

every entreaty,—people reject the word, and continue dead in trespasses and sins. We cannot explain why in other cases,—with every possible difficulty, and with no encouragement,—people are born again, and become decided Christians. We cannot define the manner in which the Spirit of God conveys life to a soul, and the exact process by which a believer receives a new nature. All these are hidden things to us. We see certain results, but we can go no farther. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” (John iii. 10.)

Let us mark this truth also, for it is deeply instructive.—It is humbling, no doubt, to ministers and teachers of others. The highest abilities, the most powerful preaching, the most diligent working, cannot command success. God alone can give life. But it is a truth at the same time which supplies an admirable antidote to over-carefulness and despondency. Our principal work is to sow the seed. That done, we may wait with faith and patience for the result. “We may sleep, and rise night and day,” and leave our work with the Lord. He alone can, and, if He thinks fit, He will give success.

We are taught, thirdly, that, as in the growth of corn, so in the work of grace, *life manifests itself gradually*.

There is a true proverb, which says, “Nature does nothing at a bound.” The ripe ear of wheat does not appear at once, as soon as the seed bursts forth into life. The plant goes through many stages, before it arrives at perfection,—“first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.” But in all these stages one great thing is true about it,—even at its weakest, it is a living plant.

The work of grace, in like manner, goes on in the heart by degrees. The children of God are not born perfect in faith, or hope, or knowledge, or experience. Their beginning is generally a day of small things.” They see in part their own sinfulness, and Christ’s fulness, and the beauty of holiness. But for all that, the weakest child in God’s family is a true child of God. With all his weakness and infirmity he is alive. The seed of grace has come up in his heart, though at present it be only in the blade. He is “alive from the dead.” And the wise man says, “a living dog is better than a dead lion.” (Eccles. ix. 4.)—*Ryle’s Expository Thoughts.*