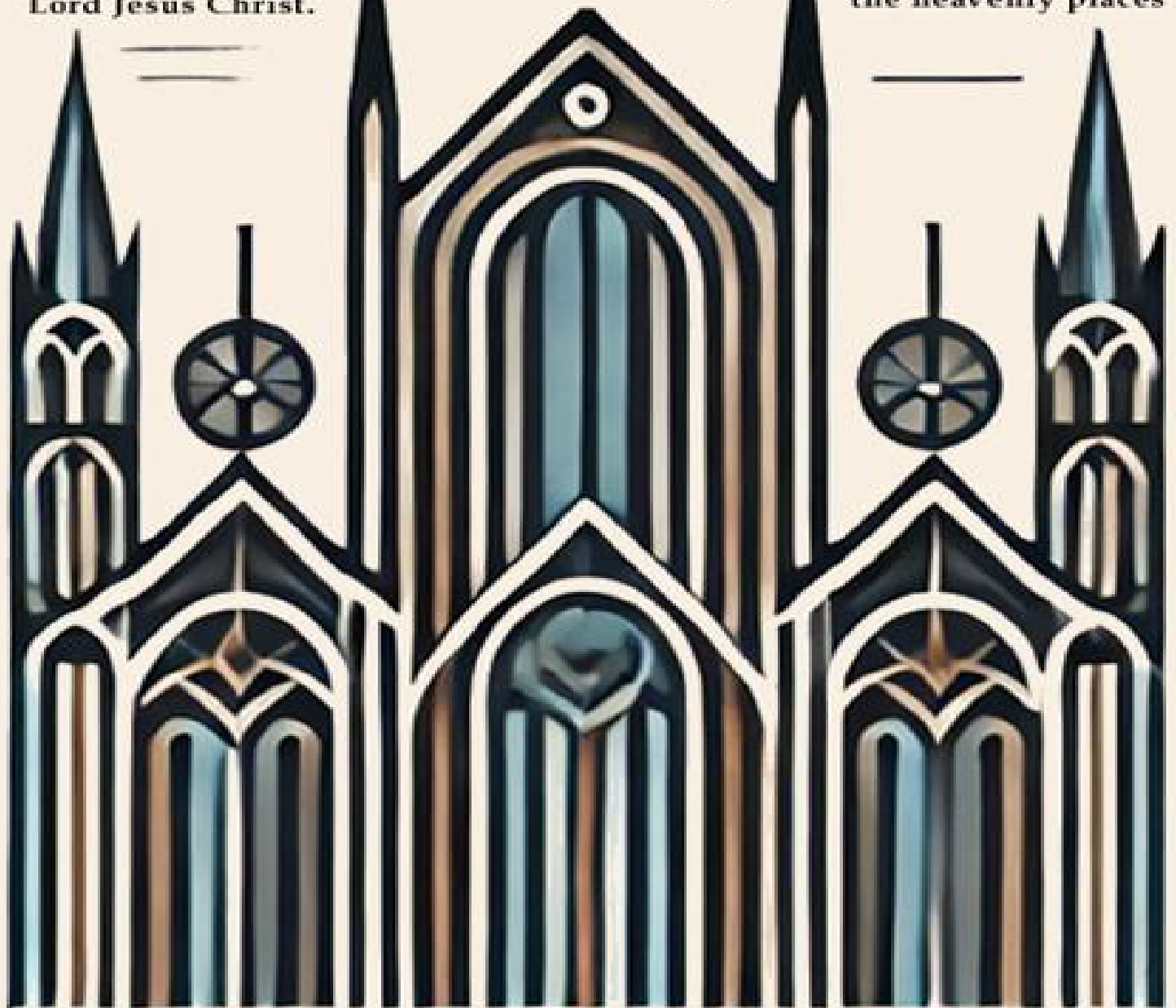

SERMONS ON

EPHESIANS

Grace be to you and
peace from God our
Father, and from the
Lord Jesus Christ.

Translated by
Arthur Golding

Who has blessed us
in Christ with every
spiritual blessing in
the heavenly places



EPHESIANS

JOHN CALVIN

SERMONS ON

EPHESIANS

Grace be to you and
peace from God our
Father, and from the
Lord Jesus Christ.

Translated by
Arthur Golding

Who has blessed us
in Christ with every
spiritual blessing in
the heavenly places



EPHESIANS

JOHN CALVIN

Sermons on Ephesians

by John Calvin

Translated by Arthur Golding

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Greetings and Argument](#)

[The First Sermon on the First Chapter - Ephesians 1:1-3](#)

[The Second Sermon on the First Chapter - Ephesians 1:3-4.](#)

[The Third Sermon on the First Chapter - Ephesians 1:4-6](#)

[The Fourth Sermon on the First Chapter - Ephesians 1:7-10](#)

[The Fifth Sermon on the First Chapter - Ephesians 1:13-14.](#)

[The Sixth Sermon on the First Chapter - Ephesians 1:15-18](#)

[The Seventh Sermon on the First Chapter - Ephesians 1:17-18](#)

[The Eighth Sermon on the First Chapter - Ephesians 1:19-23](#)

[The Ninth Sermon, the First on the Second Chapter - Ephesians 2: 1-](#)

[The Tenth Sermon, the Second on on the Second Chapter - Ephesians 2:4-6](#)

[The Eleventh Sermon. the Third on the Second Chapter - Ephesians 2:8-10](#)

[The Twelfth Sermon, the Fourth on the Second Chapter - Ephesians 2:11-13](#)

[The Thirteenth Sermon, the Fifth on the Second Chapter - - Ephesians 2:13-15](#)

[The Fourteenth Sermon, the Sixth on the Second Chapter - Ephesians 2:16-19.](#)

[The Fifteenth Sermon, the Seventh on the Second Chapter - Ephesians 2:19-22](#)

[The Sixteenth Sermon, which is the First Upon the Third Chapter - Ephesians 3:1-6](#)

[The Seventeenth Sermon, which is the second upon the third chapter - Ephesians 3:7-9.](#)

[The Eighteenth Sermon, which is the third upon the third Chapter - Ephesians 3:9-12](#)

[The Nineteenth Sermon, which is the fourth upon the third Chapter - Ephesians 3:13-16](#)

[The Twentieth Sermon, which is the fifth upon the third Chapter - Ephesians 3:14-19.](#)

The Twenty First Sermon, which is the sixth upon the third Chapter, and the first upon the fourth - Ephesians 3:21 - 4:2

The Twenty Second Sermon, which is the second upon the fourth Chapter - Ephesians 4:1-4.

The Twenty Third Sermon, which is the Third upon the Fourth Chapter - Ephesians 4:6-8

The Twenty Fourth Sermon, which is the fourth upon the fourth Chapter - Ephesians 4:7-10.

The Twenty Fifth Sermon, Which is the Fifth Upon the Fourth Chapter - Ephesians 4:11-12.

The Twenty Sixth Sermon, which is the Sixth upon the Fourth Chapter - Ephesians 4:11-14.

The Twenty Seventh Sermon, which is the Seventh upon the Fourth Chapter - Ephesians 4:15-16.

The Twenty Eighth Sermon, Which Is the Eighth upon the Fourth Chapter - Ephesians 4:17-19.

The Twenty-Ninth Sermon, Which is the ninth upon the Fourth Chapter - Ephesians 4:20-24.

The Thirtieth Sermon, which is the Tenth upon the Fourth Chapter - Ephesians 4:23-26

The Thirty First Sermon, Which is the Eleventh Upon the Fourth Chapter - Ephesians 4:26-28

The Thirty-Second Sermon, which is the Twelfth upon the Fourth Chapter - Ephesians 4:29-30

The Thirty-Third Sermon, which is the Thirteenth upon the Fourth Chapter, and the First upon the Fifth Chapter - Ephesians 4:32-5:2

The Thirty-Fourth Sermon, which is the second upon the Fifth Chapter - Ephesians 5:3-5

The Thirty-Fifth Sermon, which is the Third upon the Fifth Chapter - Ephesians 5:8-11

The Thirty-Sixth Sermon, Which Is the Fourth Upon the Fifth Chapter - Ephesians 5:11-14.

The Thirty-Seventh Sermon, which is the fifth upon the fifth Chapter - Ephesians 5:15-18

The Thirty-Eighth Sermon, which is the sixth upon the fifth Chapter - Ephesians 5:18-21

The Thirty-Ninth Sermon, which is the Seventh upon the Fifth Chapter - Ephesians 5:22-26

The Fortieth Sermon, which is the eighth upon the fifth Chapter - Ephesians 5:25-27.

The Forty-First Sermon, which is the Ninth upon the Fifth Chapter

The Forty-Second Sermon, Which Is the Tenth Upon the Fifth Chapter - Ephesians 5: 31-33

The Forty-Third Sermon, which is the first upon the sixth Chapter - Ephesians 6:1-4.

[The Forty-Fourth Sermon, which is the second upon the sixth Chapter - Ephesians 6:5-9.](#)

[The Forty-Fifth Sermon, which is the third upon the sixth Chapter - Ephesians 6:10-12](#)

[The Forty-Sixth Sermon, which is the fourth upon the sixth Chapter - Ephesians 6:11-17](#)

[The Forty-Seventh Sermon, which is the fifth upon the sixth chapter - Ephesians 6:18-19.](#)

[The Forty-Eighth Sermon, which is the sixth and last upon the sixth Chapter - Ephesians 6:19-24.](#)

Greeting and Argument

To All Christians Baptized in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost Dwelling or Abiding in France

Greeting

It is a wondrous matter, dearly beloved brethren, how all of us glory in our baptism, yet do not all with one accord consider the mark that it is important by its very nature to follow the intent of Him who is the author of it. No doubt, if we did so, we should all join together in one holy consent to worship the only one God in spirit and truth, and to acknowledge Jesus Christ as our only Saviour, advocate, Master, yea, and Lord, concerning the governance of our souls and

consciences. We would take His only word for our wisdom, guide, and rule of our whole life, especially of His service, without mingling the intentions of man's brain with it, however great antiquity or countenance they seem to have.

For the outward governance and visible order of the Church, we would hold to that which our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we were baptized, showed to His apostles, and by them enjoined the whole world to follow even unto the last day. Certainly, then would the strange confusion and divisions cease, which are seen in Christendom. All those are the cause who will not hearken unto God and yield full authority to His word, a fault that shall be laid to their charge at the judgment of God unless they turn a new leaf. May the Lord and Father grant them grace to do so, as supplication is made to Him for them in all holy assemblies, where He is called upon according to His will, in the only name of Jesus Christ.

That is what we desire. For here the case concerns not the bringing in of some new device after the fancy of men, nor do we strive to make the victory fall on men's side, whoever they may be, as some surmise, but that God and His word may have the upper hand against all abuses, superstitions, and lies of Satan, and that we may all together give glory to our God, confessing that both we and our fathers have shamefully forgotten Him, inasmuch as we have not followed His holy law, but have bowed aside both to the right hand and to the left.

Truly, whenever we read God's word in a tongue that we understand or hear it preached and declared purely, He allures us to Him, to make the same acknowledgment. And you have done so much in these late years by striving with His mercy against the malice of the world, that many have returned to the right way. Many of all degrees do follow anew, but yet it is not enough unless the residue who have

hitherto been deaf or asleep awaken in good earnest and have ears to hear, as says Jesus Christ. Therefore, we entreat and exhort them in God's name, that they may discharge themselves of the promise unto which their baptism secretly binds them, as has been said. To further them therein, besides the lively voices of the true ministers and other books containing faithful expositions of the Scripture, we offer them here the sermons of Master John Calvin upon the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians. We hope they shall have matter to fare better by for the plainer understanding of the things which they shall either hear preached or read alone by themselves.

To make a long rehearsal of things that might be alleged in commendation of the doctrine contained herein, or of the manner of teaching used by the author, which is both simple and familiar and yet nevertheless full of authority and force, is not now needful. For we are sure that such as seek God's honour and their own salvation shall, in reading them, perceive that the author had no other meaning with them. Even the malicious sort themselves shall be driven to confess this in spite of their hearts.

Wherefore, to conclude, we, your dear brethren, who meet with this book, pray you anew to give ear to our God and to His Son, our Master, who by His servant and excellent minister of His Church, declares the things which His holy apostle had long ago preached with a lively voice and afterward compiled briefly in writing for us and all that shall come after us to the world's end. And of whatever degree you may be or have been, shrink not back, for it is God that speaks, who has loved us so deeply that He has not spared His own Son but has given Him to death to redeem us from death and from the vain traditions of our fathers.

Come on, therefore, and let us all serve our God with one accord, walking in the ways which He teaches us and forsaking our own, that is to say, all that disagree with the rule of His word, and making all His gifts serve to His glory. In so doing, we shall be Christians both in name and deed, we shall discharge ourselves of our promise made in baptism, we shall see good agreement in Christianity, and we shall serve for a good example to the Jews and Turks, who are yet enemies to Christendom.

So be it. So be it.

Your brethren in our Lord, the causes of these sermons to be brought to light.

The Argument of St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians

It is well enough known that Ephesus was a city of Lesser Asia, renowned for many causes. St. Luke reported in the Acts how our Lord got Himself a people there by the service of St. Paul, how the Church began there, and what furtherance it had. As for me, I will touch nothing here but only that which belongs properly to the argument of the epistle. St. Paul had taught the Ephesians the pure doctrine of the gospel, and when he was a prisoner at Rome, perceiving that they needed to be confirmed, he wrote this epistle to them.

In the first three chapters, he stands chiefly upon the praising and magnifying of God's grace. For in the beginning of the first chapter, after his greetings, he speaks of God's free election to the end, that they should know that they were now called to the kingdom of heaven because they had been predestinated unto life before they

were born. Herein he shows forth God's wonderful mercy and the saving of our souls as coming from God's free adoption as the true and natural wellspring thereof. As men's wit is too weak to conceive so high a secret, he prays to God to enlighten the Ephesians with the full knowledge of Christ.

In the second chapter, to better set forth the greatness of God's grace, he puts them in remembrance of how wretched they were until they were called to Jesus Christ, by comparing their present state and their former state together. For we can never sufficiently perceive how greatly we are beholden to our Lord Jesus, nor consider how great His benefits are towards us, unless we lay before us, on the contrary part, how wretched our state is without Him. He also amplifies the matter anew, saying that they had been Gentiles and strangers to the promises of eternal life which God had made only to the Jews.

In the third chapter, he shows that his apostleship had been appointed peculiarly for the Gentiles, to the intent that those who had been strangers a long time might now be grafted into the people of God. Because it was an unaccustomed thing and troubled many men's minds with its newness, he calls it a secret, hidden from all times, saying nevertheless that the sharing of the same secret was committed unto him. Towards the end, he prays again to God to give the Ephesians the perfect and lively knowledge of Jesus Christ, so they may not covet to know any other thing. By these words, he not only aims to make the Ephesians acknowledge the great number of benefits and gracious gifts that God had bestowed upon them, and to show themselves thankful for the same by yielding themselves wholly unto Him. He also intended to put them out of all doubt of their own calling. For by all likelihoods, St. Paul was afraid lest the false

apostles should step in to trouble their faith by making them believe that they had been only half-instructed.

For whereas they had been Gentiles and had newly received the true Christian doctrine, they had not heard the ceremonies nor circumcision spoken of. But those who intended to bring the law anew among the Christians said that all such as were not consecrated to God by circumcision were unholy, for it was their common song that none ought to be reckoned among the people of God who were not circumcised and that all the ceremonies commanded by Moses ought to be kept. For that cause, they spoke evil of St. Paul for making Jesus Christ common to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews and affirmed that his apostleship was an unhealthy thing of the heavenly doctrine because he did after that sort offer and set forth the covenant of grace to unclean people without any difference at all. Therefore, to the end that the Ephesians, being assailed with such slanders, should not change their minds, he intended to give them a remedy.

Whereas on the one side he tells them so advisedly that their being called to the gospel was because they had been chosen before the making of the world, he wanted them on the other side not to think that the gospel came to them by haphazard at the appointment of men, or that it lighted in their laps by chance. For he tells them that whereas Christ was preached to them, that preaching was nothing else than the uttering or publishing of God's everlasting determination. When he sets up the unhappy plight of their former life before their eyes, he thereby puts them in mind that their getting out of so deep a gulf was through the singular and wonderful mercy of God. Whereas he speaks of the apostleship which was committed to him towards the Gentiles, he offers to strengthen them in the faith

which they had once received because their calling into the communion of Christ's Church was wrought by the will of God.

Nevertheless, look how many sentences there are here, so many warnings are there to cheer up the Ephesians to acknowledge God's benefits. In the fourth chapter, he describes the means whereby our Lord governs and maintains His church, namely by the gospel which is preached by men. Whereupon it follows that that is the very point of perfection, and that the church cannot otherwise be kept up. Therefore, the apostle's meaning is to commend unto the Ephesians the ministry whereby God reigns among us. Afterwards, he speaks of the fruits of preaching, that is to say, of innocence, holiness, and of all duties of a Christian man. He not only teaches what the lives of Christians ought to be in general, but also interlaces particular instructions which concern every man's peculiar calling or vocation.

The First Sermon on the First Chapter

1. Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to all you holy and faithful ones in Jesus Christ which are at Ephesus.
2. Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which has blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly things in Christ. - Ephesians 1:1-3

When we read the Epistles that Saint Paul wrote to various places, we must always consider that God intended them not only for one time alone or for certain people but for all time and for the entire Church. Indeed, if a man carefully considers the doctrine contained in them, it will be easy to discern that God's intent was to be heard in the matters spoken of, even to the world's end, and that He had such a care for us that He did not overlook or forget anything that might further our welfare and salvation.

The theme of this Epistle, which I have now taken in hand to expound, is that Saint Paul confirms those who had been trained in the Gospel, so that they might know that this is the thing upon which they must rest, as upon true, lawful, and perfect wisdom, and that it is not necessary to add anything to it. He tells us that the benefits brought to us by our Lord Jesus Christ are so excellent that we must be utterly ungrateful if we continue to wander, like people who are never at rest or contented. Thereupon, he shows us what we have in Christ so that we may cling to Him and not presume to seek help elsewhere, assuring ourselves that He has bought us entirely.

On the other hand, he shows us that Christ has so well provided for His Church that, if we have the wisdom to use the gifts of grace which He offers, we will have full and perfect happiness. Furthermore, he warns those who have been instructed in the truth of the Gospel to lead holy lives and to show that they have profited as they ought to in God's school.

These things are not intended only for the city of Ephesus, nor for any one country, nor for any one age or time. We need to be strengthened more and more, seeing that the devil continually works without end to thrust us out of the way. When he cannot lead us away entirely from the doctrine of Jesus Christ, he labors to make it

lose its appeal to us through some means or other, to entangle us in new curiosities, and to prevent us from remaining constant in the faith we have received, causing us to be in constant uncertainty.

Whenever our minds are so unsettled, it is certain that a door is opened to erase the remembrance of what we had previously learned, allowing many foolish and erroneous doctrines to enter, which corrupt and pervert the purity of our faith. We see, then, that the doctrine contained in this Epistle is directed and dedicated to us even today, and that God, in His wonderful providence, has so arranged things beforehand that not only do we have the foundations of the Gospel upon which to ground ourselves, but also a means by which our faith may grow and increase day by day until we reach perfection.

First and foremost, Saint Paul claims the authority that was given to him by God, so that people would not stop at his person, as if it had been merely the words of a mortal man. For indeed, our Lord Jesus Christ is the only Master from whom we must learn, *as it is witnessed of Him from heaven: "This is My beloved Son; listen to Him"* (Luke 9:35). It has always been God's will to govern His Church Himself and to have His Word received without opposition, and He has not given that privilege to any creature.

Furthermore, *"Jesus Christ is ordained in the place of God the Father because He is God manifested in the flesh, the infallible Truth itself, and the Wisdom that existed before all time"* (John 1:14). When men speak, they must not do so in their own name, nor present anything from their own fancy or imagination. Rather, they must faithfully set forth what God has commanded and given them in charge. This is why Saint Paul often uses the preface that he is an Apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ. He holds it as a firm and absolute

foundation that if any man speaks in his own name, there is nothing but rashness in him.

Why is that so? Because he takes upon himself something that belongs to God alone. Moreover, since our Lord Jesus Christ was purposely sent to be our final teacher, providing wisdom that is perfect and without fault, Saint Paul calls himself an Apostle sent by Him.

This presupposes two things: first, that Saint Paul had this charge committed to him; and second, that he acquitted himself duly by faithfully fulfilling the office to which he was called. For even if a man is the most able and excellent in the world, if he thrusts himself forward on his own, he disrupts all common order. We know that God desires order, not disorder among us, as Saint Paul says in the fourteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 14:33). Therefore, anyone who speaks, especially to teach, must have a calling. That is to say, he must be admitted and given his charge so that no one may thrust himself forward out of unadvised zeal, as I mentioned before.

Now, to speak any further of Saint Paul's calling, it is not necessary at present, for we know how God confirmed that He avowed Paul as His apostle. Indeed, Paul does not spend much time disputing this here, because it was already well known in the Church of Ephesus. However, because the Galatians had been troubled by deceivers, and because Paul's authority—and even the name of God—had been disgraced there, we saw how he defended his position, telling them that the reverence due to an apostle of Jesus Christ could not be taken from him without undermining the order of God. Therefore, it is enough for Paul here to have stated in one word that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Let us now come to the second point I mentioned, namely that it is not enough for a man to be called unless he discharges his duty with a pure conscience and upright conduct in his office. Paul considered this a settled matter, and he had given ample proof of it. Deceivers may well boast loudly that they are called, as we see they do. For all who fight against God and His Word and sow trouble and confusion in His Church would like to shield themselves behind their calling and their supposed zeal, claiming to be Christians, and more. But Paul had sufficiently proven that he did not come of his own accord and sought nothing but to spend himself in building up the Church. Since this was well known in Ephesus (as we may gather from the account of Saint Luke), and because Paul had endured many hardships, he thought it sufficient to simply say that he was an apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here we are reminded, first, to adhere to the pure doctrine we know to have come from God, for we cannot go astray if we follow that rule. Since in our Lord Jesus Christ we have everything necessary for our instruction, so that we need not doubt whether to hold to the Gospel or add something to it, let us be content to accept the Son of God as our Master, especially since He graciously humbled Himself to take that charge upon Him. He also assures us that if we progress well in His doctrine, we shall reach the true goal toward which we should strive. Therefore, the first lesson we must gather from this text is that our faith must not waver in any direction, but have a sure and unshakable foundation upon which to rest, namely, God's truth as contained in the Gospel.

Seeing that Saint Paul has been sufficiently avowed to us, let us not doubt that God's Spirit speaks to us today through his words. Let us not hear the doctrine as though it were subject to our judgment, but let us imprison our own understanding and receive it without dispute

unless we intend to willfully wage war against God and elevate ourselves above Him. This is one of the key points we must take from this text.

Furthermore, in order that this doctrine may not only be revered among us but also be pleasing to us, let us remember that Saint Paul speaks in the name of Christ, who was sent to us by God the Father to bring us the good news of peace. Let us also remember how he says in another text that he was ordained to bring the message of reconciliation and to beseech men, in God's name, to be reconciled to Him (2 Corinthians 5:20). I mentioned before that this was done to make the doctrine of the Gospel sweet, so that we might desire it and devote ourselves to it.

Whenever we are told that God speaks to us, that alone is enough to authorize all that He shall say. But we might still tremble at His voice and grow weary of it, as we see many people who confess that God deserves to be obeyed and that all men should be subject to Him, yet they avoid Him as far as they can because His majesty makes them afraid. However, when Jesus Christ speaks to us as the mediator between God and man, we may approach Him boldly.

As it is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "We are no longer at Mount Sinai, where the lightnings flashed, and the Law was given, so that even if a beast touched the mountain, it must die" (Hebrews 12:18-20). The voice that God uttered at that time was terrible. But now, since He encourages us by the Gospel to receive the grace He offers us, and is willing to erase the remembrance of our sins, let us allow ourselves to be justified by His free goodness and be at peace with Him. This should move us to come to Him like poor, hungry souls, ready to be fed with the heavenly food that He freely gives us.

This, in essence, is what we must remember when Saint Paul calls himself an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Whereas Paul adds that it is "by the will of God," this serves to prevent any questioning, so that people would not accuse him of presumption, as if he considered himself more reputable than others. He professes that it was not due to any worthiness of his own, but because it pleased God to choose him for that office. Surely, this is no false humility when he says he was placed in that position by God's mere grace and choosing.

As it is written, "For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Corinthians 15:9). We see how Paul confesses elsewhere that he was not worthy of such honor but instead deserved utter damnation, *as he states*, "I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man" (1 Timothy 1:13). He acknowledges that it was a testimony of God's infinite goodness that He exalted him—one who had been a murderer of Christians and shed the blood of martyrs. There is no pretense in Paul's confession here when he says that his position and authority came only by the will of God.

This teaching serves us greatly, reminding us not to judge God's Word by the qualities of those who bring it to us. One of Satan's common strategies to diminish the reverence of God's Word is to cast doubt upon the people who deliver it. Indeed, we are frail vessels, of little worth—like broken pots. But what do we find in those whom God has ordained to be the ministers of His Word?

As Scripture tells us, "We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Corinthians 4:7). The treasure is inestimable, despite the despised vessels that carry it. Therefore, when men come to proclaim the

forgiveness of our sins and the salvation we hope for, our faith must ascend beyond the human vessel and not dwell on whether that person is worthy to be heard or not. Let us rest assured that God, by these means, intends to draw us to Himself.

This is the path we must walk, and if we stray from it, we go astray and tread the path to destruction. Let us understand, then, that we must submit ourselves to God's will and ordinance, receiving without hesitation the doctrine preached to us through the mouths of mortal men. We must not be as those who, in their supposed wisdom, question whether God could not have sent angels from heaven to teach us through revelations. Nor should we be like those presumptuous individuals who claim they have the Holy Spirit in their possession and thus scorn the gifts God has distributed.

To avoid being bewitched by Satan in this way, let us take heed to what is said here: it is God's will that the Gospel is preached by the mouths of men, and they serve as witnesses to us. Whoever refuses to accept this order is, in effect, pushing back God's hand when He offers the sure and infallible testimony of salvation. This is what we must carefully note from this text.

Moreover, those called to bear and spread God's Word must take Saint Paul's example to heart and walk in humility. For who are we compared to him? He shows us that he was not chosen for any sufficiency or ability within himself, but because it was God's will. Therefore, let us be sure that we owe all things to Him and to His mere grace, and we cannot claim anything for ourselves unless we intend to rob Him of His rightful glory. We know that such ingratitude cannot be tolerated.

Hereupon he says, "To all the holy ones that are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 1:1). It is true that the name

of the city is expressed here, but yet (as I have touched on already) the doctrine is common to us all. God has ordained it for our use even today, and we must receive it as if Saint Paul were still alive and preaching among us. Indeed, we must not only look to Paul as the messenger, but also to the One by whom he is sent. For although Paul died when he finished his race, God's Spirit does not die.

Whatever the case may be, we must remember for our learning what Saint Paul means here when he speaks to the holy and faithful ones in Jesus Christ. Although we are not of that time, nor of the country and people of Asia, yet, since it has pleased God to unite us with those to whom Paul wrote in that time, let us assure ourselves that it is equally necessary for us today to be strengthened in the faith we have received through the Gospel. This is because the intent and purpose of the Holy Ghost was to encourage all those who have entered into the Gospel, who are still weak, and who need further confirmation.

Let us pay close attention to these words, "the holy and faithful ones in Jesus Christ." For Paul shows that all human holiness is nothing but pretense until God has called and dedicated people to His service and consecrated them through faith. By nature, we are all unclean, and nothing but uncleanness can come from us. It is true that if men can set a good appearance upon things, they may be considered as righteous as can be, and their virtues will be praised everywhere. A man can earn a reputation for great perfection if he has some outward signs of goodness.

However, we must remember what is said in Acts 15:9, that "God cleanses people's hearts by faith." And He certainly needs to do so, for, as the Prophet Jeremiah says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). We may not

perceive it, but God has clearer eyes than we do. Whatever the case may be, let us assure ourselves of this: all the holiness that men imagine they possess is but corruption and utterly abominable before God until they are made one with Him by believing in the Gospel.

Therefore, take note of this foundational truth: no other holiness is approved or accepted by God than the holiness of believers. For unless we first become Christians, we are blind and can never render God His due.

Although there were no other hindrance than this, would it not be enough to mar all the virtues we might otherwise possess? Again, seeing that the spirit of perfection, the spirit of the fear of God, the spirit of righteousness, and the spirit of purity abide and rest in Jesus Christ, it is certain that all who are separated from Him have nothing but vice and all manner of uncleanness in them, no matter how much the world flatters them.

On the other hand, let us also note that all who boast of belief in the Gospel but are not sanctified by God reveal their own hypocrisy and self-deception, regardless of what their mouths may say or sing. We see many nowadays who defile and dishonor the name of faith, which ought to be holy. Everyone claims to be faithful, and those who have the least faith are often the boldest in asserting that faith resides only in themselves. Would God that this were true even for half of us! But we see that even among those who bear the name of Christians, their whole lives are disordered and loose, to the point that they mock God openly and despise all religion. Yet, in the meantime, they believe (as I have already said) that they are greatly wronged if they are not regarded as good Christians and Catholics.

Despite this, we see how Saint Paul links these two things together in an inseparable bond: namely, that if we have the faith of the Gospel,

we must wholly give ourselves over to God and separate ourselves from the corruptions of the world. As we have seen in his Epistle to the Galatians, *he says* that the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ was for the purpose of sanctifying us by His blood, so that we would yield obedience in all purity to God the Father (Galatians 1:4). And as he says in another place, "*We are not called to uncleanness, but to holiness, so that God's name may be honored and glorified by us*" (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

Thus, you see what we must remember in this preface, so that we may be better prepared to receive the teaching contained in this Epistle. It should carry the authority it deserves among us and, moreover, be made desirable to us, so that we understand how it is for our singular benefit to learn from Paul. For he testifies to us the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and leads us to God to be reconciled to Him, whereas we are naturally the children of wrath. Furthermore, we may stand in His favor, being bold to call upon Him as our Father, and be assured that He takes us as His children.

Therefore, let us give thanks, lifting up our hearts to acknowledge how greatly we are indebted to God, especially considering that He has shown Himself so bountiful toward us, revealing His grace to us in every way possible.

"Blessed," says he, "be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

Forasmuch as the chief thing God requires from men is that they acknowledge His benefits and be thankful to Him for them, Saint Paul considers first how this can prompt them to fulfill their duty. For we are so reckless, it is a pity to see. We readily confess that our chief purpose and endeavor ought to be to live a well-ordered life—

that is, to praise God. If a man were to ask us why we are in this world, why God cares for us, why His goodness feeds and cherishes us, and why He showers us with such great blessings, the answer is clear: so that we might offer Him some acknowledgment of them.

As it is said in the Psalms, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you" (Psalm 16:2). We cannot profit Him at all, and He requires nothing from us except thanksgiving, *as it is written*, "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord" (Psalm 116:12-13).

We see, then, that all we can offer to God is to acknowledge that we are indebted to Him for all things. Yet, even in this, we do not discharge our duty, not even a hundredth part of it. Rather, from the greatest to the least, we defraud Him of the praise due to Him because, through our wickedness, we continually bury the praise that should be ever present in our mouths.

For this reason, the Lord rebukes us for our negligence. The holy Scriptures exhort us to praise God and use many words to that purpose. Let us not think that these exhortations are superfluous, but recognize them as many reminders of our ingratitude and failure to do what is so essential—the primary purpose of our lives.

It is true that the Holy Spirit often presents other reasons why we should magnify God's name, such as the order of nature, the fruits of the earth, the help God provides, and other such things. These are sufficient reasons to praise God. However, Saint Paul leads us higher here. He wants us to glorify God above all things because it was not enough for Him to place us in the world, to care for us here, and to provide for our needs in this transient life. He has also chosen us to be heirs of His kingdom and of heavenly life.

Thus, we are doubly bound to God, even more than the ignorant and unbelieving, for although they are already sufficiently bound, the good that He has done for us in Jesus Christ is incomparably greater and more noble. He has adopted us as His children. Truly, as humans, we are part of His creation, fashioned in His image. But what of that? This image has been defaced in us by sin and by the corruption inherited from Adam's disobedience. What heritage remains for us other than His wrath and eternal death?

In short, if we remain in the state of our natural condition, we are not worthy to be counted even among the brute beasts. But now, seeing that God has made us members of His only Son, has set us in the company of angels, and has prepared us to partake of His own nature and glory, *as Peter says*, "He has given us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), should we not perceive this as a grace so high and noble that it ought to completely captivate our hearts?

Thus, the first thing Saint Paul intends to convey in this text is that we are exhorted here to apply ourselves entirely to praising God because we are too cold and slothful in this regard if we are not prompted and driven to do so.

In addition to this, Saint Paul had another intention: to feed us in such a way with the grace we receive through the Gospel that we no longer desire other things in the way we are naturally inclined to. We see how fickle we are by nature, and even when God is gracious enough to set His Word before us, we still seek other things, and nothing seems to satisfy us. What is the cause of this? It is because we are dull and have neither understood nor grasped what God reveals to us by His Word.

As we shall see later, those who know the love God shows us in our Lord Jesus Christ have all that they could wish for—upward, downward, far, and wide. Therefore, Saint Paul calls on us to bless God so that we hold fast to the doctrine in which lies the fullness of all happiness, at least if we have the wisdom to use it for our benefit.

Furthermore, let us also observe why Paul says, "in spiritual blessings." Although we cannot eat a bite of bread or drink a drop of water without owing it to God, unless we acknowledge and confess that He shows Himself gracious toward us in it, yet the things that pertain to this earthly and transitory life are nothing compared to the things that serve for the everlasting welfare of our souls. Indeed, when Paul exhorts us here to praise God for His heavenly blessings, he also gives us a reminder that we should be patient if we are troubled in our flesh and do not have everything we desire. If God withholds some portion of our needs and does not handle us as tenderly as we would like, two things are implied here.

First, we should learn to understand where our true and perfect happiness lies—that is, in the life we hope for, which is hidden from us for now, so we will not be tied to the world (Mark that for one point). Second, if the world despises and rejects us, and if people mock us while the ungodly boast in their pomp and luxury, we must settle ourselves in patience. Even if some of us suffer hunger and thirst, while others are wrongfully troubled and vexed, we must look beyond these things. Why? Because we are to content ourselves with the heavenly blessings that God has bestowed upon us. This great, high, and inestimable privilege should enable us to endure all the hardships we may face when God exercises and tests us in this world with many afflictions, calling us to endure scarcity and poverty in many things.

This is the essence of what we must understand from this passage.

Now, before we proceed further, let us note that the word "blessing" is used in different senses when Paul applies it either to God or to ourselves. It is said that we bless God, and how? And how does He bless us? When we bless God, we fall far short of how He blesses us. For (as I already quoted from the sixteenth Psalm), all our services cannot benefit Him, and again, as I quoted from the hundred and sixteenth Psalm, all that we can bring to God is simply the acknowledgment that we are indebted to Him for all the good things we have. So, all our blessing consists merely in offering the sacrifice of praise to God. Let that serve as one point.

But now, when God blesses us, is it only in words? No. It is in filling us and providing for all our needs as far as is necessary. Why is this word "blessing" attributed to Him? Because He does not need to labor or exert effort to help His servants and give them the things He knows are good for them. If He only speaks His will, the thing is done. Since God created the world by His word alone, He also has the power to do us good merely by promising it. Therefore, it is said that we are enriched by His blessing—that is to say, by His showing of love and favor to us.

Now let us consider if we can be excused when we defraud God of His due, refusing to open our lips to confess how much we owe Him after receiving so many benefits from His hand. Let all the blessings that men in the world could offer to God be weighed against the one blessing with which He enriches us—which will outweigh the other? All that men can say is that they must confess they can neither do nor say anything of real worth, while on the other side, God shows us that He has everything necessary for our welfare.

Therefore, it is not without reason that Paul says here that the faithful must devote all their thoughts and efforts to blessing God, seeing that He gives them such great cause. Otherwise, they are ungrateful and miserly. Thus, Paul speaks of two things: "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

Where he says, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," it must be understood in this way: namely, that the God whom we experience as so favorable to us is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This detail deserves careful attention. By it, Saint Paul helps us understand that God's benefits, especially those that pertain to heavenly life and the eternal salvation of our souls, cannot reach us unless Jesus Christ is, in a sense, the conduit through which they flow, so that we may become partakers of them.

Therefore, let us clearly recognize that we are cut off from all good things, especially those concerning the salvation of our souls, unless Jesus Christ becomes our mediator. It is true that the ungodly eat, drink, and indulge themselves to the fullest, and the sun shines upon them. But even though they enjoy these things, they do not rightfully possess any of the things God gives them because they take them without any lawful claim. The world was made for God's children, and that is in relation to their inheritance in our Lord Jesus Christ.

In short, it is not without purpose that Saint Paul, when explaining how God has given Himself to us, says it is because He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But (as I mentioned earlier), this is not merely about eating and drinking; it concerns far greater and more precious matters: namely, that God has adopted us as His children. This is the main point we must remember.

However, to benefit more fully from this passage, we must guard ourselves against wandering into confusion when we hear that God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Because the Papists often have the word "God" on their lips, and they speak of Jesus Christ, but in the meantime, they have disfigured Christ and corrupted the doctrine of His Gospel, in which He ought to be revealed. So, while they may claim to know God, it is only by a confused imagination, and in truth, they do not know Him. Indeed, they know no more about the true God they worship than the Turks do.

We know that our Lord Jesus says in the fourth chapter of John, "Those who do not have the Spirit to guide them do not know what they worship, and they continually create idols for themselves" (John 4:22). Therefore, there is only one way to have good and infallible access to God, and that is by beholding Him in His living image, Jesus Christ. God's majesty is too great, too distant, and too deep for us. But Christ has come near to us, accommodating Himself to our weakness, and revealing everything necessary for us to know in order to draw near to God the Father.

You see, then, that we must have our Lord Jesus Christ as our way to prevent us from going astray. Since He is the Father of our head and of Him who is one with us, we may now come familiarly to Him. Without that Mediator, we are all cut off from God, and His majesty would make the hairs on our heads stand up in fear. But when we consider that God calls Himself the Father of Him who is our head, we understand that He must also acknowledge us as His children because He has bought us with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Furthermore, although Saint Paul mentions here but one phrase, "spiritual blessings," yet he shows that God has been bountiful toward us in more ways than one. He will later provide a more

detailed explanation, laying forth the specific benefits we obtain through the Gospel, as this entire chapter is full of them. Regardless, he makes it clear in this passage that God's gracious gifts to us are not given in small amounts or in a fleeting manner, as if with a "wet finger," as the saying goes. Instead, He has given us His gifts abundantly and in diverse ways, so that we have ample reason to magnify Him in all respects.

Therefore, let us understand that since Jesus Christ is given to us, in Him we obtain everything necessary for our salvation and for our happiness, just as Paul speaks of it in Romans 8. *As it is written*, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). If the only Son is given to us, then surely all the benefits He holds are communicated to us through Him and by His means.

However, as we receive these blessings, let us learn to value God's spiritual gifts in such a way that we gather all our thoughts and focus on appreciating them fully. To achieve this, we must be careful not to let our minds become too attached to the world. The very reason we often fail to perceive even a fraction of the good that God has done for us, and cannot apply His benefits to our advantage, is our own vanity. Each of us deceives ourselves with our wandering and frivolous desires.

Therefore, let us strive to remove the things that hinder us from coming to our Lord Jesus Christ. Even though our corrupt nature urges us to pursue the fleeting things of this world, let us make every effort to turn away from them, so that we may yield ourselves with a free heart to God, be earnestly committed to obeying Him, and give ourselves entirely to Him. This is His will for us—that we be joined to Him completely.

This is what we must take from Saint Paul's words when, after speaking of spiritual blessings, he immediately adds, "in heavenly places." By this, he intended to show that we cannot truly receive the gracious gifts communicated to us in Jesus Christ, which God wants us to possess, until we recognize that nothing in this world should captivate us. When we understand that we are not meant to remain in this world forever, but are to live as pilgrims passing through, knowing that our eternal inheritance and true treasure are in heaven, then we should press onward toward that goal and dedicate ourselves to it more and more.

Although we may feel weak, we should not lose heart but instead be courageous and pray to God for strength. Furthermore, you see why Paul speaks of "spiritual blessings"—to remind us that, while the devil may lay many traps to lead us astray, God will provide everything necessary to counter them. Why? Because He has such an abundance of blessings that He can easily frustrate and destroy everything that stands against our salvation.

But now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with the acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to touch us more deeply with them, that we may be brought to true repentance. Let us pray that we may condemn ourselves and seek our Lord Jesus Christ for the grace we lack—not just for one day or in a moment of crisis, but continually and steadfastly until the end of our lives. And whatever may befall us, may we always assure ourselves that we have reason to praise our God.

If we are poor and miserable in this world, let the assurance of our eternal inheritance be enough to comfort us and sweeten all our afflictions and troubles. Let it give us such contentment that we may still keep our mouths open to bless God for showing Himself so kind

and generous toward us, even adopting us as His children. Let us praise Him for revealing to us that the inheritance, purchased for us by the blood of His only Son, is ready for us and that we cannot miss out on it if we pursue it with true and invincible constancy of faith.

May it please Him to grant this grace not only to us but to all people. Amen.

The Second Sermon on the First Chapter

Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ: According to his choosing of us in him before the foundation of the world, to the end we should be holy and unblamable before him in charity. - Ephesians 1:3-4

We have seen heretofore how St. Paul exhorted us to praise and bless God, because he has blessed us, and that not after an earthly manner, but after a spiritual manner, to the end we should learn to hold ourselves contented with God's showing of his fatherly goodness and love towards us, in opening the gate of the kingdom of heaven unto us by hope. In so much that although we be subject to much misery in this world, yet it is good reason that we should content ourselves with God's choosing of us after that fashion, and with his calling of us to him, according as it is witnessed to us by the Gospel, that he is our

father, namely in as much as he has knit us to our Lord Jesus Christ as members to their head.

And now S. Paul brings us to the original & wellspring, or rather to the principal cause that caused God to take us into his favor. For it is not enough that God has uttered the treasures of his goodness and mercy upon us, to draw us to the hope of the heavenly life by the Gospel: and yet is that very much. For had not St. Paul added that which we see presently: it might have been thought that God's grace is common to all men, and that he offers it to all without exception, and consequently that it is in every man's power to receive it through his own freewill, by means whereof there should be some deserving in us.

For if there were no difference in men, but that some receive God's grace and others not, what might be said, but that God has showed himself kind to all mankind? But they that are partakers of the Lord Jesus Christ, attain to it by faith. And so you see what might be deemed of it. But St. Paul, to exclude all deserving on man's behalf and to show that all comes of God's only freely bestowed goodness, says that He has blessed us according to His choosing beforehand. As if he should say that to exalt God's grace as becomes us, we must look upon the difference that is put between man and man. For the gospel is preached to some and others know not what it is but are utterly shut out from it, as if God should make it rain in one coast and suffer another coast to remain dry.

Now, if it be demanded why God favours one part and forsakes and gives over the other, there is no other answer but that it so pleased Him. Upon the preaching of the gospel in a place, some shall be touched with lively faith in their hearts, and others go away again as they came, without feeling any the better, or else they harden

themselves against God and betray the stubbornness that was hidden in them before. Where does such diversity come from? Even from this, that God mends through one lot by His Holy Spirit and leaves the other lost in their natural corruption.

You see, then, that the thing wherein God's goodness shines forth most unto us is that by the preaching of the gospel to us, we have as it were a token that He pities us, loves us, calls us, and allures us to Him. But when the doctrine that is preached to us is received by us heartily and effectually, that is yet a further and more special token whereby we perceive that God intended to be our Father and has adopted us to be His children. Not without cause, then, does St. Paul say in this strain, that we are blessed of God, even according to His choosing of us beforehand. For we have not come to Him of ourselves, nor have we sought Him of ourselves. But the saying of the prophet Isaiah must needs be fulfilled in all, namely, that God showed Himself to such as sought Him not, and that such as were far off, see Him near at hand. And He says to them, "Here I am, here I am, although you have despised Me, yet do I vouchsafe to come to you because I care for your welfare."

Thus we see what St. Paul aimed at in this strain. To be sure, we have to mark here that we shall never know whence salvation comes until we have lifted up our minds to God's everlasting purpose, whereby He has chosen whom He thought good and left the rest in their own confusion and fall. Now then, it is no marvel, though some men think this doctrine to be strange and hard, for it agrees in no way at all with man's natural wit. If a man asked the philosophers, they will always tell him that God loves such as are worthy of it and that, forasmuch as virtue pleases Him, He also marks out such as are given thereto, to hold them for His people.

You see, then, that after our own imagination, we will deem that God puts no other difference between man and man in loving some and in hating others than each man's own worthiness and deserving. But by the way, let us remember also that in our own understanding, there is nothing but vanity, and that we must not measure God by our measure, and that it is too excessive and overweening to bind God to the stake so as He should not do anything but that which we could conceive and which might seem rightful in our eyes. The matter, therefore, concerns here the reverencing of God's secrets, which are incomprehensible to us, and without which we shall never taste the principles of faith. For we know that our wisdom ought always to begin at humility. And this humility is as much to say that we must not fall to the weighing of God's judgments in our own balance, nor take upon us to be judges and determiners of them, but that we must be sober because of the weakness of our wit, and that, forasmuch as we are gross and dull, we must magnify God and say, as we are taught by the Holy Scripture, "Lord, Thy determinations are as a great deep, and no man is able to reckon them up unto Thee."

You see, then, that the cause why some men find this doctrine hard and irksome is that they are too much wedded to their own opinion and cannot submit themselves to God's wisdom, to receive His sayings soberly and modestly. And truly, we ought to take warning by that which St. Paul says, namely, that man of his nature does not understand God's secrets but takes them to be stark foolishness. And why? For we are not of His counsel but must have things revealed to us by His Holy Spirit, or else we should never know them. And we must have them in such measure as He gives them unto us. St. Paul speaks here of the things that we know by experience, that is to wit, that we are God's children, that He governs us by His Holy Spirit, that He comforts us in our adversities, and that He strengthens us

through patience. We should not conceive any of these things unless we were enlightened by His Holy Ghost.

How then shall we understand the thing that is much higher, namely, that God chose us before the making of the world? Since the case stands so, let us learn to put away all that we conceive of our own brain and lay it at His feet. Let us receive whatsoever God lays up for us, discharging ourselves utterly of all self-weaning and assuring ourselves that we cannot bring anything of our own side but beastliness. Thus, see what we have to bear in mind. And in good sooth, we see how St. Paul exhorts us to come to the same point: "Who art thou, O man, that standest in contention with thy God?" After he had set down many replies, which we are wont to make, he says, "Who art thou, O man?" By the word "man," he meant to make us perceive our own frailty, for we are but worms of the earth and rottenness.

Now then, what manner of goodness is it to open our mouths to dispute with God? Is it not a perverting of the whole order of nature? Is it in our power to block the sun out of the sky, or to latch the moon, but to extend our teeth, as they say? Much less is it lawful for us to contend with God and to allege reasons to control His judgments, which we cannot comprehend. There are those that will grant this doctrine of predestination to be true, as St. Paul treats here, but yet they would have it so buried that it might never be spoken of. Yea, but they show themselves to be but fools in controlling the Holy Ghost, which speaks it by the prophets and apostles, yea, and even by the mouth of God's only Son. For when our Lord Jesus intended to assure us of our salvation, He sends us to this everlasting election. And likewise, when He intended to magnify the gift of faith, the one in the tenth of John, and the other in the fifth, and the other in the sixth. Therefore, those kinds of folk come

too late to put God into silence and to wipe the things out of the Holy Scripture which are shown there. For all the whole Scripture is profitable. St. Paul spoke that of the Law and the Prophets. Therefore, we also may conclude that there is no superfluity in the Gospel, nor anything which serves not a good purpose, and whereby we may not be edified, both in faith and in the fear of God.

But this doctrine is contained there, and the Holy Ghost speaks it loud and surely. Therefore, they must need to be Manichaeans, who intend to nip and gild the Gospel, for look what they do not like, they set it aside and forge their Gospel of diverse pieces, allowing nothing but that which they themselves think good. Now, if such manner of heretics have shown a devilish stubbornness against God in separating the things which ought to go together in an inseparable bond, then are they malicious and fraud also, who would nowadays have the doctrine of election kept in silence. For they would overrule God if it were possible and stop His mouth as often as He answers anything that does not please them. Again, a man may evidently see their beastliness in that St. Paul had not a better proof whereby to magnify God's goodness than this. If there were no other reason, yet it would be better that the whole world should go to confusion than that this doctrine should be suppressed with silence. For it is reason that God should set the infinite treasures of His mercies before our eyes, and yet that they should not be spoken of, but be thrust underfoot.

But there are yet two reasons more which show that this doctrine is most needful to be preached and that we reap so great profit by it, as it had been much better that we had never been born than to be ignorant of the thing that St. Paul shows us here. For there are two things whereat we must chiefly aim, and whereunto it behoves us to apply all our wits and endeavours. And they are the very sum of all

the things which God teaches us by the Holy Scripture. The one is the magnifying of God as He deserves, and the other is the assuredness of our salvation, that we may call upon Him as our Father with full liberty. If we have not these two things, woe unto us, for there is neither faith nor religion in us. Well, we may talk of God, but it shall be about a leasing.

As touching the first point, I have told you already that God's grace is not sufficiently known but by setting God's election, as it were, before our eyes. For put the case that God draws all men alike, and that such as intend to obtain salvation must come of their own free will and self-moving. If it be so, then it is certain that we deserve to be received at God's hand, and that He should handle every man according to his worthiness. But wherein shall God's goodness be magnified? Even in this: that He prevented us of His own mere free goodwill and loved us nevertheless, without finding anything either in us or in our works why He should love us. If this be true, then must there needs be election. So as God must take the one sort because He thinks it good so to do, and leave the other. Thus it is a most assured point that God's glory does not appear and shine forth as requisite, except it be known that He sheds forth His goodness and love where it pleases Him.

I said even now that the preaching of His Word is a singular benefit to us, and that is the cause why it is said so often in the law and the prophets that God has not dealt so with any other nation as He dealt with the lineage of Abraham, in that He vouchsafed to choose and adopt them. After the law was a short record, the children of Israel were exhorted to praise God because He had vouchsafed to give them His law, and in the meanwhile had let the poor Gentiles alone as folk that pertained not to Him at all. But it is yet a far greater and special privilege when He makes us fare the better by that Word. For it is

certain that our ears might be beaten daily with the things that should be told to us, and we'd be never the better for it until God speaks to us by His Holy Spirit within us. Then, in this matter, God shows a double grace. The one is when He raises up men to preach the Gospel to us, for no man is meet and sufficient to do it of himself. Needs, therefore, must they be of God's sending, who call us to Him and offer us the hope of salvation. But yet, for all that, let us mark well that we cannot believe except God reveals Himself to us by His Holy Spirit and speaks to our hearts by the Holy Ghost, as well as He has spoken to our ears by the mouth of man.

That is the cause why the prophet Isaiah saith, "Who hath believed our doctrine? Or to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" He shows that there is no faith in the world till God has wrought in men's minds and hearts by the power of His Holy Spirit. For the very same cause also, our Lord Jesus saith that no man comes to Him except he be drawn by the Father. "But whosoever hath learned of my Father," saith He, "the same submits himself to Me." To be short, we see manifestly that God shows Himself pitiful to us when He vouchsafes to enlighten us by His Holy Spirit to the end that we should be drawn to the faith of His Gospel. If the same work was done commonly and indifferently to all men, yet should we have cause to magnify God. But now when we see that some are hardened and others unconstant, and that some go their ways without taking any profit by the things that they have heard, and others be altogether blockish, it is certain that the same makes God's grace more apparent to us, according as St. Luke saith that at St. Paul's preaching, as many believed as were ordained to salvation. Verily, the number of people was great that heard St. Paul's sermon, and out of all doubt, he on his side had so great grace as ought to have moved even the very stones. Yet notwithstanding, a great sort continued in their unbelief and stubbornness, and others believed.

Now, it is plainly seen that the cause thereof was not that the one sort were more forward folk than the other, or that there was any towardness of virtue more in the one than in the other, but for that God had foreordained them to salvation. Therefore, in one word, we see that all man's deserving must cease and be laid underfoot, or else God shall not have His deserved praise. Yea, and we must understand that faith cometh not of ourselves, for if it did, then should there be some worthiness in our works. True it is that by faith we confess that there is nothing but wretchedness in us, that we be damned and accursed, and that we bring nothing with us but only an acknowledgment of our sins. But yet should our faith serve for some desert if we had it of our own breeding. We must therefore conclude that it is impossible for men to believe unless it be given them from above.

Surely, St. Paul declares here a thing well worthy to be marked when he says, "Blessed be God." And for what cause? Even for enriching us in such wise in Jesus Christ that our life is happy and blessed. And afterward, he adds, "according to His choosing of us." Is not faith comprehended among the spiritual riches whereof St. Paul maketh mention? Yes, and which is more, it is the chief of them. For it is by faith that we receive the Holy Ghost. It is by faith that we become patient in our adversities. It is by faith that we become obedient to God. It is by faith that we are sanctified to His service. To be short, faith continueth always chief among the spiritual benefits that God bestows upon us. Now, let us remember St. Paul's order. He says that God has given us faith as well as any of all the rest, according to His choosing of us. We see then that faith depends upon God's election, or else we must make St. Paul a liar.

So, touching the first point, you see that all such as cannot abide to have predestination plainly and openly spoken of are deadly enemies

of God's grace, and will face it to the utmost of their power. For, as I said before, the hiding thereof were the overthrowing of all religion. The second point is the assuredness of our salvation. The papists say we must doubt of it, and that we cannot come unto God otherwise than with an opinion that He will receive us, but to assure ourselves of it, that ought we not to do, for that were too great a presumptuousness. But when we pray unto God, we must call Him Father, at leastwise if we be the scholars of our Lord Jesus Christ, for He has taught us so to do. Now, do we call Him Father at all adventure? Or are we sure of it in ourselves that He is our Father? If not, then is there nothing but hypocrisy in our prayers, and the first word that we utter shall be a stark lie.

The papists, therefore, never know what it is to pray unto God, seeing they say that they ought not to assure themselves of their salvation. But, as we shall see in the third chapter especially, the Scripture shows us that if we will pray to God rightly, we must have belief in Jesus Christ, which gives us trust, and upon that trust, we by and by conceive boldness. Then, howsoever the world goes, we must not be murmuring, nor yet doubt, but we must be thoroughly resolved and persuaded in ourselves that God accounts us as His children. And how may that be but by embracing His mercy through faith as He offers it to us in His Gospel, and by assuring ourselves also that we are grounded in His everlasting election? For if our faith should depend upon ourselves, surely it would soon slip from us, and it might be shaken off if it were not maintained from above. And although we be kept or preserved by faith, as says St. Peter, yet it is God that keeps us and preserves us. Then if our faith were not grounded upon God's eternal election, it is certain that Satan might pluck it from us every minute of an hour. Although we were today the constantest in the world, yet might we fail tomorrow. But our Lord Jesus shows us the remedy to strengthen us against all temptations

in that He saith, "You come not to me of yourself, but the Heavenly Father brings you to me, and forasmuch as I have taken you into my keeping, be no more afraid, for I acknowledge you for the inheritance of God my Father, and He that has given me the charge of you and put you into my hand is stronger than all."

We see then that, besides the setting forth of God's glory, our salvation also is warranted by God's eternal predestination, which ought to be sufficient cause to move us to consider what St. Paul treats of in this place. True it is, as I have touched already, that many men startle at it when they hear that God has chosen whom He thought good and refused all the rest. For we see that the number of them that come unto God is very small. And why then has He refused the rest? Verily, as who would say that God's will ought not to stand for a rule towards us. It behoves us to mark first that God is not bound at all to any person. For, if He were, then we might well go to law with Him. But forasmuch as He on His side is nothing at all bound unto us, but we all together unto Him, let us see now what we shall win by contending with Him. For if we will need to constrain God to deal alike with all men, He should have less liberty than mortal creatures.

If a man be rich, he may do what he likes with his own goods. If he be liberal to someone, is it reasonable he should be sued at the law for it, and that every man should demand the like sum of him? Behold, a man of his goodwill advances one whom he loves. Now if all poor folk should come and require him to do as much for them as it were a bounden duty, were it not a foolish thing? Verily, a man may adopt the farthest stranger in the world to be his child and heir, and it is free for him to do so. Behold, God is liberal to all men, for He makes His sun to shine both upon good and bad. Only He reserves a certain part of men on whom to bestow the privilege of adopting them to be

His children. What? Are we now again murmuring against Him? If any man says that, then he should seem to be an acceptor of persons? No, it is not so, for He chooses not the rich and lets the poor go. He chooses not noblemen and gentlemen rather than men of no estimation and base degree, and therefore it cannot be said that there is any accepting of persons before God. For in choosing those that are unworthy, He has no respect but only to His own mere goodness. Neither cares He whether one be more worthy than another, but He takes whom He likes.

What would we more? Then is it good reason that we should hold ourselves contented with God's will and bridle ourselves and let Him choose whom He wishes? Because His will is the sovereign rule of equity and right? And so you see, the mouths of all the world are stopped. And although the wicked and heathenish seek to rant and rail at God, yea, or blaspheme Him for so doing, yet, is He mighty enough to maintain His own righteousness and infinite wisdom? And when they have chattered their fill, yet must they be confounded in the end? For our part, we see what St. Paul saith here, for it is no dark doctrine when he says that God has blessed us, verily inasmuch as He has enlightened us with the faith of the Gospel by His Holy Spirit, and made us partners in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, even thereby He showeth that He had chosen us before the making of the world. And therefore, let us understand that to magnify God's grace aright, we must, as I said before, come to this wellspring and original cause that is to wit unto election.

Now have we to pass further forward to the intent of the better to exclude all respects and worthiness which men might pretend, inasmuch as we be inclined to challenge always somewhat to ourselves, and cannot abide to be brought to nothing, he says, before the creation of the world. So then, forasmuch as through such

imagination we think ourselves to have that which we have not, it was required that St. Paul should here beat down all such fantastical fondness. And for that cause, he says, we could not put ourselves forward when we were not yet born. Now. Verily, God chose us before the making of the world, and what could we then bring unto Him? Indeed, the papists have a little shift in this behalf. For they say that God chose such unto salvation, as had not yet deserved it, but yet He chose such as He foresaw, should deserve it. Thus they confess that no deserving at all went before election, either in order or in time, but that God, to whom all things are open, knew who should be worthy of it. After that manner, do the papists speak of it. So as they deny not God's election, and simply to show that the naughty packs which nowadays cannot abide to have it spoken of, are as devil's incarnate, and maintain a more outrageous and villainous wickedness than the papists do.

We must note that the papists confess God to have chosen and predestinated whom He thought good, even before the making of the world, they stand unto that, which thing these devils deny, and would have God's majesty utterly defamed by overthrowing His ordinance after that manner. The papists, at leastwise such of them as have walked upright, and I speak even of the very monks and friars which are called school divines, grant yet further that this election of God is free, and that He chose not any men for any other respect than for that it pleased Himself. But yet by and by, after, they mingle and turmoil all, for they say that when God chose whom He listed, He did it to make them deserve it. And thereupon they ground all their merits inasmuch as they conclude that men may win the kingdom of heaven by their own power. They grant indeed, that as touching the election, it is a free gift. But always they return to their fantastical surmise that God foresaw who should do good. But how should He foresee that which could not be? For we know that all

Adam's offspring is corrupted, and that we have not the skill to think one thought of doing well, and much less therefore are able to do well. Indeed, although God should tarry for us a hundred thousand years, if we could continue so long in the world, yet is it certain that we should never come unto Him, nor do anything else, but increase the mischief continually to our own condemnation. To be short, the longer that men live in the world, the deeper do they plunge themselves in their damnation. And therefore, God could not foresee the thing which was not in us before He Himself put it into us.

How then can we under God, how obey we Him? How have we an acquired mind that yields itself according to His faith? All these things come from Him. And so it follows that He is fain to do all Himself. Wherefore let us consider that in saying that God chose us before the foundation of the world. St. Paul presupposes a thing that is true, namely, that God could not see anything in us save the evil that was there, for there was not one drop of goodness for Him to find. So then, seeing He has chosen us, you see, it is a very manifest record of His free goodness. And for the same cause in the ninth to the Romans, where he speaks of the two twins, Jacob and Esau, at such time as they were yet in their mother's womb, before they had done either good or evil to the intent that all should come only of the caller and not of the worker, it is said that the elder should serve the younger.

We see then how St. Paul declares there more at large, the thing that he touches here briefly, that is the word that whereas God chose us before the creation of the world, therein He shows sufficiently, that one man is not more worthy or excellent than another, that He had no respect to any deserving. Therefore seeing that the putting of difference between Jacob and Esau was before they had done either good or evil, it came not of the works but of the caller, then must all

praise be yielded unto God, and nothing at all be reserved to men. And so you see yet once again, what we have to mark here, when St. Paul says that we were chosen before the making of the world. He confirms the thing yet better in that he says that the same was done in Jesus Christ. If we had been chosen in ourselves, it might be said that God had found in us some secret virtue unknown to men, but seeing that He has chosen us, that is to say, loved us out of ourselves. What shall we reply to that? If I do a man good it is because I love him. And if the cause of my love be sought for, it will be for that we be like, have conditions, or else for some other respect, but we must not imagine any likeness in God. And so it is told us expressly here for St. Paul saith, that we were chosen in Jesus Christ.

Had God an eye unto us when He vouchsafed to love us? No, for then He should have utterly appalled us. It is true that in respect of our miseries, He had pity and compassion upon us, to relieve us. But that was because He had loved us already in our Lord Jesus Christ, then must God needs have had His pattern and looking-glass before Him, wherein to behold us. That is to say, He must have looked upon our Lord Jesus Christ, before He could choose us and call us. And so to be short, after St. Paul has shown that we could not bring anything unto God, but that He prevented us of His own free goodness in choosing us before the creation of the world. He added yet a more certain proof, namely, that He did it in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is as it were, the true book of record, for God's vouchsafing to choose us, that is to wit, His vouchsafing to do it before all everlasting. This was as it were, a registering of us in writing of record, and the Holy Scripture calls God's election the Book of Life. As I said before, Jesus Christ serves for a register, in Him we are engraved, and in Him God acknowledges us for His children. Seeing then that God had an eye unto us in the person of Jesus Christ, it follows that He found not anything in us, which might labour for Him, to cause Him to elect us.

This in effect is the thing that we have to remember further. It follows afterward, that it is to the end, that we should be pure and unblamable before God namely in love.

This word love may be referred unto God, as if it were said that we shall find no other reason why God vouchsafed to take us for His children, but only His own free love. Or else, as it is very likely, St. Paul shows here that the true soundness and perfection of the faithful is namely to walk in all righteousness before God. We cannot lay forth the whole as now, but it shall suffice to tell briefly where St. Paul had an eye, for he shows here that although God's election is free and does beat down and put away all the worthiness, works, and virtues of men, yet, notwithstanding, it serves not to give us leave to do evil and to lead a disordered life, or to run as rovers, but rather to withdraw us from the evil wherein we were plunged. For naturally, we can do nothing else but provoke God's wrath. Wickedness will always reign in us, and we will be held down under the bonds and tyranny of Satan.

God therefore must work and change us, for all goodness comes from His election, says St. Paul. You see, then, that the thing he means to bring the faithful to is to make them know that life, as God chose them of His own free goodness. So He gives them not leave to yield themselves to naughtiness, but intends to keep and preserve them undefiled to Himself. For God's choosing of us and His calling of us thereto unto holiness are things inseparably matched together, accordingly, also as St. Paul saith, in another text, that we are not called to uncleanness and filthiness, but to be dedicated to God in all godliness and holiness.

Now, forasmuch as we cannot lay forth the whole at this time, let us look to make our profit of this lesson. And seeing we are now about to prepare ourselves for the receiving of our Lord Jesus Christ's supper, which is a pledge unto us as well of election as of the hope of our salvation, and of all the spiritual benefits that come forth from this wellspring and fountain of God's free goodness, let us consider that there He uttered His riches unto us, not to the end that we should abuse them, but rather of purpose to be glorified for them at our hands, not only with our mouths, but also with our whole lives.

And forasmuch as we hold all things of Him, let us also learn to be His, and to give ourselves over to the obeying of Him, that He may enjoy us quietly. And let us always shoot at this mark, namely, to get assurance that He takes us for His children, by bearing His marks and by showing in very deed that we are rightly governed by His Holy Spirit in calling upon Him as our Father. Thus, you see, in effect, what we have to mark in this text, till the residue may follow.

Now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God with acknowledgement of our faults, praying Him to make us feel them in such wise as we may continue to profit in His fear, and be strengthened more and more in the same, and in the meanwhile, so to bear with our weakness, as we may always enjoy His grace, even till He has set us in possession of all things at such time as He shall have done away our sins and blotted them quite out for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. And so, let us all say, Almighty God, Heavenly Father, etc.

End of sermon two.

The Third Sermon on the First Chapter

4. God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, to the end that we should be holy and unblameable before Him in love,

5. Who has predestined us to adopt us to Himself by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will,

6. To the praise of the glory of His grace, whereby He has accepted us in His well-beloved.

I began to show you this morning that it is not lawful for us to take liberty to looseness under the guise that God has chosen us before the making of the world, as though it were right for us to give ourselves over to all naughtiness because we cannot perish, seeing that God has taken us for His children. For we must not put asunder the things which He hath coupled together, seeing that He has chosen us to be holy and to walk in purity of life. Election must be as a root that yields good fruits, for as long as God lets us alone in our own kind, we can do nothing but all manner of naughtiness because there is so great corruption and lewdness in man's nature that all that they ever think or do is contrary to God's righteousness.

Therefore, there is no other way but to be changed by God. And whence comes this change but only from the grace that we speak of, namely, that He did elect and choose us for His children before we were born into the world. Herewithal, we have to mark further that God lets His chosen ones go for a time so that they seem to be astray and utterly lost, and yet brings them home again to His flock when it pleases Him. And that serves to humble them the more and to make

His goodness and mercy so much the better known to the whole world.

If God should make all His chosen ones walk in perfectness of conversation even from their very childhood, it should not be so well discerned that the same comes from the grace of His Holy Spirit. But when wretched folk who lived loosely and were given to all naughtiness for a time are quite changed, that cannot come to pass without God's working and putting to of His hand. Thus, you see that the cause why God delays the calling of those whom He has chosen is to touch them to the quick by His Holy Spirit, that He may make them walk in His obedience. For when we see them reformed suddenly and beyond the common expectation and opinion of men, therein we perceive that God has manifested His power in them, as I said before. And again, on the other part, every one of us is convicted by experience that we are beholden to God for all the good that is in us.

When we are naturally inclined to any vice, and afterward the same is corrected, we perceive well that God has looked mercifully upon us. You perceive then that we have so much the more cause to humble ourselves, seeing we were in the way of perdition until He drew us out of it. And it stands with us in hand to mark that well, for there are some fantastical heads which imagine that God so guides His chosen ones by His Holy Spirit that they are sanctified beforehand, even from the time that they are born into the world, as soon as they come out of their mother's womb. But the contrary appears.

And in good sooth, we see how simple in another text speaking to the faithful saith, some of you were plunged in covetousness, some were given to cruelty, some were scorners, some were lewd and loose

livers, and others were gluttons and drunkards, and to be short, you were full of all uncleanness. But God, having changed you and made you clean from such filthiness and infection, has dedicated you to Himself. Again, he says to the Romans, you ought to be ashamed of the life which you led before He drew you to Himself.

So then, whereas it is said in this text that God chose His servants to make them walk in holiness of life, it is not meant that He is bound to govern them with His Holy Spirit even from their childhood. For, as I have said already, experience shows us that He lets them run astray until a convenient time comes for Him to call them. But yet we must always bear in mind that God's choosing of us was to the end that we should live holy lives. If He should let us alone still as wretched castaways, surely we could do nothing but all manner of naughtiness, according to the corruption that is in us. The good then proceeds from His freely bestowed mercy that He has used towards us before we were born, yea, and before the world was made. Thus, you see, in effect, what we have to mark upon this strain.

And so the blasphemies of those who would deface God's praise are repelled, which make a jar and, as it were, a divorce between God's free election and the endeavour of doing well. "Yea," say they, "if God has chosen us, then let each of us do what we list, for we cannot perish. What should we care about doing either good or evil?"

Seeing that our salvation is grounded upon God's mere grace and not upon any virtue of our own, the answer hereunto is easy, namely, that if God's election were not, look how many thoughts and appetites there are in us, so many rebellions should there be against all righteousness. For we tend all of us but to evil, and we are not only inclined to it, but we are as it were seething hot with it. And we run to it with frantic eagerness because the devil possesses all such as

are not reformed by God's Holy Spirit. And so we must conclude that our giving of ourselves to do good is because God guides us and leads us thereto by His Holy Spirit, all because of His election.

Therefore, as I said earlier, we must not separate the things that God has joined together, for we are not chosen to take leave to do what we list, but to show by our deeds that God has adopted us to be His children and taken us into His keeping, intending to dwell in us by His Holy Spirit and to knit us to Himself in all perfection of righteousness. Herewithal let us mark also that although God has reformed us, and set us in the good way, and made us to feel that He has already wrought in us to subdue us to His word, and make us serve Him obediently in all things, it does not therefore follow that we are fully reformed on the first day. No, not even in all our whole lifetime. St. Paul says not that God brings His chosen and faithful ones to the full point of perfection, but he says that He draws them towards it, and so we are but in the way thither, even until our death.

Therefore, as long as we live in this world, let us learn to profit and to go forward more and more, assuring ourselves that there is still always some way to go. They that imagine any perfection are as good as bewitched with hypocrisy and pride, or else have no feeling nor fear of God in them, but mock Him flatly to His face. For he that examines himself shall always find such a store of vices as he shall be ashamed of if he considers them well. Those then who say that we can come to any perfection while we dwell in this mortal body, do well show that either they are utterly blinded with devilish pride, or else that they are heathenish folk void of all religion and godliness.

As for our part, let us mark, as I touched upon before, that God has chosen us to the end that we should be blameless, howbeit that we are not able to be so until we are quite rid of all our infirmities and

departed out of this prison of sin, wherein we are held fast as of now. And therefore, when we feel any vices in us, let us fight manfully against them, and not be disheartened as though we were not God's children because we are not yet faultless before Him. But let our sins be always before our eyes, which make us guilty. Although then we find never so many miseries in ourselves to thrust us out of the way, yet let us go on still, assuring ourselves that as long as we live here beneath upon the earth, our way is never at an end. We must always go forward, and we can never come to our resting place.

Thus, the faithful ought to harden and strengthen themselves, although they are not perfect. And let the same also cause us to groan and sigh under the burden which we feel, for the perfection of the faithful and of God's children is to acknowledge their own weakness and to pray, not only to amend all their misdoings, but also to bear with them of His infinite goodness, and not to call them to account with extremity and rigour. You see then that the thing whereunto we must resort for succour is God's mercy, whereby He covers and bears with all our sins because we have not yet attained to the mark whereunto He calls us, that is to a holy and faultless life. But however the world goes with us, let us go forward still, and take good heed that we step not out of the right way.

If the word "love" be referred to men, then St. Paul meant to signify the true righteousness of Christians, that is, to deal faithfully and uprightly. For we know that the hypocrites would content God with ceremonies and shows, as men term them, and meanwhile, some of them shall be given to catching and snatching, some shall be full of envy, malice, cruelty, and treason. Some shall be drunkards, and others shall be lewd and loose livers, giving themselves the bridle to all naughtiness.

Yet for all this, they think all is safe if they may make a few gestures and pretend some countenance of holiness by using a few ceremonies. St. Paul, to cut off all such stuff, says that we must walk in love, which is the bond of perfection and the fulfilling of the law if we intend to have our life allowed by God. And so, you see what we have to mark upon that strain.

Furthermore, let us mark that in this place, St. Paul exhorted us to acknowledge ourselves beholden to God for all the virtue and goodness that is in us. As for example, if we have any good zeal, if we fight against our own vices, or if we walk in the obedience of God, whence comes it even from this wellspring that He purposed it, that is, that He chose us beforehand. Then let us consider that the praise thereof is due unto Him and let us not defraud Him of His right. For although we lived as perfectly as angels, yet, if we were so foolish as to think that the same comes of our own free will and self-movement, we miss the chief point of all. For what do our good works serve but to glorify God? And if we take them to spring from ourselves, we see they be marred by so doing and are turned into vices, so as they become nothing else than stark vainglory.

You see then that the thing whereat St. Paul aimed in this sentence is to bring us always back to God's free election, that we might know how all goodness depends thereupon. He added immediately that we be predestinated in adoption in Himself through Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of His own will. Whereas he says that God has predestinated us in adoption, it is to show that if we be God's children, it is not through nature, but through His only grace. Now, His only grace is not in respect of anything that God foresaw in us, as I touched this morning, but because He had already marked us out and appointed us to such adoption, even in such a way that the cause thereof is not to be sought elsewhere than in Himself. And that

is the cause why St. Paul addeth immediately that He did it in Himself and according to the good pleasure of His own will.

Also, he repeated the same thing that I declared this forenoon, namely, that all was done in Jesus Christ. You see, therefore, that the thing which we have to mark in this sentence is that none other cause makes us God's children than only His choosing of us in Himself, for we have no such prerogative by birth or inheritance. Neither does it come of flesh and blood, as it is said in the first chapter of St. John, inasmuch as all that ever can be sought in our own selves is utterly excluded and abolished. And that is to show us that if men be let alone in their former plight, they have no intercommunication at all with God, but are utterly cut off from His kingdom. True, it is that our first father Adam was created after the image of God, and that he was excellent in his first state. But after the coming in of sin, we were all utterly lost, inasmuch as even Adam had not any state of himself, and his free will, that was given him, served him to none other purpose but to make him the more inexcusable, for he fell willfully and through his own malice. But hereby we see what manner of constancy he had in him since he was no sooner made, but he by his fall drew us down into his fall with him.

Then, as now, we are all of us born the children of wrath and are cursed of God. And so, as long as we abide in our former state and plight, there is nothing but endless death in us. Therefore, God must call us home to Him. Are we able to purchase such a prerogative? Where is the gold or silver to buy it with? Where are the virtues whereby we need to recompense God for so great and excellent a privilege? To be sure, as is said already upon this sentence, it comes neither of our flesh nor of blood, that is to say, it comes not of anything that we can find in this world, but only of God's adoption. For the word which St. Paul uses betokens the appointing of

children. Like as when a man adopts a child, he chooses him to be his heir, and all the goods that he has afterward do pass under that title, even so are we heirs of the heavenly life because God has adopted and chosen us for His children.

But St. Paul is not contented to magnify God's grace so far forth. He says, moreover, that God had also predestinated us and appointed the thing beforehand. We see then that St. Paul gathers together all the things that may beat down the fond imaginations which we might conceive of bringing ought unto God or of advancing ourselves towards Him to make ourselves acceptable unto Him. Therefore, all such things must be laid aside. That is also the cause why he repeats, "through Jesus Christ." If it be demanded why and how we be predestinated of God to be His children, it is because He vouchsafed to look upon us in Christ. For, as I have said before, He is as it were the register wherein we be written to attain to the heritage of life and salvation.

Though God pities our miseries, we should always be hateful in His sight if Jesus Christ did not come before Him, because all of us who are descended from Adam are of one mould and making, and there is none better than another among us. Now, then, one sort is forsaken. And why is that? It is because God, looking upon them in themselves, dislikes them, but He chooses us in our Lord Jesus Christ and looks upon us there as in a glass that He likes. So, you see where the difference proceeds. However, to express the matter better, St. Paul says that God's choosing of us was in Himself. That is, God had us all good in Himself.

But here St. Paul aims to set out something not seen in all the ordinary works of God: that none other cause moved Him to choose us than His own will. St. Paul, therefore, takes away all respect when

he says that God chose us in Himself. If He had found any desert or worthiness, any disposition or forwardness, any goodness or virtue, or, to be short, any one drop of anything that He might like and allow, He would not have chosen us in Himself. We ourselves should have had some partnership with Him. Seeing then that St. Paul looks upon all things in God's purpose which belong to our salvation and says that our election also is shut up there, it is all one as if he should say that men do sorely overshoot themselves when they take upon themselves to be anything worth or to have been furtherers or preparers of themselves to the receiving of such grace. Therefore, we must be carried up aloft if we will know whereupon our salvation is grounded, and what is the very original wellspring and the chief and only cause of the same. So you see what is meant by this saying, that God did it in Himself.

But St. Paul adds further, according to the good pleasure of His own will. If he had set down no more but only the word will, it had been enough. Accordingly, as we have seen heretofore and was declared upon Sunday last, St. Paul was chosen according to the will of God. Why so? Because he was neither fit nor worthy to have such a prerogative, but that it pleased God to choose him. St. Paul, therefore, does not boast that he had gotten the apostleship, but with all mildness acknowledges it to be the free gift of God. Thus, you see what the word will imports, and that not in any one place only, but throughout the whole Holy Scripture. Therefore, whensoever God's will is mentioned, it is to show that men cannot bring anything of their own.

Nevertheless, St. Paul sets down here a word of overplus and says, according to the good pleasure. As if he had said, truly seeing that God's will is the cause of our salvation, we should not flit to and fro and seek other reasons and means thereof. Be it for as much as men

are so unthankful and malicious that they would always darken God's glory and so puffed up with fond overweening that they continually challenge more to themselves than belongs unto them. Therefore, if they be not sufficiently persuaded of God's will, let them understand that it comes of the good pleasure of His will, that is to say, of a freely inclined will, which depends not upon any other thing than itself, nor has any respect one way or another, but vouchsafes to choose us freely because He liked and liked to do so.

Now, then, we see that such searchers into the cause why God has chosen us would, if it lay in them, overthrow His everlasting ordinance. For the one is inseparable from the other. If God has chosen us, as it is showed here, then nothing can hang upon our deserts, nor upon any thought that we might have to come. But God wrought it according to His own freely inclined will and found no other reason to move Him thereto than His own good pleasure. If any man thinks this to be strange, it is because they would be held fellows with God. And herein appears their devilish malapertness, that they cannot suffer God to reign freely as the thing that He likes might be received as good, just, and rightful without gainsaying. But let such folk bark like dogs as much as they list, yet is this sentence definitive, unable to be repealed, which the Holy Spirit has uttered here by the mouth of St. Paul, namely, that it is not for us to search any further cause for our election than the good pleasure of God. That is to say, than His own freely inclined will whereby He has chosen us, though we were not worthy in any other respect, then for that He listed to say so it pleased with Him.

And so you see, in effect, what we have to gather upon those words of St. Paul.

Now, he says immediately that it is to the praise of the glory of His grace. Here he showed the final cause that God looked at in choosing us, namely, that His grace might be praised by it, and that not in a common and ordinary manner, but with a certain glory.

For He has coupled those two things together to the intent we should be ravished when we see how God has drawn us out of the bottom of hell, to open us the gate of His kingdom, and to call us to the heritage of salvation. Here we see yet again the thing that I treated off this morning, namely, that all such as would put away God's predestination or are loath to hear it spoken of, do thereby show themselves to be mortal enemies of God's praise. To their seeming, it slides up and vanishes away. But who is the competent judge thereof? Do they think themselves wiser than God who has spoken the clean contrary to that which they allege? Oh, say they, that were the next way to open the mouths of many men to blaspheme God. Surely, as for the wicked, it is certain that they will always find cause to rail, and they cannot be hindered so to do. But yet, for all that, God shall have enough wherewith to justify Himself, and all they that despise Him and His righteousness shall be confounded. However, then, the case stands, it is not without cause said here that God is duly glorified, and His praise magnified when we acknowledge that He has freely chosen whom He listed, and that there is no other cause of difference between men than only His will, so that they whom He has refused perish because they are worthy of it, and they whom He calls to salvation must not seek the cause thereof elsewhere than from the said free bestowed adoption.

Furthermore, by those two words, St. Paul meant also to stir us up to a greater and fervent earnestness of praising God. For it is not enough for us to confess coldly that our salvation springs from God's mere goodwill, but we must be as it were inflamed, and give

ourselves wholly to His praise, as if we were wholly wedded to it. As St. Peter shows, for as much as we were drawn out of the darkness of death, it is good reason that we should be speaking of the inevitable praises of God.

And hereby, he means to show that when the faithful have strained themselves to the utmost to discharge themselves in praising God's goodness, they shall never fully accomplish it because it is a thing incomprehensible. Mark well, therefore, what we have to bear in mind, and so upon this goodness or grace of which he speaks. It behoves us to gather that men shall never yield God His due glory until they are utterly abased, so that there remains not anything at all in them to glory of. Let us put the case that God's election were never thought of; should He therefore cease to be praised? No, but He should still have some portion of His praise, for if men should say no more than that God causes His sun to shine upon us, that would be cause enough to praise Him. And when we open our eyes to look upward and downward upon the wonderful works that He shows us, the same is a large provocation to exercise us in His praise all our life long. Moreover, when His gospel is preached unto us, there too we have cause to praise Him, though no mention at all be made of His election.

I say there is enough in respect of us, but then should He be robbed of His chief praise, and we should yield Him but a piece of that which is due to Him. And why so? Because the faithful should think that they have faith of their own self-moving and free-inclined will.

I told you this morning that faith is a fruit of election, for there is no other difference between us and the unbelievers but that God reached us His hand and drew us to Him by a secret means at such time as we turned our backs upon Him and were strangers to Him.

To be short, it is not for naught that St. Paul says here that God's praise shall never be glorified as it ought to be until we acknowledge His election to be the cause of all the benefits which He bestows upon us. And that if He, of His infinite mercy, adopted us not of set purpose from everlasting, we should have a piece of the praise to ourselves which is due unto Him.

And so should God be diminished and abridged of so much of His right. To be sure, we see well enough how it is said here that men must be utterly abased to the end that God may have His right and no man be made co-partner with Him. But all men must confess that He is both the beginner and the accomplisher of our salvation.

Also, we must mark well how St. Paul adds that by His own grace He has accepted us in His well-beloved. By this, it is yet more evident why our salvation is grounded upon God's mere election and freely bestowed goodness, for men will never give over their foolish overweening if they be not so vanquished that they have not one word more to reply. St. Paul, therefore, to bring us to such reason, tells us that we'd be damned and lost in ourselves. Now, when such a thunderbolt lights upon our heads, it is not for us to stand checking anymore. If men will be so foolish as still to hunt about with windlasses to have somewhat or other belonging and reserved to themselves besides the only grace of God, they need no more but this same to turn them from it, namely, that we were not in God's favour till we were in Jesus Christ because we be utterly damned and accursed in our own selves. This matter was sufficiently declared already, if we were not overflowed, considering the thing that is so needful and which ought to be so clear unto us. And in good sooth, even experience ought to teach us in this behalf. And surely, if hypocrisy did not blind us too much, we should well perceive that there is nothing but wickedness in us, and God's wrath would strike

us in such fear that we should be at our wits' end with it. But God must compel us to obedience by strong hand, or else we cannot find in our hearts to give over all praise unto Him.

Therefore, let us mark well what is meant by this speech, where it is said that we were taken into favour in Jesus Christ because He is the well-beloved. And why is Jesus Christ called God's well-beloved, according as He is termed in the 17th of Matthew and in other places, and also as is showed to be so in the prophet Isaiah? Thereby it is shown to us that God does justly hate and abhor us so long as we abide in our own natural plight. For if that title were not peculiar to Jesus Christ, then was it said in vain, "This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But if it be peculiar to Jesus Christ, then no other creature can claim it. In so much that although God loves His angels, yet they cannot be thoroughly beloved of Him but by the means of Jesus Christ. And as for us, there's a far greater respect. For as I have said already, we be beheaded, and Jesus Christ is the mediator or spokesman to set the angels at one with God. In so much that there should be no steadfastness, no constancy in them, if they were not upheld by Him. And besides that, their righteousness should not be perfect, but they be blessed and chosen in Him. That serves for one point.

As for us, seeing we are estranged from God through sin, He must needs take us as His enemies and be an adversary to us. Jesus Christ, therefore, is the only well-beloved among men. And as for all the rest of us, God utterly dislikes and disclaims us. Indeed, so much so that He says He repented Him that He made man. This saying implies that we are not worthy to be among the asses, dogs, and other beasts, for they continue to be God's creatures in the same state that He made them, but we are so lewd and depraved that we deserve to be erased and to have our memory cursed and hateful before God.

Now let us go brag and boast and seek ways to ennoble ourselves, for we see how the Holy Ghost disagrees with all such as think themselves to be of any worth. Therefore, let us consider that if we are enemies unto God, we are in worse condition than if we had never been created. Hereupon St. Paul tells us that God has accepted us in His well-beloved. Seeing then that our Lord Jesus Christ is received by God His Father, to be the beloved, not only in His own person but also in respect of the love that is extended to all the members of His body, by that means we are called home again, and God embraces us as His children, whereas previously we were His enemies and utterly hated by Him.

But however the world goes, we must always come back to the election that we have spoken of before. For the grace that is communicated to us by our Lord Jesus Christ also issues from the same spring. Therefore, continuing with the matter that I have touched upon already, he shows us how greatly we need to be well-beloved in Jesus Christ. For if it were not proven to our faces, we would never grant—unfeignedly—that we are beholden to God for all things, for we are always laboring to advance ourselves in some way or other, and every one of us seeks to reserve something to himself, even if it is but the amount of a pinpoint. But contrariwise, St. Paul tells us that God must needs love us out of ourselves, and that if He likes us, it must not be in respect of our own selves. And why? Because we are prisoners and bond slaves of sin, held down under the yoke and tyranny of Satan. Finally, we are shut up in the bondage of death until we are ransomed by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now then, we see that the sum of this lesson is that men are admonished to depart out of themselves and to seek their salvation in God's only goodness, even by holding to the means that is showed us here, which is to resort to our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet there are two

evil extremities of which we must beware. The one is that in coming to our Lord Jesus Christ, we must not imagine that there is any worthiness in us that should make us partakers of His benefits. And how may that vice be corrected? Even by being led to God's free election. For the very cause why men presume so much upon their own free will, and the very ground also upon which they build the opinion they have conceived of their own deserts and worthiness, is that they know not how they be nothing in any other respect than for that God has accepted them out of His own mere free goodness because He has chosen them already in His own everlasting purpose.

Therefore, we cannot by any means ascribe the beginning of our salvation to God unless we confess that which is showed us here, namely, that we were utterly damned and accursed at the time He adopted us, and that the very original cause of His adopting us is that He had predestinated us beforehand, even before the making of the world. Mark that for one point. The other evil extremity of which we must likewise beware is speculation. Many fantastical folk will say, "As for me, I shall never know whether God has chosen me or no, and therefore I must be content to abide still in my destruction." Yes, but that is for want of coming to Jesus Christ. How may we know that God has chosen us before the making of the world? By believing in Jesus Christ. I said before that faith springs from our election and is the fruit of it, which shows that our root is hidden within. He that believes is thereby assured that God has wrought in him. Faith is, as it were, the copy or counterpart which God has delivered to us of the original register of our adoption.

God has His everlasting purpose or determination, and that He keeps always to Himself as a chief precedent or original record, whereas He gives us a copy by faith. I speak here after the manner of men, for we know that God uses neither paper nor parchment to record us in.

And as I have told you already, to speak properly, the register wherein we are enrolled is our Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, God reserves to Himself the knowledge of our election, as a prince would do an original precedent register or record, but He has given us copies or counterparts of it, authentic enough, in that He imprints it in our hearts by His Holy Spirit, that we are His children.

You see then that the faith which we have in our Lord Jesus Christ is enough to warrant us of our election. And therefore, what seek we more? I told you just now that Jesus Christ is the looking glass wherein God beholds us when it is His will to be pleased with us. Likewise, on our side, He is the glass upon which we must cast our eyes and looks when we intend to come to the knowledge of our election.

For whosoever believes in Jesus Christ is God's child, and consequently His heir, as I have declared before. Then it follows that if we have faith, we are also adopted. For why does God give us faith? Even because He chose us before the creation of the world. This, therefore, is an infallible order: inasmuch as the faithful receive God's grace and embrace His mercy, holding Jesus Christ for their head, with the intent to obtain salvation by His means, they know assuredly that God has adopted them. It is true that election is of itself secret, being so deep and hidden a determination as it behooves us to honour it. Nevertheless, God shows it to us as far as is requisite and as He knows it to be for our benefit and welfare, and does so when He enlightens us with the belief of His gospel. Thus, you see why, after St. Paul had spoken of God's everlasting election, he set forth Jesus Christ as the one to whom we must resort to be assured that God loves us and accepts us as His children, and consequently, that He had adopted us before we knew Him, yes, and before the world was made.

Moreover, we must gather from this sentence that the doctrine of predestination serves not to carry us away into wandering speculations, but to beat down all pride in us, and the fond opinion which we conceive always of our own worthiness and deserving, and to show that God has such free power, privilege, and sovereign dominion over us, that He may refuse whom He wills and choose whom He wills. By that means, we are led to glorify Him and therewith to acknowledge that His choosing of us is in Jesus Christ, to the end that we should be held fast in the faith of His gospel. For if we are His members and take Him for our head according to the covenant and holy union that is between Him and us, we can never be broken so long as we believe His gospel. We must repair to Him to be made sure of our salvation because we see and feel by experience that God has adopted and chosen us, and that He presently calls us and tells us that the assurance which He has given us and daily gives us by His gospel, namely that He will be our Father, especially as He engraves it in our hearts by His Holy Spirit, is no deceitful thing. For the gospel may well be preached to all men, even to the castaways, but yet for all that, God is not so gracious to them as to touch them to the quick. Therefore, when we have God's adoption engraved in our hearts, then it shall be declared hereafter. We have a good and imperishable gauge that God will guide us unto the end, and that since He has begun to lead us into the way of salvation, He will bring us to the perfection whereunto He calls us.

Therefore, because without Him, we could not continue for so much as one day. But now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us perceive them more and more, that being utterly ashamed of them, we may hate our vices and all our whole life with the naughtiness and vileness thereof, and resort to Him who alone is able to remedy the same and not swerve one way or another from Him, as He

communicates Himself to us in our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us keep straight on to Him, acknowledging that as we are chosen in Him, so also we are maintained and preserved for His sake, and that He will show His power more and more in us until we have finished our race and come to the heavenly heritage whereunto we are going. Beseeching Him that although we are yet far from it, yet, He will vouchsafe to give us a steady and invincible strength to hold out continually, so that we fully renounce the world and, being quite consumed in ourselves, are renewed in the image of God, as the same may shine perfectly in us, until we are made partakers of the glorious immortality, which He has bought dearly for us. May it please Him to grant this grace not only to us, but also to all people and nations, etc.

End of Section Three

The Fourth Sermon Upon the First Chapter

God hath accepted us in His well-beloved.

7. By whose blood we have redemption, that is to wit, forgiveness of sins, according to the richness of His grace.
8. Whereof He hath shed out abundance upon us in all wisdom and understanding,
9. By making us to know the secret of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,

10. To the intent to deal it forth when the time was fully come, that is to wit, to gather all things together by Christ, as well the things in heaven as the things on earth, in the selfsame.

I have declared already that we cannot be beloved of God but by the means of His only Son. For if the angels of heaven are not worthy to be taken for God's children but by the means of a head and mediator, what shall become of us who cease not to provoke God's wrath daily by our wicked doings, as folk that do indeed fight against Him? God then must be fain to look upon us in the person of His only Son, or else He must needs hate us and abhor us.

To be short, our sins set God and us so far at odds that we cannot soon come toward Him without feeling His majesty utterly against us and, as it were, armed to put us to utter confusion. But now it remains to see how God receives us into His favour by means of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the thing which Saint Paul means in adding that in Him we have redemption through His blood, that is to wit, forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of God's grace.

Here we are first of all made to understand that the enmity which God bears us is not in respect of our nature, but in respect of our corruption. I say it is not in respect of nature, for in respect that God has created us, it is certain that He cannot hate us. But inasmuch as mankind is utterly marred and given over to all naughtiness, God must needs be as a mortal enemy to us and as an adversary against us till the remembrance of our sins is buried out of His sight. For we are subject to everlasting death till we are restored again, by reason whereof, God, being the fountain of all justice and righteousness, utterly hates and abhors the evil that He sees in us. Therefore, until such time as our sins are blotted out, it is impossible for us to hope that God should either favour or love us.

But let us mark here how St. Paul uses two words to express how we are reconciled to God. First, he speaks of the ransom or redemption, which is all one, and afterward, the forgiveness of sins. How does it come to pass that God's wrath is pacified, that we are made at one with Him, yea, and that He accepts and adopts us as His children? It is by the pardoning of our sins, says St. Paul. And furthermore, because redemption is requisite, he matches that with it also. It is that, as in respect of us, God wipes away our sins of His own free goodness and shows Himself altogether bountiful without respect of any recompense at our hands.

And in good sooth, what man would be able to make amends for the least fault he has committed? If every one of us should employ his whole life in making satisfaction for any one fault alone, and by that means seek to win favour at God's hand, it is certain that the same would far surpass all our abilities. Therefore, God must be inclined to receive us to mercy without looking for any recompense or amends at our hands. But yet for all this, the atonement, which is freely bestowed as in respect of us, did cost the Son of God very dear. He found no other payment than the shedding of His own blood insomuch that He made Himself our surety, both in body and soul, and answered for us before God's judgment to secure our release and discharge.

Our Lord Jesus Christ employed Himself wholly, both body and soul, for it would not have been enough for Him to have suffered so cruel and slanderous a death in the sight of men. It behoved Him also to endure such horrible anguish in Himself, as if God had become a judge to Him. For He came to the point that He sustained the person of all sinners, to make full amends for them all. And so you see why St. Paul has matched those two words together in this strain.

Therefore, we have to mark first of all, that we can obtain no favour at God's hand, nor be received by Him until our sins are wiped out, and the remembrance of them completely put away. The reason for this is, as I said before, that God must need to hate sin wherever He sees it. So then, as long as He considers us as sinners, He must need to abhor us, for there is nothing in ourselves, nor in our own nature, but all manner of naughtiness. Thus, being in confusion, we are enemies and adversaries unto Him until we come to the remedy that St. Paul shows us here, which is to have our sins forgiven.

Hereby, we see that no man can be loved by God for any worthiness that is in himself. For wherein lies the love that God bears us?

I have told you already that God must cast His eye upon our Lord Jesus Christ and not look at us at all. Yet, it is further declared that God does not favour us until He has released us from our debts and adopted us as His children, notwithstanding that we are worthy of death before Him. Thus, you see that the assurance of our salvation (as is said in the song of Zachariah) is that God is merciful to us and forgives us our sins, whereby we had become His enemies. However, let us also bear in mind that the clear release of our sins through God's free goodness is not done without the ransom that was paid by our Lord Jesus Christ, not in gold or silver (as says St. Peter in his first epistle) but in such wise that He, who was the unspotted Lamb, was compelled to serve that purpose Himself.

Therefore, whenever we intend to seek God's favour and mercy, let us focus all our thoughts upon the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may find there what is needed to appease God's wrath. Furthermore, seeing that our sins are done away with by such payment and satisfaction, let us understand that we cannot bring anything of our own for which we should be reconciled to God.

Herein, we see how the devil has by his cunning cut off all hope of salvation from the world, by leading men to believe that each must ransom himself and make his own atonement with God. This is precisely what men call good works, merits, and virtues in papistry. For what purpose do all the inventions they have forged serve? Why do they martyr themselves in so many fashions, never ceasing day nor night, but continually creating new schemes and paths? The aim of all these things is to pacify God. Thus, all the so-called good works in papistry are merely means to make amends for sin. However, this defaces the ransom of which St. Paul speaks here.

There is, as it were, an inseparable bond between these two things: that God puts our sins out of His remembrance and drowns them in the depths of the sea, and moreover receives the payment that was offered Him in the person of His only Son. Therefore, we cannot attain one without the other. Hence, if we intend to have God's favour, let us consider that we are His enemies until He pardons all our sins of His own free goodness. Yet, nonetheless, our Lord Jesus Christ must intervene. For the sacrifice of His death serves to purchase us an everlasting atonement, so we must always seek refuge there. True, the whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ is our ransom, for the obedience He yielded to God His Father in this world was to make amends for Adam's offence and for all the iniquities whereby we have incurred debts. However, St. Paul speaks here specifically of His blood because we must resort to His death and passion as the sacrifice that has the power to blot out all our sins.

For that reason, God represented in figures under the law that men could not be reconciled to Him except by that means. Now, it is true that Jesus Christ did not only shed His blood at His death but also felt the fear and terror that ought to have fallen upon us. But St. Paul

here, in one phrase, comprehends the whole matter after the ordinary manner of the Holy Scripture.

To be brief, let us repose all our righteousness in God's showing of Himself merciful towards us of His own free goodness. Let us not presume to face Him with any virtue of our own to bind Him to us. Instead, let it suffice us that He receives us into His favour freely without any desert of ours, solely because the remembrance of our sins is buried out of His sight. Again, let us understand that this can be done only by the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that this is the foundation upon which we must wholly rest.

Hereupon St. Paul adds that all is done according to the riches of God's grace. Not without cause does he magnify God's mercy in receiving us into favour. For we see, on one side, how men wilfully overreach themselves through their foolish overweening. Most men have always imagined that they might make their atonement with God by their own satisfactions and various other shifts. Seeing then that men are so far deluded in their own imaginations, St. Paul, to exclude all such dealings, says that we must be enraptured by the richness of God's goodness. He could have simply said that God does all according to His grace, but he highlights here His great treasures, to the intent that men should not be so foolish as to bring, as it were, a mere farthing to discharge a debt of ten hundred thousand crowns.

Truly, when the Papists prattle of their satisfactions, they do not claim to fulfill everything thoroughly. Still, they believe that with the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, they can also contribute something of their own, and by bits and pieces, satisfy and content God. Thus, you see what a devilish opinion reigns in Papistry. They insist on holding masses, reciting many prayers, going on pilgrimages, keeping this or that feast, performing various devotions,

and wearing sackcloth next to their skin—all to supplement the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, as if it were not sufficient by itself. But St. Paul tells us that God's goodness, as shown to us in Jesus Christ, is such a great treasure that all other things must necessarily give way and be thrust underfoot. Seeing that God uses such great bountifulness, we ought to be wholly enraptured by it. Is it not outrageous presumption when we bring our own paltry efforts, as though our pilgrimages and other devotions had any value or estimation? Is it not as if the blood of Jesus Christ were not a sufficient price and ransom for our salvation?

You see then, on one side, how St. Paul intended to cut off all occasions for the foolish imaginations that lead men to believe they can pacify God's wrath by their own satisfactions and payments. On the other side, he intended to succour our feebleness. Although we tend to believe in our own virtues and bear ourselves in the belief that God is greatly beholden to us, when it comes to calling upon God in earnest and putting our trust in Him, if Satan drives us to despair and we are tossed with troubles and temptations, we become so dismayed that all the promises of Holy Scripture and all that is said to us of the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot make us have any hope. St. Paul, therefore, to remedy this vice of unbelief deeply rooted in us, sets before us the great treasures of God's goodness, so that all the distrust we can conceive may be, as it were, swallowed up, seeing that God vouchsafes to use such great bounteousness towards us.

And hereupon he adds that He has made this grace abound towards us in all wisdom and understanding. By these words, he signifies by what means we come by the things he had specified before. Behold, all our happiness and all our sovereign welfare consist in being at one with God, so that He may take us for His children, and it may be

lawful for us to call upon Him as our Father with full liberty. But how shall we obtain that thing from which we are so far off? It is said that although we are worthless and can do nothing, yet we shall find all things in Jesus Christ that are wanting in ourselves, and that His death and passion will be a sufficient sacrifice to put away the remembrance of all our misdeeds.

However, does it follow that all men partake in this benefit which is purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ? No, for the unbelievers have neither part nor portion in it. Thus, it is a special privilege for those whom God gathers to Himself. Also, St. Paul shows that either we must have faith, or else Christ shall not profit us at all. Although Christ is generally the redeemer of the whole world, yet His death and passion advantage only those who receive what St. Paul shows here. Hence, when we know the benefits brought to us by Christ and which He offers us daily by His Gospel, we must also be knit unto Him by faith.

For the Turks, Jews, Papists, and all others like them are cut off and estranged from Christ and rot away in their own filth because they presume to work wonders of themselves. It is a common principle among the Papists, Jews, Turks, and all heathen men that they must appease God's wrath. And how? By various means of their own devising, each according to his own imagination. Such men, therefore, have no part in Christ. Wherefore, if faith is the key that opens the door for us to enjoy the treasure whereof St. Paul spoke just now, then it is the means to make us rich, so far as is requisite for our salvation, ensuring we lack nothing if we are knit unto Christ by faith.

Notwithstanding, it is not for naught that St. Paul has here set down these two words of wisdom and understanding. For they make us

aware that the learning of the Gospel is enough to bring us to all perfection and that whatsoever is added more is but dung, filth, and rottenness. To be brief, St. Paul's use of these two honourable terms for the Gospel is to the end that every man should quietly give ear to the things that God teaches him by the means of His only Son, and that we should yield ourselves so teachable to Him, as not to take upon us to know anything other than that which comes out of His mouth, but simply receive whatsoever He speaks and continue in the same to the end, though the whole world despise us, and all men set themselves against us, and not be swayed by the sights of the world, as many men do, who have itching ears and are always desirous to hear some new thing.

To the end, therefore, that we are not so wavering, nor led astray by a foolish desire of knowing more than is lawful for us to know, let us mark well how St. Paul says here that if we have once profited thoroughly in the Gospel, we shall find there all wisdom to the full, so that we may reject all other things, not only as needless but also as noxious because by them we shall be turned from the pure doctrine by which it is His will to have us knit unto Him. To be short, St. Paul meant to show here that God does us an inestimable good turn when He vouchsafes to call us to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, His only Son, and that when we have Him, we must despise all other things and not be troubled with a foolish desire of knowing this or that because the full perfection of all our knowledge is there, that is to wit, in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And here you see also why it is said to the Colossians, that He had been a faithful teacher, even to bring men to the perfection of wisdom. Indeed, he confesses that he was rude and homely of speech and that he had neither the wisdom nor the eloquence that was highly commended in the world. Yet, he declares that if his doctrine

were received, there should be found a full substance in it for the nourishment of men's souls, and that there need not be any more to be added to it.

When we hear these things nowadays, we must take warning to bridle ourselves and to repress the fond over-curiousness that is rooted too deeply in us, that we may hold to the pure doctrine of the Gospel and rest wholly thereupon. Thus you see, in effect, what we have to gather upon that strain.

Herewithal let us mark the thing that I have touched already: namely, that as often as the Gospel is preached, so often is God's grace spread out upon us. If we acknowledge His goodness and liberality, which He makes us perceive by His moistened of the earth, to the end it should yield us fruits to the sustenance of our bodies, much more may we understand that when God sends us the word of salvation, He not only waters us for the welfare of our souls but also gives us so largely thereof to drink that we may be thoroughly satisfied therewith.

For St. Paul thinks it not enough to say that whereas we are barren, we have some refreshing by the Gospel, but he says that it is as if God should pour down an abundance of water upon us, and that we might be so watered and refreshed with it, as we might gather substance and lustiness from it to hold out to the end. And so you see in what wise we ought to esteem God's goodness when He vouchsafes to draw us to Him by means of His Gospel, and that therewithal we enter into possession of the benefits that have been purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ, according as He offers them to us by His word, and will have us also to receive them by faith.

Now for a larger opening of the matter, he adds immediately, "That His doing is because He has uttered the secret of His will to us,

according to His own good pleasure which He had purposed afore in Himself.” Here is another thing that ought to advance the dignity of the Gospel yet more: which is, that there we have the secrets which were hidden heretofore in God. And it is not here only that St. Paul speaks after this manner, but we shall see yet a larger discourse of it in the second chapter. And not only in this epistle, but also everywhere else, he shows how we ought to be as it were ravished at the preaching of the Gospel because God does there open the things that were incomprehensible to all men before, and which no man would ever have believed or once thought of.

For He seemed to have chosen only the line of Abraham, in such wise as if He had cast away all the world besides. Therefore, it was a wonderful thing when He poured out His grace in common upon all nations. Yet notwithstanding, we know that at such time as Jesus Christ came into the world, the very same people were grown out of kind, and God’s doctrine was so corrupted that there was nothing but superstition among the Jews. It seemed then that all had been past hope of recovery when suddenly, beyond the opinion of all men, behold, salvation was offered to all nations. Behold, Christ, who had erst been hidden in deep darkness, yea, and in so deep darkness, as there was no hope that He should ever have come out of it, rose up as the Dayspring of righteousness, to give light to the world. For this cause, therefore, does St. Paul say that in the Gospel we are made privy to the secrets of God’s will.

True it is that at first sight there seems to be nothing but simple stuff in the Gospel. And that is also a cause why many scoffers think that the things contained in the Gospel serve only for idiots, and they bear themselves in hand that they are able to devise many wittier things in their own dreams and dotages than all the doctrine that concerns Jesus Christ. But such folk are unworthy to taste of the thing that is

shown us here, for their pride utterly blinds them and makes them stark dolts. Notwithstanding, however they fare, yet the faithful perceive full well that there is a divine majesty in the doctrine of the Gospel.

For that cause, St. Paul gives us to wit in this same text, that our coming thither must not be to learn any common thing, but to lift up ourselves above the world. For we shall never be good scholars to God, nor ever be in any readiness to profit in His school, except we mount above the world and reverence the things that God speaks with His own holy mouth. To be short, the beginning and entrance of our faith is lowliness. But how can men well humble themselves unless they know that the things God tells them far surpass their own wit and capacity?

You see then that the thing whereat St. Paul aimed is that we should reverence the Gospel, assuring ourselves that it is not for us to judge whether God has spoken well or ill. For it becomes us to be fully resolved that all that ever comes from Him is infinite wisdom, yea, and such wisdom as is utterly faultless. To the end, therefore, that all glorying may be beaten down in ourselves, and we learn to reverence soberly and modestly the doctrine that is preached to us in God's name: St. Paul has purposely set down this secret.

To help us understand how much we are bound to God, St. Paul repeats the phrase, "according to his good pleasure," which he had mentioned before. This is done to eliminate any notion of our own worthiness. For God's good pleasure can have no place unless men are barred from all deserving and come to Him utterly empty. As soon as we presume to bring anything at all to God, it is surely an advancement of ourselves to the defacing of God's grace, so that it may no longer have the beauty and preeminence among us that it

ought to have. Therefore, to prevent such presumptuousness, St. Paul sends us back to God's good pleasure.

He essentially says that there was no other cause for the preaching of the Gospel to the world than the sheer and free goodness of God. Yet, to repress all the overboldness of men, he adds that God had purposed the said ordinance and the high incomprehensible determination of His will beforehand in Himself. What is the cause that men take such great liberty in questioning, disputing, and going to law with God? It is because they think they are dealing with matters that ought to be open and manifest to them. So then, St. Paul, perceiving us to be so foolish and rash as to presume too boldly to be inquisitive about God's purpose, says it is a sealed letter, and that God has His purpose in Himself. It is not lawful for creatures to mount so high; if they do, it is the next way to cast them down and break their necks. True, we may well apply our whole endeavor to know God's will, but that must be no further than He has revealed in His word, for His word is our light.

If God holds His peace, He will have us bridle and, as it were, imprison ourselves, not starting out any further. For if we desire to know more than is granted us, more than we ought to know, and more than is imparted to us by His word, it would be but an entry further and further into a maze or rather into the bottom of hell. Therefore, let us mark well how St. Paul means that whenever God keeps His purpose to Himself, it becomes us to stoop and be content to be ignorant of it. For it is a cursed wisdom, such wisdom as sends us to the pit of hell, when we take leave to know more than God has taught us. Conversely, we are wiser in our ignorance than all the wise men of the world when we do not presume to know anything further than God's word guides and governs us.

True, there is only one single will in God. Nevertheless, He utters the same to us according to our capacity and as far as is expedient and profitable for us. For example, we have seen that the forgiveness of sins is a point that we cannot overlook or forbear. Therefore, Zacharias calls it the knowledge of salvation. Again, it stands us in good stead to know where the forgiveness of our sins is to be sought. For if we have not Jesus Christ, we continue still enemies to God, we have no agreement nor rest in ourselves, and God's justice must needs pursue us. But Jesus Christ is our peace.

Furthermore, when we know the things that are witnessed to us by God's word, we must also reverence the mysteries that are hidden from us, as has been said already, and will be said again when we come to God's election. St. Paul again sets down the word "foreordaining" or "forepurposing" to show that God had predestinated us before the making of the world, and yet that the same was hidden. Yes, indeed, but now the same is discovered to us, he says. Thus you see, in effect, that the thing we have to bear in mind is that we are not called to the knowledge of the Gospel by our own inclination, nor because any of us put himself forward to it of his own accord, nor because we have bound God to us by any virtue of ours, but because God of His own infinite goodness chose to enlighten us.

He did not do it because it suddenly came into His mind to do it, as men are wont to do, who are carried with sudden impulses, but because He had determined the same in His own purpose, even from before all time. If our minds are ticklish and provoke us to be inquisitive and say, "How so? Had God chosen us beforehand? And why then did He not reveal it to us sooner? How did it happen that it was not perceived before this?" To the end that we should not so overshoot ourselves, St. Paul says that this purpose was in a sense

locked up in God until it was revealed to us. To be brief, it is not lawful for us to know any more than is revealed to us in the Gospel. Whatever is shown to us there, we must revere it. For this reason, it is added that His doing was to set forth the same in the fullness of time.

Herein he shows that men may well vex themselves, yet they shall come short of their purpose, and all their wits and imaginations shall fail them if they go about to know more than God has given them leave to know. For if any man demands why God hastened not sooner to do it, therein he shows that he would be wiser than God. And is not that a devilish pride? Is the creature worthy to go upon the ground when it advances itself so high? For this cause, St. Paul says that the appointing thereof belongs to God. For if a man may set order in his own house and say: I will have my people to fare thus, I will have them to drink such drink, I will have them to eat that kind of bread, I will have them lodged in this manner, how much more ought we to let God do so? Why should He have less privilege than worms of the earth? Therefore, let us give God leave to dispose of His church, and of the welfare of His chosen, as seems best to Him. And as for the time, let us take that for the full time which it shall please Him to show us. For it is not for us to be either judges or umpires in this case, to measure the times, years, months, or days: but it ought to content us that God wishes to have it so.

Some man will argue the case and say: What, I pray you? Behold, four thousand years passed between the fall of Adam and the coming of Christ: and could not God have remedied the matter by sending the redeemer of the world sooner? See what a number of wretched folk wandered away in darkness: behold the destruction of mankind as a water flood that swallowed up all things: and yet in the meantime, Jesus Christ was hidden. Besides this, a small number of

men tasted of Him, only by figures and shadows. For none but the Jews waited for the redeemer to obtain salvation by His means: and yet even they were fain to use calves and sheep and other brute beasts to ascertain themselves of the forgiveness of their sins, and that God was merciful to them. If a man asks how this comes to pass, let us repair to that which is said here in one word: namely, that the time was not yet fully come. And why? Because God had so appointed it. And this is the very same thing that we have seen already in the Epistle to the Galatians, where St. Paul repressed all the foolish gadding, whereby men wander away in mounting up higher than is lawful for them to do. Therefore, let us conclude that it is God's peculiar office to appoint times and seasons, and that we must not think any other to be due than that which He appoints.

For albeit that winter and summer are ordinary with us every year, yet if summer comes late, we must bridle ourselves, and not grudge against God. We may well say, alas, if it pleased God to send us heat, it should be welcome. But yet in the meantime, we must fully resolve ourselves thus: It belongs to God to govern, and all sovereignty and authority pertain to Him. If we ought to behave ourselves so modestly in respect of the order of nature which is common among us, and wherein God shows Himself familiarly to us, what ought we to do when we come to the scanning of the heavenly secrets, as of the everlasting salvation of our souls, and of this high mystery that the Son of God is come to set things in their state again which were lost and perished?

Does it not become us to stoop in that case, and humbly to take in good worth whatsoever God tells us, and to like that which He likes? Thus, you see why St. Paul spoke here expressly of the fullness of time, as if he should say that we can never profit in the Gospel until we yield God so much honor as to hold ourselves contented with His

only will. We should not step forth to reply against Him, nor face Him with our jangling, but glorify Him by acknowledging His will to be the rule of all wisdom, all right, and all equity.

And for the better declaration hereof, he adds immediately, that it was to gather all things together, as well in heaven as on earth, by Jesus Christ, in Himself. As touching this word gather, St. Paul meant to show us thereby how we are all horribly scattered until such time as our Lord Jesus Christ sets us in order again. This is verified not only of us but also of all other creatures. To be brief, it is as if he had said, the whole order of nature is as good as defaced, and all things decayed and disordered in the sin of Adam, until we are repaired again in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For although we behold God's wonderful wisdom, power, goodness, justice, and righteousness in all creatures, yet nonetheless, there are marks of sin both above and beneath, and all creatures are subject to corruption. All is disordered because God hates and rejects us. Therefore, a restoration must be made by Jesus Christ. That is the meaning of the gathering together St. Paul speaks of here. We should learn to dislike ourselves and to be ashamed of the disorder within us, and with which the whole world is filled through our sinful life. Moreover, we should learn also to magnify God's goodness so much the more.

Thus, the Holy Ghost warns us in this text that not only we ourselves are out of order, but also that we have brought the whole world to the same point. We keep it still in the same state daily by our sins, and there is no other remedy than that Jesus Christ must be fain to amend all again and make such a gathering and union that we may be knit again to our God. You see the first point that we have to mark upon this text.

Truly, this thing is spoken in few words, but it needs to be pondered at greater length. For it is the matter on which we ought to occupy ourselves both early and late. When we look into ourselves, we might reflect in this wise: who are you, wretched creature? You see you are separated from your God even from your birth. Behold, you are His enemy and inheritor of His wrath. On the other side, there is nothing in yourself which tends not to naughtiness and frowardness. You ought not only to feel this disorder in your own person but also to perceive that all things else are out of order through the whole world by reason of your frowardness. Therefore, let us sink down and be ashamed of it, and confess how much we are indebted to God for His vouchsafing to gather us together in the person of His only Son, even us who have so torn asunder the things that He had set in such goodly order.

For this reason, St. Paul speaks here not only of men, who were estranged from God by reason of sin, but also of all things that are in heaven and on earth. He comprehends even the very angels. For although God's glory shines forth in them, and they were never yet separated from Him, yet nonetheless, it was necessary for them to be gathered together by our Lord Jesus Christ, and that in two respects. Although they never swerved aside nor fell from what they were at first, and that God's righteousness always shows itself in them, insomuch that they are as mirrors and patterns of it, yet notwithstanding, if God chose to look upon them with rigour, they would find themselves far short of the perfection of righteousness that is in Him, as is said in the book of Job.

Furthermore, there is yet another reason to be matched with this: the angels should not have such constancy and steadiness as is requisite unless Jesus Christ had so established them that they might never fall. Thus you see one way how they were gathered together. But this

gathering, whereof St. Paul speaks here, is in respect of their uniting again to us. For we know that inasmuch as we were banished out of God's kingdom, we were cut off from all hope of salvation, so the angels were immediately fain to become our enemies and should be so still were it not for the atonement we have with them again by means of the head common to us both.

Here you see also why in the ladder shown to Jacob, it is said that God stood upon the top of it and touched both heaven and earth, and that the angels went up and down on it. Now our Lord Jesus Christ is the true living and everlasting God who touched both heaven and earth because in His person God has knit His own divine being (or substance) and the nature of man together. Thus, you see that heaven is open, so the angels begin to acquaint themselves with us, and become our servants, as is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews, because the care of our souls is committed to them. They, as is said in the thirty-fourth Psalm, encamp about us, watch over us, and are our keepers.

You see then how we are united again to the angels of heaven by our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the cause also why He said, "From henceforth you shall see the heavens open, and the Son of Man coming down in His majesty with His angels." By this, He makes us understand that heaven was shut against us, and we were unworthy to find any favour at God's hand. Yet notwithstanding, now that He has come to be our head and has made the atonement between His Father and us, and taken upon Him the office of mediator, and become the head not only of the faithful but also of the angels, He has gathered all together again in such wise that whereas the devils make war against us and practice our destruction without ceasing, the angels are armed with infinite power to maintain us.

Although we see them not with our eyes, yet we must certainly believe that they watch for our welfare. Otherwise, what a thing would it be? For we know that the devil is as a roaring lion, seeking nothing else but to devour us. We see what a number of wiles he has to wind about us with. Therefore, the angels must have infinite power to defend us. Also, it must need be that we are preserved under the protection of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is both their head and ours too. Thus, you see briefly that the thing which St. Paul meant to tell us in this text, where he says that we are gathered together again, is that we were scattered asunder before. We are not only reconciled to God by the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also now henceforth knit again to the angels, so they become our brethren and fellows. God has given them charge to guide and maintain us in all our ways, to watch over us, and to be in continual battle to withstand all the enemies that make war against us until we are all gathered together into the rest of heaven.

Now let us cast ourselves down before the majesty of our good God with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us feel them so deeply that it may draw us to true repentance, and make us continue the same all the time of our life. Yet, notwithstanding, may we not cease to trust in Him and to offer ourselves boldly in His sight, forasmuch as our sins are scoured out by the blood that was shed for the washing of them.

May we so frame ourselves to this doctrine that we may all the time of our life acknowledge, that seeing He has purchased us so dearly, we ought to give ourselves wholly to His service. Seeing He has shown Himself to be such a good Redeemer towards us, may we not doubt that He will continue His goodness from day to day, to the full finishing of the work that He has begun, and strengthen us in all assaults, until He has delivered us from the cruelty of Satan and all

his upholders. May He quite and clean take us out of the world to make us partakers of the happy blessedness to which He calls us.

May it please Him to grant this grace not only to us, but also to all people and nations. Amen.

The Fifth Sermon upon the First Chapter

13. You also do trust in Christ, upon the hearing of the word of truth, that is to say, of the glad tidings of your salvation, by believing whereof you also are sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise.

14. Which is the earnest penny of our inheritance, unto the redeeming of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

We have seen heretofore how St. Paul has declared that there is no other ground of our salvation than God's free goodness, and that we must not seek anywhere else for the cause why He chooses one and forsakes another. For it becomes us to hold ourselves contented with His only will, purpose, and unchangeable determination. And whosoever goes any further must needs stumble into such a dungeon through his own rashness, as he shall feel that those who cannot honour God's majesty and everlasting ordinance with all lowliness and reverence must come to shame. Therefore, whenever we come to the searching of the cause of our salvation, let us learn to attribute it altogether to God.

It is true that to be God's children and heirs, it behoves us to be of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is done by faith. But we cannot believe the Gospel unless God draws us to it by His Holy Spirit. Now we see that He deals not alike with all men. For He could very well enlighten all the world and bring to pass that there should be no unbelievers at all, but we see the contrary. Therefore, let us assure ourselves that He chooses whom He pleases. If a man should ask the reason why He does it, it would be too lofty a presumption, and that is the very cause that makes so many overweening folk break their own necks, for they cannot find in their hearts to grant that God governs men according to His own will, as of good right He may full well.

Furthermore, St. Paul has heretofore set the Jews and Gentiles both on one even ground, and that is a thing that requires yet longer discourse. For seeing that God had chosen Abraham's offspring, it might have been thought that there had been some worthiness in them. Surely if we have an eye to the special favour that God showed to the Jews, they are well worthy to be preferred before all the rest of the world. But if a man takes them as they are of themselves, he shall find them void of all righteousness. For we must always come back to this point, that God is not bound nor beholden to any man at all, and His receiving of the Jews by free adoption is not because they were better worth than other men or because they might make any manner of vaunt at all of themselves.

Therefore, you see why St. Paul says expressly that those who believed in Jesus Christ in times past are comprehended under God's election, as well as the others, and that the others cannot boast themselves to be more worthy or to have deserved more than they, but that all must come to this point: that as well of the Jews as of the Gentiles, God chooses whom He likes and pleases, so that nothing

should be considered in that behalf but His only mercy, and that all mouths might be stopped, and no man be able to allege that he brought anything of his own.

However, when St. Paul enters into this comparison between the Jews and the Gentiles, he says that if a man has an eye to God's accepting of the Jews for His own peculiar heritage, they were a holy lineage, and He had given them His law and promises, by means whereof they were in a more excellent and high degree than all the residue whom He had forsaken and shaken off. But if we have an eye unto God, all man's glory must needs be laid awater. St. Paul in that place speaks only of the forgiving of our sins and of our embracing of God's grace by faith, which things he shows cannot be attributed to any other cause than God's pitying of us.

Also, we have seen heretofore in the Epistle to the Galatians how St. Paul said to Peter, "We are Jews by nature." For inasmuch as it was a common opinion that the Jews were a holy lineage because they were descended from Abraham's race, very well (says he), however the case stands, we have no other refuge nor assurance of salvation but to believe in Jesus Christ, for he knew well that men are utterly undone and lost in themselves, bringing nothing with them but God's wrath and curse.

Therefore, like as in those texts, St. Paul has shown that men beguile themselves if they imagine that they have any desert or worthiness in them. So now, for the better confirmation of the same doctrine and to take away all disputing and to beat back all replyings, he brings us to this wellspring: namely, that God not only gives faith to whom He pleases, but also has elected and chosen us before the making of the world.

You see then that the thing which we have to mark in effect is that all men, from the most to the least, are indebted to God, and there is none so holy or excellent that can exempt himself from that general state of men.

Now hereupon St. Paul magnifies God's goodness, in that the Ephesians were gathered together and made all one with those that were held and accounted before as God's people and the household of His Church. Before the Ephesians believed the Gospel, there was a great diversity between them, as shall be declared more at large in the second chapter. But notwithstanding that the believing Jews, who had already been converted to our Lord Jesus Christ, were as brethren to the angels of heaven, for as much as they were members of the head that was common to them both, whereas in the meantime the Ephesians were poor wretches, shut out from all hope of salvation, enemies of God, and plunged in all cursedness. Behold, God took away that diversity and arranged them both in one array. God's goodness, therefore, was so much the more manifest in that He did so gather back those who were drowned in the bottom of hell to match them with His own children and to make them fellow heirs of His heavenly kingdom.

That, therefore, is the cause why St. Paul, having spoken of such as had believed in Jesus Christ before, tells us expressly that God has gathered and established His Church in such a way that it well appears that the greatest depend wholly upon Him and have no other thing to rest upon than His only mercy, and that those who were after a sort cast away, yea and abhorred, have cause to glorify Him, seeing He has delivered them from the confusion wherein they were. Herewithal St. Paul shows that the thing which he had said before is verified unto us by the effects of God's grace. For (as I have said before) our election is a secret thing, yea and incomprehensible.

When men have inquired of it as much as is possible, surely they must needs fail in their own imaginations if they mind to enter into the said everlasting ordinance of God. And therefore it is not lawful for us to seek any further than the Scripture guides us and shows us the way. You see then that God's choosing of us is hidden in Himself, but yet He yields us records of it by the gifts of grace which He bestows upon us, such as faith, which is a gift of the Holy Ghost. Mark that for one point.

Now, were it but such a gift, as when He makes His sun to shine both upon the good and the bad, or as when He causes the earth to bring forth fruit indifferently for all men, the same ought also to be reckoned among the gifts and benefits of God. But faith is a singular gift, which is not bestowed commonly upon all men, but is reserved by God as a jewel for those whom He likes well of. And what is the cause of it? We are all the children of Adam, and we are all of one mould. Why then does He enlighten one sort and let the other alone in their blindness? There is no other cause but His own choice. So then although we cannot conceive either by wit or by reason how God has chosen us before the making of the world, yet we know it by His showing of it unto us, and experience itself avouches it sufficiently, inasmuch as we are enlightened by faith. What is the cause that I receive the Gospel and stick to it, and in the meantime others abide still in their beastly blockishness, or rather bear a spiteful rancour against the doctrine of salvation?

If I imagine that it comes of my own towardness, I am a traitor to God. For we must always come back to that which we have seen already and say, "Who is he that has made thee to excel others?" St. Paul then, in that saying, pulls down all loftiness of man, to the end that no man should advance himself nor allege that he has aught of his own. We must not think (says he) that we have any worthiness of

ourselves, but that every bit of it comes from God. Therefore in this text St. Paul shows by experience how the Ephesians had been chosen by God and that it behoved them to have their whole faith grounded thereupon, that is to wit, upon God's free goodness. And for proof thereof (says he) you have heard the doctrine of the Gospel and believed it. But how comes that to pass? He shows that it must needs be that they were confirmed by the Holy Ghost. Now, if they were confirmed, it was of necessity that the Holy Ghost must have worked beforehand. And so it is to no purpose to enter into so deep a maze as God's everlasting ordinance. For He shows us as it were with His finger how He has chosen us, at least wise if we do not act ungratefully with Him, but acknowledge the good that He has done us and be fully persuaded and resolved in ourselves that there is no other cause of it than that He had given us His mark from before all everlastingness, that is to say, that He had reserved us to Himself as His own children.

Now then we see St. Paul's meaning: and therefore let us learn to leave making of long ranges when the case concerns our imputing of all things to God's only mere mercy. For the faith that we have does show it well enough; because (as I have said before) the same comes not from our own mother wit, but as a gift that comes from above, and such a one as God does not communicate to all men without exception, but only to those He pleases.

Furthermore, there are many words here worth weighing. On one side, St. Paul intends to magnify the grace of the Holy Ghost by showing that we can have no part or portion in our Lord Jesus Christ, nor in any of all the benefits that He has purchased for us, except God puts us in possession of our salvation by His Holy Spirit. That, therefore, is one point. Yet notwithstanding, St. Paul does not

fail to show the inestimable benefit that we have by the Gospel, in that he terms it the word of truth and the glad tidings of salvation.

First of all, he meant to assure us so that we might have an infallible warrant to call upon God without doubting or grudge of conscience. For so long as we are in doubt whether God loves us or hates us, it is impossible for us to pray truly to Him. And so, by that means, you see how our salvation is utterly defeated, according to what is said by the Prophet Joel. It is a common doctrine in the Holy Scripture that we cannot obtain salvation but by fleeing to God with prayer and supplication. But we would be shut out from that if we did not have the said warrant, as we shall see more fully in the third chapter. Therefore, it stands us in good stead to be thoroughly assured that God is our Father and that He accepts us as His children. And how shall we be warranted that unless the doctrine of the Gospel is so certain in all points that it is not lawful for us to bring it into question? That, therefore, is the cause why St. Paul says that it is the word of truth.

No doubt there are other truths also, for even when God threatens us, He does it not in jest nor in vain, for both His threatenings and His promises have their execution sure and certain. However, forasmuch as the present case concerned the correcting of all distrust in us, as we are too much inclined to it, St. Paul has termed the Gospel the doctrine of truth, as if he should say, "My friends, God is a faithful witness unto you of His own will, for the Gospel is as much as if He laid forth His heart unto you; and therefore settle yourselves upon it." Moreover, he says that our salvation lies enclosed in the Gospel, and that is to make us love it and esteem it. For should we be so witless, or rather stark mad, as to hold in scorn our own welfare?

But yet notwithstanding, he says that all this comes of God's mere mercy and of His everlasting election, which as in respect of ourselves is far off and unknown to us, but we have knowledge of it by the Gospel, which is the means and instrument thereof. For to what purpose were it that our Lord Jesus Christ has offered Himself in sacrifice to reconcile the world to God His Father, unless we were made partakers of it by faith? Now, faith is not an opinion of man's conceiving in his own brain, but a settled belief that God cannot lie nor deceive us, and that it is not to be feared that our hope shall not come to a good end if we wait upon Him.

So then, to be short, St. Paul's intent was to show that if we have the skill to make our profit of the doctrine of the Gospel, we shall no longer stand in murmuring and perplexity, but shall be able to call upon God with open mouth, acknowledging ourselves so bound and wholly indebted to Him in all things, as we fear not but that He avows us for His children, and that we are accepted at His hand, and that He hears us in all the prayers that we make unto Him.

Thus much concerning the first point. Therefore, according to St. Paul's exhortation, let us learn to rest in such wise upon the doctrine of the Gospel that it may be as much to us as if God showed Himself visibly unto us and that the heavens were opened unto us. And let us always bear in mind how it is announced by the mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself that whenever sins are forgiven by the preaching of the Gospel, the same is out of hand ratified in heaven. Thus you see what certainty we ought to have, that we are no more doubtful whether God will hear us or no. But just as the Gospel teaches us to believe, so also St. Paul shows us that we ought to esteem it as an incomparable treasure, forasmuch as it is the power of God, tending to the salvation of all that believe, as he speaks of it in the first chapter to the Romans.

Seeing then that we are forlorn and undone of ourselves, and there is no other means to call us back again to God but by the Gospel, let us set store by that treasure and be well advised to make our profit of it. And in so doing, let us boldly despise both the Devil himself and all his temptations which he practices against us, seeing that God calls us and has given us a sufficient record of His fatherly love and goodwill towards us.

But let us come to the second part, which I touched upon briefly. For St. Paul shows that besides God's gracious act of having the Gospel preached to us, it is necessary for Him also to work by His Holy Spirit and by special grace. Indeed, we shall find many who will readily grant that God was not moved to send us His Gospel upon any other cause than His own mere free goodness. But they surmise that the reason why some receive it and some do not is because their own free will plays the decisive role, and by that means, God's grace is diminished.

For God does not offer us His grace as a man would offer an apple to little children so that the one who can run best should come and have it. If God were to cast it out so, it is certain that the greatest part of our salvation would proceed from our own power and policy, and the commendation thereof would redound to ourselves.

Now then, after St. Paul has shown that God has called, and daily does call us to the inheritance of His heavenly kingdom, and that His doing so proceeds from His own mere free goodness, he adds further that it is necessary for us to be touched by His Holy Spirit. Indeed, he sets down but one part of the grace of the Holy Ghost: and that is because he had set down the other part before. For he has not in this discourse forgotten anything that belongs to his matter, but he began

with God's free goodness, with which we are all filled, and showed that faith springs out of the said fountain of free election.

And now, for the second part, he adds that God's enlightening of us by His Holy Spirit, so that whereas we were blind, He has printed His grace in our hearts, and bowed and bent them to obeying Him, is not enough for us. Moreover, He must be willing to confirm us and strengthen our faith, by giving us an invincible constancy to hold out to the end.

You see then that the point to which St. Paul brings us is that besides our receiving of faith at the hand of the Holy Ghost, and besides His enlightening of us by His grace, which I have spoken of already, He also steadies us in such a way that we do not fall away.

For a better understanding of this, we must first recall what has been treated at length already: that is, that so long as God lets us alone in our own state and plight, we are blind wretches wandering in darkness. And whatever is preached or spoken to us, we remain as blocks in our brutishness. For the sensual man shall never understand anything that belongs to God or to his own salvation.

You see then how we are utterly barred and excluded from the heavenly light until God pities us and gives us the spirit of light and insight. Mark that for the first point. However, as that point has been discussed before, it suffices to do no more than to remind you of it.

Now there is yet another point, which is that when we have once embraced God's grace by faith, so that we know that our Lord Jesus Christ is He in whom we find all that is requisite to make us perfectly happy, it stands us in good stead to be established in the same. Why? Let us note how wavering men are. He who is best disposed to follow God shall by and by fall, because we are so frail that the devil will

overthrow us every minute of an hour if God does not hold us up by a strong hand. For that reason, it is said that God demonstrates His power in maintaining us when He has chosen us and given us to our Lord Jesus Christ. For if He did not fight for us, alas, what would become of us? We should be confounded out of hand, and we should not take one or two falls, but infinite falls, as I said before. As soon as we were in the way of salvation, we would be turned out of it immediately by our own frailty, lightness, and inconstancy unless we were held back and God worked in us so that we might, by His Holy Spirit, overcome all the assaults of the devil and the world.

Thus, God's Spirit works doubly in us as it pertains to faith. For He enlightens us to make us understand the things that would otherwise be hidden from us, and to receive God's promises with all obedience. That is the first working. The second is that the same Spirit is compelled to continue in us and to give us perseverance so that we do not falter in the middle of our journey. That, then, is the matter St. Paul addresses now. As if he should say, "My friends, you have known God's grace, and you have had experience of it, and that He has drawn you to the obedience of His Gospel. For you had never come to it if He had not shown Himself merciful towards you. But yet assure yourselves that He doubles His grace, in that He gives you the power to hold out in the same. For had you continued but two or three days, or two or three years, yea or more: it must necessarily be that God helped you therein, for else you should always have been in a wavering state, yea, and as poor wretches at your wit's end, without any certainty at all, but that God has promised to have a care for you, and to guide you continually till you have come to your journey's end, and have accomplished your course."

That, therefore, is the reason why he says here that they were sealed or signed by the Holy Ghost. Now it behooves us to mark well the

analogy that St. Paul uses. For we know that documents are made authentic by seals, and that has been the case in all times. True it is that men did not set them in such a manner as they do nowadays. But yet, in place of signing them with their own hands, they delivered their seal or a ring, and that was the manner of the publication of testaments, and of other documents, and of all bargains and covenants.

In this respect, St. Paul says that we must be sealed in our hearts. True it is, that to speak properly, he should have said that the Gospel was sealed. However, to the end to show that the fault comes and springs from ourselves, and that the Gospel is a doctrine of sufficient authority of itself, he intended to show us that God's sealing of His truth is in respect of our hard-heartedness and inconstancy, for we are shaken with every wind like wavering reeds until such time as He has strengthened us. But however the case stands, let us note that the Holy Ghost is as it were the seal with which He ratifies and warrants His truth unto us.

Now I have told you already how greatly we stand in need thereof. For although we grant that God's Word deserves to be admitted without gainsaying or reply, yet we cease not to doubt it, and that we find well enough by experience. For whenever any trouble or vexation comes, we are as dismayed, whereas if we were thoroughly persuaded of God's goodness in such wise as He assures us of it, it is certain that we should not be in any such fear. All the temptations then which shake us show well enough that we do not profit as we ought to do in the Gospel. And therefore, God is compelled to warrant it on His behalf by His Holy Spirit, and to print it so surely in our hearts, that we may be steadfast, and as that same steadfastness may not be beaten down by all that ever the devil can work or devise to overthrow it.

But we shall understand this thing yet better by continually examining our own weakness, as I have spoken of before. For take all the reasons of the world, and yet shall we never be certified so fully and perfectly as is requisite, that God will be merciful to us and defend us in the midst of all the perils of this world. For we are here as it were in a sea, the winds and storms assail us every minute, and we are still in danger of being swallowed up. How then may we despise Satan, being as wretched sheep unprovided with both armour, weapon, and all other means of help? How can we be merry both in life and death, knowing that Satan might do anything against us, if we were not well sealed, and after an authentical manner?

So then, besides that in this text we are warned to rid ourselves of all presumption and overweening, that only God may be praised and magnified, we may also gather therewith upon St. Paul's words, that we have armour and weapons with which to encounter and fight well, and that although our enemy is mighty and sturdy, yet he shall never overcome us, if we take advantage of what is said here, namely that God's Spirit seals the truth, and the certainty of the promises of the Gospel in us.

And St. Paul adds yet another analogy, saying that God's Spirit is as an earnest penny. Let us not find it strange that St. Paul has so mightily confirmed this doctrine, for the devil has never ceased from the beginning of the world to puff men up continually with some fond opinion of their own wisdom and virtue. The cause of Adam's fall was that he would advance himself higher than was lawful for him and be wiser than God, which God did not permit him to do. Even so, the case stands with us, and the devil still pursues his challenge. For behold, he overthrew mankind by that sleight, and all his endeavour still is to make us believe that we are able to do this and that. Therefore, it stood St. Paul in good stead to rid men of that

false and cursed opinion of their own free will and self-virtue and to show them that they are beholden to the Holy Ghost for all. Mark that for one point.

Secondly, we are so gross and earthly that we need to have the doctrine chewed for us, and we cannot conceive any more of God's gracious gifts, which are invisible, than we see with our eyes and touch with our hands. Therefore, it was necessary that St. Paul should by analogies declare how it is God's Holy Spirit that puts us in possession of the Gospel and of all the benefits contained therein, and who holds us in them until the end.

Now we know that bargains are confirmed by the giving of an earnest penny, which men commonly call a God's penny. In buying either lands, houses, inheritances, or goods, although a man's bare word ought to suffice, yet notwithstanding, men are so ill-disposed that if they perceive any disadvantage to themselves in the matter, they will not be ashamed to eat their word. Therefore, this ceremony of giving an earnest penny was added, and it is as if the payment were fully performed, so the bargain is utterly past calling back again. St. Paul then means here that God's Spirit serves to warrant our salvation to the full.

To what end? For your inheritance (says he) to the day of your redemption. It is true that we are God's heirs even in that we are His children. But we must note how it is said in the eighth chapter to the Romans, that our salvation is shut up under hope. So then, we cannot see it, nor enjoy it now, according to the third chapter of the Colossians, where it is said that we are like dead men who have departed out of this world, and that our life is hidden with God in Christ. Therefore, although we are God's children, yet we do not have the full enjoyment of it yet. And it is all one with what St. John says

in his canonical Epistle. We know (says he), whereby he shows that our faith is not doubtful.

But yet he adds that it is not yet seen (or it does not yet appear), but we must wait for the day when we shall be like unto God, and then we shall have light to see the thing perfectly, which we now only believe. Again, we have seen how St. Paul said in the second chapter to the Corinthians, that as long as we are in this earthly pilgrimage, we are (after a sort) absent from God. For why? We walk (says he) but in hope, and we do not see the thing as if it were present, but we see it by faith. To be short, although we have passed from death to life (as is said in the fifth chapter of John), yet we fight against an infinite number of deaths because we are besieged by them. And St. Paul well matches both together in this text. For on the one side he says we are not yet come to our redemption and heritage, and yet nonetheless he shows that we are sure of it, and that nothing but our own unthankfulness prevents us from fully glorifying God, and saying with full assurance that we do not doubt our coming to the heavenly life, forasmuch as we have an earnest penny thereof by the Holy Ghost, and are so knit to our Lord Jesus Christ, that all the goods which He has belong to us and are made common to us by faith.

Therefore, let us mark well what is contained in these words of St. Paul. He says that the Holy Ghost is our earnest penny. Seeing it is so, we must needs be sure of our redemption, whereof we shall have the possession at the last day, yea even to the full: and that does the thing itself show sufficiently. For we are but silly worms of the earth, we are compassed about with rottenness and corruption, we are beset with so many miseries as is pitiful to see, the world rails upon us and mocks us and our simplicity, we are fain to endure hunger and thirst, it often seems that God has forsaken us, and after a sort

cut us off, yea, and that He vouchsafes not to pity us, as the most despised creatures of the world. Look at what point we are at to outward appearance. And therefore it stands us in good stead to have a remedy, to warrant ourselves withal in the midst of so many perplexities and heartgriefs. That is the cause why St. Paul says purposely, that the Holy Ghost is our earnest penny. Although then that the world has the bridle loose to trample us under its feet, as they say: although our Lord keeps us occupied with many temptations: although He humbles us in such wise, as it may seem that we are as sheep appointed to the slaughter, so as death is continually between our teeth: yet we are not unprovided of good remedy.

For why? Seeing that the Holy Ghost reigns in our hearts, we have whereof to boast even in the midst of all our temptations, according as it is said in the eighth chapter to the Romans, that being once assured that God takes us for His children, we may not only call upon Him, but also although we are afflicted and tormented, yet we cease not to be always fully and infallibly resolved that He is our Father, to lead us to the glory of heaven: for even that also is a means whereby our hope is tried.

Furthermore, we are also warned to walk in patience, and that since God has given us His Holy Spirit as an earnest penny, we must not be as hasty and impatient as we are wont to be. For if God handles us roughly, by and by we fall to grudging, and are very loath to suffer anything: for we see how tender and nice we are by nature. But we must endure patiently, because God will not have us come to His kingdom in one leap, as they say, but will have us pass through this world amid thorns and briars, so that we shall have much to do to get through, and we shall be in great distress.

Seeing that He will have us led in such a way, and yet nonetheless gives us so good a remedy as ought to suffice us, which is that He strengthens us in invincible constancy by His Holy Spirit, let us stand ready to fight till the time of victory is fully come. It is true that our faith even now already gets the upper hand, but we do not yet receive the fruits of it, nor do we fully enjoy it. Therefore, we must determine with ourselves to sigh and groan continually, and yet nonetheless to rejoice also. For why? To rejoice in our hearts, and also to cry with St. Paul, "Alas, wretched wretch that I am, who shall deliver me from this prison of my body," are things that may match very well together.

Therefore, let every one of us mourn, and be grieved at heart, for that we are still so much given to our wicked lusts, and to the number of vices that are in us. And yet nonetheless let us cease not to say that we thank God, and to be contented with His giving of such a portion unto us as ought to suffice us, and to tarry His leisure till He accomplishes and performs the thing that He has begun, seeing we have His Holy Spirit so dwelling in us, with a promise that we shall never be destitute of Him unto the end. Thus, you see how we are here encouraged to take heart and to walk in such constancy, as all the miseries of the world may not stop us from it, till we come to our race's end.

And that is the cause why St. Paul speaks purposely of redemption. It is true that we are redeemed by our Lord Jesus Christ, and He is given us for our redemption or ransom, as is said in another text. Yet nonetheless we have not the effect and full fruition of it yet. Then, there is a double redemption: one which was accomplished in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and another which we wait for, and which shall be shown upon us at His coming again. According to which St. Paul says in the eighth chapter to the Romans, that

although we groan and are held down in anguish, yet we must not be dismayed at it, nor think it strange, because all creatures (says he) do bear us company, and are as a woman in travail of childbirth. For we see that all the world is subject to corruption through the sin of Adam.

Seeing then it is so, let us not quail in our groanings, but let us so measure our affections as to hold ourselves contented in that we have our redemption purchased in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and thereupon trust that He will accomplish the same thing in us and in our persons, which He has brought us in His own. The thing therefore that St. Paul meant to say is that God's Spirit is our earnest penny during the time that we wait to be taken out of this transitory life, and to be set free from all miseries, especially from the bondage of sin, which is the heaviest burden that can be. Until such time then as we are delivered from all those things, we must rest upon this, that God's Spirit dwells in us.

And as for the redemption of purchase, it may well be taken for purchased redemption, for it is a very common manner of speech: like as when it is said, the Spirit of promise, it is meant, the Spirit that assures or warrants all the promises: The Spirit of the fear of God, because it is He that makes us obedient to His righteousness. So likewise when he speaks of the redemption of purchase, it may well be said that it is the redemption which was purchased for us, to show that if we feel the effect of it in ourselves, so as we be out of all doubt of the things that Jesus Christ has done for us, we must not mistrust that He has suffered in vain. For surely His suffering would be to no purpose at all towards us, unless it came unto us, so as it might redound to our profit, and we enjoy it.

That therefore is the thing that is purchased in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. And yet in the meantime, as in respect of ourselves, He reins us in short, to the end that we should not through our own unthankfulness refuse the benefit that God offers us, that is to wit, our rejoicing in our afflictions, because we know that our salvation is sure, nor repine against God and blaspheme Him, but walk on quietly till we are delivered from this prison wherein we are, and until we are fully set free by being gathered together in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let us cast ourselves down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us feel them more and more, even so far as to bring us to utter disliking of the wretchedness that is in ourselves. Finding that there is nothing in us but a dungeon of all naughtiness, may we learn to resort to His righteousness, seek it at the wellhead, and acknowledge that He has shown Himself a merciful Father towards us. Let us not doubt but that thereby He meant to assure us also that He had adopted us before the beginning of the world, to the intent we should continue in calling upon Him with true steadfastness and never give over.

And so let us all say, Almighty God, heavenly Father, etc.

The Sixth Sermon upon the First Chapter

15. For this cause, I also, having heard of the faith which you have in Jesus Christ, and of the love which you have towards all the Saints,

16. Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.
17. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, should give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, to have knowledge of Him.
18. That is to wit, to have the eyes of your mind enlightened, that you might understand what the hope is which you ought to have of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance among the Saints.

We have seen already how Saint Paul brought the Ephesians not only to the chief but also to the only cause of their salvation, and showed that they must of necessity attribute all to God, without mingling any foolish presumption with it, as if to say that they themselves had furthered God's grace which they had received, either by their free will or by any good intent in them. Saint Paul therefore has shown, in effect, that not only the Ephesians to whom he spoke, but also those who had been God's Church before, ought all without exception to confess that all their welfare proceeded from God's only free goodness, not only because they were all redeemed by means of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also because He had called them to the belief of the Gospel, according to His choosing of them before the creation of the world.

And now he warrants all the said doctrine by the record which it yields to God, in that it magnifies His goodness, even when He is, as it were, separated from man's eye and from the sight of all witnesses. Truly, the doctrine of the Gospel ought not to be less esteemed when it is preached and published in the open face of the whole world, but yet it behoves him that speaks it to have it thoroughly printed in his heart, and to say the same thing in himself before God and His

Angels, which he speaks before men. For otherwise, it were but a jangling, or rather a profaning of God's word, if a man should step up into the pulpit to talk like an angel, and in the meantime have no such meaning in his heart, nor be persuaded of the thing that he speaks. It were better that a man were drowned a hundred times than to bear abroad the most excellent record of salvation and of God's truth, and in the meantime not be persuaded in himself of the thing that he preaches, so that God and His Angels might know that he has the same thing printed in his heart. Therefore it is not without cause that, after Saint Paul has preached God's free goodness in choosing whom He liked, and in calling them to the knowledge of His Gospel when He had chosen them, and in confirming them with His strong hand, and by giving them invincible constancy and steadfastness when He had called them, now he adds that God knows his witnessing thereof to be in good earnest and unfeignedly. For he protests here concerning the prayers which he makes alone by himself, when no man could know his thought nor what he says and utters with his mouth, that even then he avows the same doctrine before God, inasmuch as he prays Him to vouchsafe to accomplish the thing that He has begun. Here, therefore, we have to mark first of all, that such as mind to have their labour profitable to the edifying of the Church, and such as have any true zeal, must not only give themselves to teaching but also therewithal pray God to work with them by His power and grace. For oftentimes it happens that we do but beat the water (yea, though we have the tongues of angels) because we do not pray to God to further the doctrine that we preach. For of ourselves, we are but unprofitable instruments, and when He has given us utterance, He must also make it effective, according as it is said, that he who plants is nothing, and he who waters is nothing, but it is God who gives the increase. Seeing it is so, let such as have the charge of teaching God's Church walk fearfully and carefully, and not only endeavour to win men to God but also humbly acknowledge

that they can do nothing of themselves, and that they would but cast forth a sound into the air, which would vanish away out of hand if God did not work with them by the secret power of His Spirit. That, therefore, is the thing that we have to remember upon the words that Saint Paul speaks here.

But every one of us also ought to apply it generally to his own use. Therefore, when we come to be taught God's word, or when any of us reads it alone by himself, let us not imagine our wits to be subtle enough, and that we are able enough to understand whatsoever the scripture tells us. Let us acknowledge our own foolishness and pray to God to make His doctrine prevail with us in such a way that it may not slip from us.

This will be better perceived by the process that Saint Paul holds on here, if we weigh well all the words that he uses. He says that he gives thanks to God without end or ceasing for the faith which he heard to be in the Church of Ephesus, and for their love towards the Saints. Yet, notwithstanding, he continues his praying to God that He should enlighten them more and more and bring them to the perfection which all the faithful ought to labour to attain until God has taken them out of this world. Now, in that he says that he ceases not to give thanks to God, we see by his example where the faithful ought to spend their time. For indeed, the chief sacrifice that God requires and allows is that we should honour Him for all His benefits and yield Him His deserved praise for the same.

And it is not to be thought that this can be done, as you would say, by starts or by patches. Just as God on His side ceases not to pour out His benefits infinitely, so also it behoves every one of us to enforce ourselves to bless and praise Him without ceasing. For Saint Paul speaks here unfeignedly, and when he blessed God for the Ephesians,

he meant as much for all other Churches. What an unkindness then were it if a man should not think at all upon the benefits that he has received at God's hand? We are all of us bound to praise God for our neighbours. If we hear it reported that God has prospered His Church or shown mercy to His people a hundred leagues off, and to be short, if we hear of anything that ought to make us glad, it becomes our mouths to be open to praise God for it.

Now, if we are bound to do this for the good turns that we see not, but which our neighbours feel, though they be distant in far countries from us, what is to be thought of us when God fills our mouths (as it is said in the Psalm) and yet in the meanwhile we have no mind at all to yield Him thanks? We have to note further that if we are bound to praise God for our meat and drink and for all the things that belong to this fleeting life, He binds us to Him much more without comparison when He calls us to the heavenly heritage and when He blesses and enriches us with spiritual gifts of grace, which serve to lead us far further than this world. Seeing then that God uses such bountifulness towards us, what excuse can we have if we follow not the example that is shown us here in Saint Paul, which is that all our life long we must occupy ourselves continually in praising the name of God?

Now herewithal, he shows that faith and charity are the very gifts of God and come not of ourselves, as men always imagine through a devilish pride. I told you before that Saint Paul played not the hypocrite in giving thanks to God for the faith and charity of the Ephesians. If every man could believe and had faith of his own inclination, or could get it by some power of his own, the praise thereof ought not to be given unto God, for it were but a mockery to acknowledge ourselves beholden to Him for that which we have from others than Him. But here Saint Paul blesses God's name for

enlightening the Ephesians with faith and for framing their hearts unto charity. Therefore, it is to be concluded that all the whole comes from God.

The heathen men, bringing in their own free will, thought themselves beholden to God for nothing but their good fortune, as they termed it, for they surmised that they had all things by their own power and policy. The Papists also will well grant that God's grace must help us in part, but yet for all that, they will have man still exalted and to attain to faith by his own motion. Here, Saint Paul shuts out all these devilish opinions and shows (as we have seen heretofore) that whenever there is any Church in the world, or any people to call upon God, which are settled and grounded upon the belief of the Gospel, God deserves to have the whole glory thereof.

And why? For His hand must needs have wrought in that case because men would never incline to any goodness if they were not guided and governed to it, yea, and even drawn to it perforce by the Holy Ghost. For there is so great a wilfulness in us that we are not only weak and feeble, as the Papists imagine, but also utterly contrary to God until such time as He has cleansed us. This is the thing which He means in saying by His prophet Ezekiel that the hearts which were stony before shall be turned into fleshly hearts, namely that He will soften them and bow them to His obedience.

Furthermore, under these two words, Faith and Love, Saint Paul has comprehended the whole perfection of Christians. For the mark whereat the first table of the Law aims is that we should worship one only God and depend upon Him for all things, acknowledging ourselves to be so indebted to Him, as we ought to flee to Him alone for all refuge, and endeavour to spend our whole life in His service. That is the sum of the first table of the Law.

The contents of the second are nothing else but that we should live together in equity and uprightness, and deal in such a way with our neighbours as we should strive ourselves to help all men without hurting any man. And we are sure that God has set forth so good and perfect a rule of good living in His law, that nothing can be added to it. Seeing it is so, it is not without cause that Saint Paul in this place sets down faith in Jesus Christ and charity towards our neighbour as the sum of whole Christian conduct, showing whereunto we ought to frame ourselves, and which is our rule.

But herewithal, we have also to mark that under this word Faith, he comprehends the whole service of God. For it is impossible that we should not be wholly ravished in love to our heavenly Father, being once acquainted with His goodness, as He has shown it to us in the person of His only Son. Behold, God draws us out of the dungeon of confusion and death, opens us the gate of the heavenly kingdom, and tells us that He will take us for His children. Now, can we hear and believe this, but that we shall be wholly given over unto Him, forsaking the world, and hating the evil that is in ourselves, because it separates us from Him? You see then how the word Faith imports a full yielding over of ourselves wholly unto God.

Again, faith is not an idle thing: it imports that we should resort unto God, and that whenever we are stained with any blot, we should pray to Him to redress it. For there is no necessity in the world which is not as a dash with a spur, which God gives us to make us come unto Him. Faith therefore imports prayer and supplication. It imports moreover that it cannot be but we must hallow the name of God by resting ourselves upon Him, and by yielding Him the whole glory that belongs to Him, when we know that He gives us all things of His own free goodness, looking for nothing at our hands but only the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Thus, you see how faith imports all that is

contained in the first table of the Law. True, it is that the part is put for the whole: howbeit it is to be considered that the things which we have spoken of cannot be put asunder.

Now then, it stands us in hand to live uprightly and indifferently with our neighbours, as it is said in the sixteenth Psalm, that we are beholden to God for all things, and that we cannot yield Him any recompense again, and that when we have strained ourselves to the uttermost to bestow aught upon Him, all that we can do is neither here nor there to Him. What requires He then? That we should be given to doing good to His poor faithful ones, according as Saint Paul also names the Saints expressly in this text. True, it is that we ought to use charity towards all men without exception: for we cannot be the children of God, who makes His sun to shine both upon good and bad, except we love our enemies and strain ourselves to succour and help them.

That therefore is the mark that we must aim at. Yet, notwithstanding, this hinders us not to love all God's children with a brotherly love, because they are knit unto us with a stricter bond. That is the cause why it is said as well in my fore-alleged text of the sixteenth Psalm as in this present one of Saint Paul that we must have love towards all the faithful. Yes, and Saint Paul himself in another place does well discuss the doubt that may be cast in this behalf. For he wills us to have charity to all men in general, and chiefly to such as are of the household of faith. God then will have us to become like Himself and to follow His example in doing good to all men, even to such as are not worthy of it, insomuch that we should to the uttermost of our power procure the welfare of those who seek nothing else but to pick out our eyes.

Moreover, forasmuch as He has set His mark upon all the faithful, and commended them unto us, He will have us to bear a certain special brotherly love towards them. For God's gifts are to be esteemed wheresoever they are seen, according to the fifteenth Psalm, where it is said that we must love such as fear God and abhor such as are wicked. Then, if we see the tokens that God has put into His faithful, whereby He comes near them, is it not meet that we also on our side should be stirred up to love them? To be short, we see that Saint Paul has comprised here the whole rule of good and holy conversation: that is to wit, that first of all we must give over ourselves wholly to our God, to stick steadfastly unto Him. And secondly, live even and uprightly with our neighbours, abstaining from all evil doing, and endeavouring to do good to all men according to our power and ability.

And how may that come to pass? Even by knowing our heavenly Father, and by acknowledging the infinite good turns which He has done us, and whereof He vouchsafes to make us partakers daily, so as all our whole life depends upon Him, and He only be the party at whose hand we look for everlasting salvation, by calling upon Him and by yielding Him thanks all our life long. Let that serve for the first point.

Again, as touching the second, it is not possible for us to love our neighbours, but we must also live soberly without showing any evil example, and look in such wise to our behaviour, as no man may have cause to complain of us. For what charity is there in a whoremonger that goes about to dishonour another man's wife? Or in a thief that seeks to steal another man's goods? Again, seeing that our life ought to be guided with all honesty, whenever any man bursts out into drunkenness, blasphemy, or such other things, it cannot be, but that in so doing there must be some troubling of poor

folks, some robbing them of their goods, or some starting out into all manner of extortions and excesses.

So then, if we have charity and love towards our neighbour, we shall live a sound and upright life with them, and we shall rule it in such wise that we shall not busy ourselves about vain fancies, as the Papists do. For they take great pains in their ceremonies, and they call it God's service to babble much, and to gad here and there on pilgrimage, and to do this or that: and in the meantime, they do but wander away in their own imaginations: and that is only for want of knowing whereto God calls them. To the end, therefore, that we take not labour in vain, let us mark what God allows, and let us hold to that. For we cannot miss if we abide continually in the way, as He shows it us by His word, especially since He shows us in so small a room what is requisite to the leading of such a life as becomes us.

For were the volumes long and without end, we would excuse ourselves that we were no great scholars, and that we could not bear away so many things. But now, seeing that our Lord utters His whole demands in two or three words, we must needs grant that if we bear not away so short and easy a lesson, we are too peevish and froward, and stop our ears wilfully, lest we might hear what He says unto us.

Finally, it is to be noted upon this word Faith, that Saint Paul does not without cause say, the faith in Jesus Christ, for that is the thing which we must look at. The fathers of old time had always the image of God before their eyes, for they might not make sacrifice but before His mercy seat: they might not hope that God heard them, or was merciful to them by any other means. They then had the visible image of the Ark of the Covenant: but we have now Jesus Christ, the image of God, who was invisible of Himself: for not without cause does Saint Paul say that God is incomprehensible till He manifests

Himself in the person of His Son. Therefore, since we have Jesus Christ who is the express image of God, it behoves us to look there. And here you see also why it is said that He is the express image of the power of God His Father.

For although the persons be distinct, yet does He represent unto us the things that are belonging and requisite to our salvation, so that in knowing the Son, we know the Father also, as says Saint John: and he that has not the Son, renounces the Father, whatever protestation he makes of going to Him. So then, whereas it is said here that we must believe in Jesus Christ, let us bethink us of the warning which He gives to His disciples. "Believe ye in God," says He, "believe ye also in Me." There He shows that the ancient fathers which lived under the Law had but a dark teaching until the time that He was manifested to the world.

True it is that they worshipped the living God, and that they had no access unto Him but by means of the Mediator. Howbeit, that was but under shadows and figures, neither had they any such light as we have nowadays under the Gospel. And for that cause also, I told you that He is called the image of God, who is of His own nature invisible, so as we could not know Him, unless He uttered Himself by such means. To be short, let us mark that we do nothing else but wander until we have our faith settled in Jesus Christ.

And this will be the better perceived by the errors wherewith the world has been imbrued unto this day. For the Papists will protest well enough that they believe in God: as much do the Turks and the Jews also. True it is that the Papists and Jews seem to come nearest the truth: for the Jews protest that they worship the living God, even the same God that gave them His Law by Moses. But what for that?

In the meantime, they reject Christ, who is the end and substance of the Law.

As for the Papists, although they profess Christianity and avow Jesus Christ to be their saviour, yet it is apparent that they make war against Him, inasmuch as they set up serving of God after their own liking, so as there is nothing but disorder in all their doings. As touching the Turks, they can well enough say, "Almighty God, the maker of heaven and earth," but shall we think that God will renounce Himself or unsay that which He has said, which is, that no man can come unto Him but by His well-beloved Son, whom He has ordained to be the mediator between Him and men? Again, we see how the Papists will well enough say that they believe in God, but yet, withal, they will need patrons and advocates to bring them to His presence. Again, it is not enough for them that they are bought with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ: they must also put to their own merits and ransom themselves by their own satisfactions: and when we have offended God, we must have such means and such.

Then if a man lists to examine the Papists' belief, surely he shall find that they believe their own dreams, and that all that ever they do is but a confused maze. For with Jesus Christ they mingle whatsoever comes in their own head, whereas we know that He ought to continue whole alone by Himself. We see then how Saint Paul leads us to the true trial of our faith: which is by resting upon Jesus Christ, so that we feel ourselves utterly void of all goodness, and that we must draw from out of His fulness to be filled with all good things, or else woe will be unto us. For if we had all the angels in heaven on our side (if it were possible), yet it is certain that all should go to wreck if we have not the said head, as Saint Paul says in the first and second chapters of the Epistle to the Colossians. And so you see what we have to gather upon that sentence.

Now, after Saint Paul has said that he thanks God for the things that he saw already in the Church of Ephesus, he adds that he prays to Him also. This is to show us that when we see God bestow His excellent gifts upon His children, we need to beseech Him still to continue and go forward with the same, and that for two causes. For he that stands may happen to fall, and again, God needs to increase His grace more and more. For even those who are the perfectest shall have cause to be ashamed if they look well into their own wants.

You see then that the thing whereunto Saint Paul brings us is that when we praise God for the gifts which He has bestowed upon His chosen children, we ought to match prayer also with our thanksgiving. And why? For it is in His only to bring to pass the thing that He has begun: and it behoves us to lay always this ground, "Lord, Thou wilt not leave the work of Thine own hands half undone." And the same thing which we ought to do for others is also requisite for ourselves.

To be short, we are here warned to magnify God in such wise for His goodness and gifts which we have felt already, as we must perceive that there is still much default in us, and that it stands us on hand that He should give us perseverance to the end. Moreover, He should correct our vices and augment His grace in us till we come to full perfection, which thing will never be until we are rid of this mortal body. Yet notwithstanding, we see how Satan nowadays possesses such as surmise a hellish perfection, and make but the three first petitions to their Father, saying that it is enough to pray God that His name be hallowed, that His kingdom come, and that His will be done: and so they cut off all the rest of the prayer which our Lord Jesus has left us.

And for this matter, I have the signing of their own hands which their disciples know, whereby those devils show that they must needs be utterly without wit, seeing they are carried away so far as to refuse to yield God this glory, that even now we are yet still over-laden with the burden of our infirmities, held down with a store of corruptions, and hemmed in with an abundance of vices, and that God must be fain to cleanse us of them more and more, yea even from day to day, until He has brought us to the perfection whereto He calls us. And it stands us so much the more on hand to mark this doctrine well because the Papists are not so far overshot in the errors of their superstitions and idolatries as these varlets are, which do nowadays sow abroad their poisons in their privy meetings and lurking holes.

But however they fare, let us mark well what is showed us here by the Holy Ghost when Saint Paul says that he prays to God. And why? I have told you already that the Ephesians had profited, and that the gifts of God and of His Holy Spirit were augmented in them: he has shown that. Now to knit up the matter, he says further that he prays to God to give them that which they have not, and which they want as yet. Since it is so, let us mark that the more we have profited, the more cause we have to humble ourselves, and with all mildness to beseech God to finish the thing that He has begun, and to increase His gifts in us until we need no more to go any further, which shall be at the meeting, whereof we shall speak more in the fourth chapter.

But yet we must mark well the words that Saint Paul uses. For he says, "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory," or the glorious Father (for the speech "Father of glory" is put in the Hebrew tongue for "glorious Father"), give you the spiritual revelation to have knowledge of Him. Now, when Saint Paul sends us here to Jesus Christ, saying that the God whom he calls upon is the same

who is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, yea and His Father too, it is to show the trust that he had to be heard, and that the Ephesians should take heart to follow the same fashion and rule of praying, and that when they have any occasion to resort unto God, they should hold the same way that he did and keep by the straight line of coming through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But now, if a man demands how God is above our Lord Jesus Christ, the question is easy to be resolved, if we have an eye to the person of the mediator, who is abased in our stead and degree, to be the means between God and us. True it is that Jesus Christ is all one with His Father, and when we speak of the living God, it behoves us to acknowledge that the whole fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him. Therefore, we must not separate our Lord Jesus Christ, as though He were a new God and some other than the same that was shown to the fathers from the beginning (as some devils say nowadays, which have stirred up that stinking villainy and abomination). But it is the selfsame only one God who has shown Himself to us in the person of the Father, so we seek Him in Jesus Christ. For in Jesus Christ we have to consider the office of the mediator, in that He so abased Himself. Not that He forfeited any whit of His majesty, nor that He was any whit abridged or diminished of His eternal glory—there was no such thing at all. But as in respect of us He was abased, yea and utterly emptied. And we must not be ashamed to say that Jesus Christ was abased, seeing it is said that He was emptied: for that is the very word that Saint Paul uses to the Philippians.

Therefore, when we speak of Jesus Christ as He is joined to us, to the end to bring us to His Father: so is He under God His Father, namely in respect that He has taken our nature upon Him and is become our fellow. And that also is the cause why He said to His disciples (as Saint John reports in his twentieth chapter), "Go ye to my brethren

and tell them, I go to my God and your God, to my Father and your Father." Lo, how Jesus Christ joins Himself in such wise with His faithful ones, that He says He will have one selfsame God with them. Yea verily, but in what sort? For is He not God Himself? Yes: however, forasmuch as He is clothed with our flesh, and inasmuch as He vouchsafed to be made flesh, to the end that we might be members of His body: that is the cause why He has one God with us. And that is the cause also why the Apostle applies this text of Isaiah to His person: "Lo, here am I with the servants whom Thou hast given Me," so as Jesus Christ comes there as a captain that presents himself before his king and prince, saying, "Lo, here I am with the company of children whom Thou hast given Me."

However the case stands, we see that Jesus Christ draws us to God His Father, to the end we should repair to Him with full trust, and He receive us. For otherwise, who is he that dares be so bold as to promise himself that his request should be heard? What grace could we obtain, if the gate were not opened to us by Jesus Christ, and that He performed not the thing that He has spoken, namely, that He is the way?

However, to the intent we might better know what need we have to be guided by our Lord Jesus Christ, Saint Paul sets here before us the infinite glory of God. How dare we then be so bold as to offer ourselves into God's sight, but for that we have an advocate who makes us a way in thither? For if the sun dazzles men's eyes, and the heat of it singes us though we be very far off from it, what will become of us when we will press unto God? For what else is the sun than a little power which He has breathed into it? And must we not needs be as it were swallowed up when we press to the incomprehensible majesty that is in God? Yet, notwithstanding, if we have Jesus Christ, we have to understand that God is not only the

Father of glory, but also the Father of mercy, and that He looks with pity upon such as are most miserable and are held in reproach and disdain of the world. Lo, whereupon we ought to rest in praying unto God.

Saint Paul prays to God here expressly to give the Ephesians the spirit of wisdom and revelation. It is certain that God had already revealed to them the truth of His Gospel, as it is seen. And verily, we could not have one spark of faith or of light except God had wrought in us already, according as it is said to Peter in the sixteenth chapter of Saint Matthew, "Flesh and blood has not opened these things unto thee, but my heavenly Father who is in heaven." And yet for all this, Peter shows afterward that he knew not any whit of Christ's spiritual kingdom. Then, although he were but as a silly novice at his A.B.C., yet it is witnessed of him that the small taste of the Gospel which he had was a gift from heaven.

Hereby we see how God must be fain to increase His gifts more and more in us, and in that respect, our life is termed a way because we must always go on forwards till our race is ended. And whosoever imagines any perfection in this world is possessed of Satan and utterly renounces God's grace. Yet notwithstanding, let us not surmise that God changes His purpose (for He is not variable) or suffers His grace to be chopped out in gobbets and cantles at men's pleasures. But He has appointed this order: that we should grow from day to day, and yet therewithal learn to acknowledge soberly our wants and to groan for them, and to dislike them, and to hold ourselves always in awe.

You see then that these two things agree very well: namely that the Ephesians had already received the spirit of revelation, and yet that they needed to have it given them of God. For although there be but

one spirit, yet are the gifts diverse, and they are distributed to every one of us in measure, and as it pleases Him to give them. There is none but Jesus Christ who has received them fully. He only is the fountain that can never be drained dry; it is He upon whom God's spirit rests, to the end that we should all of us be made partakers of it. And for our own parts, let us acknowledge that the wisest of us have need always to be scholars and to learn still even to our dying day.

However, by the way, let us mark that this word revelation condemns us of all blindness. For we have our eyes open to discern between white and black: we see the sun and the moon, we see these worldly things and are able to judge of them: we need no new revelation for that gear, for we have it of nature. True it is that our eyes are instruments of God's power and goodness, whereby He makes us to enjoy the light: but that is a common thing. But here Saint Paul shows us that we are blind and that we conceive not any whit of God's spiritual grace except He opens our eyes and takes away the kerchief or veil that is before them, yea and gives us a new sight, which we have not. For we have our eyes worse than stopped until He enlightens them by His Holy Spirit. Thus you see what we have to bear in mind.

And that is the thing which he proceeds still withal. Namely (says he) to have the eyes of your understanding enlightened. But a man might reply, "If we have the spirit of revelation already, why have we need of it?" Verily, as who should say, you saw nothing at all. True it is that you see partly: but you have your eyes still too much dimmed. And this may be said generally of all men, according as it is said, that in this world we see things but darkly, and as it were through a glass, till we are able to behold God in His heavenly glory, at which time we shall be fashioned like unto Him.

Again, to the intent that men should not allege (and say), "Must God then reveal things in such wise unto us, as if we were in such taking that we could see nothing at all? And shall a man be as a brute beast without discretion or judgment?" To answer hereunto, it is true that we have some wit, but yet are we blind for all that, because we are corrupted by sin. God, therefore, must be fain to give us new eyes, as I said afore. And he adds the word wisdom, the better to beat down the fond overweening that men conceive in themselves, when they will needs fly without wings to come unto God. For there is not that man who would not be wise.

If we desired true wisdom by seeking it at God's hand, it were a good and well-ruled desire. But there are two faults in us: for we will needs be wise after our own conceit. "Am I not wise enough to govern myself?" will a fool say. And in the meanwhile, we despise God's word, and every one of us will needs have the bridle laid loose in our neck, and have leave given him to do what he thinks good. But that is too great an overweening. The other vice is, that in reading the holy scripture, we still imagine to come to the knowledge of the things that are contained there by our own discretion. But here both twain of them are excluded by Saint Paul.

For when he desires God to give His faithful ones the spirit of wisdom, he shows that they have no discretion, no more than brute beasts, except it be by the guiding of our Lord Jesus Christ, on purpose to come to the kingdom of heaven. For even in civil matters and worldly affairs, God gives it not to any but to such as He thinks good. Now, if He keeps His special goodness always to Himself, to give discretion to whom He lists to guide Himself withal in these base things of the world: then does He make the unbelievers to be well-sighted: and therefore, when the case concerns the heavenly life, there is no preparation in us. And so Saint Paul presupposes the

thing which I have said already, namely, that we must be taught at God's hand, to know Him by the doctrine of truth through the record of the Gospel. For without that, we should be like these fantastical fellows, who rove under the pretence of having the revelation of God's Holy Spirit: however, that is not after the manner that Saint Paul takes the word revelation when he prays God to give it to His children.

As for example, when Jesus Christ speaks of His spirit, He does not separate it from the doctrine that He had preached. "When the spirit comes," says He, "He shall tell you all truth." And how is that? Had not the apostles received it already? Yes: but He adds, "He shall show you the things that you hear now of My mouth." To be short, it is the peculiar office of the Holy Ghost to teach us in such wise as the word which we hear may therewithal have its course and place, and as we may profit in the same.

And thereupon Saint Paul shows also wherein lies all our light and knowledge: namely, in knowing God in the person of His only Son. That, says he, is the thing wherewith we must content ourselves. For if we have ticklish wits to be inquisitive of the things that pass our capacity, let us consider a little how weak and raw our understanding is. And if our wits are so gross and heavy, how shall we do when we would soar above heaven and earth? Are we able to comprehend all that in so small a room? Yet nevertheless, we see how men take unmeasurable leave to be inquisitive of this and that, and to put forth questions in a way of pleading and disputing against God. For this cause, Saint Paul shows us here that if we mind to be wise, it behoves us to be sober: that is to wit, we must understand what manner of thing God and our Lord Jesus Christ is, as he himself will show anon after. When we are once come to that point, we have so much as ought well to suffice us, and if we presume to go any further, it is but

a wilful overthrowing of ourselves. Saint Paul then will show that more at length hereafter, but it ought to suffice us, that as well in this text, as in all the whole holy scripture, we ought to learn which is the God whom we ought to serve, what is His will, how we may have our trust in Him, what entrance we may have to pray to Him, and to flee to Him for succour at all times. That is the thing whereunto we must employ ourselves.

But that cannot be done unless all that ever we have need of, and is available to our welfare, is to be had in Jesus Christ, in whom God has manifested Himself. For in itself the majesty of God is too high a thing, and we should be undone a hundred times before we could come near Him, if it were not that He has come down unto us. But if we once have Jesus Christ, there we have a lively image of Him, wherein we may behold whatsoever is requisite for our salvation. For there we understand that God is our Father, and that we are cleansed from all our sins to be transformed into the glory of God. There we see how God accepts us as righteous, and that we are reconciled to God again. There we perceive how He has ransomed us, and that we shall never be left destitute of the grace of His Holy Spirit, till He has brought us to the joy of our inheritance. Thus do we know all these things in our Lord Jesus Christ. And that is the cause also why Saint Paul says in another place, that he desired not to know any other thing than Jesus Christ, and that it is He only of whom he intended to boast.

According whereunto we have seen heretofore, how he forsook all things to abide under the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that although the same has to the world nothing but shame and reproach, yet he protests that he had given over all that he had esteemed afore, and that he esteemed them but as hindrance and loss, yea and as filth and dung, to the intent to cleave to our Lord Jesus Christ. And

to show that such as are possessed with the fond opinion of their own deservings, do separate themselves from our Lord Jesus Christ, and that if we will be knit unto Him, we must give over all that we imagine ourselves to have of our own, and offer ourselves unto Him void of all goodness, to be filled at His hand.

And here you see also why Saint Paul says that he had rather come to the haven of salvation poor and stark naked, than to live in the midst of the sea, and to be there swallowed up. For although he was taken for a holy man, and as half an angel, yet he made no reckoning of all that, so he might be partaker of the remission of sins that was given him in Jesus Christ, and of the grace which He has communicated to all His members. Therefore, let us learn to magnify God's grace in such wise, as we may utterly forget all the toys wherewith the devil deceives the unbelievers, by puffing them up with I know not what manner of pride, and come utterly empty to our Lord Jesus Christ to beg His grace. For we cannot receive one drop of it, but by confessing ourselves to be utterly unworthy of it.

And now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us perceive them more and more, and that the same may so humble us, as we may be established in His grace, and labour to come nearer and nearer unto Him, that being beaten down in ourselves, we may be raised up by Him through His mere mercy, and depending altogether upon Him, resort unto Him as to our Father, and continue in so doing till He has taken us out of the prison of sin, and joined us perfectly to Himself. That it may please Him to grant this grace, not only to us, but also to all people. Amen.

The Seventh Sermon upon the First Chapter

17. I pray for you, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, to have the knowledge of Him:
18. That is to wit, to have the eyes of your understanding enlightened, to the end you may know what the hope is which you ought to have of His calling, and what the riches are of the glory of His heritage among the Saints.

All men have naturally some understanding. Not that it shows itself as soon as they are born: but in the process of time all have some discretion of good and evil. And for that cause, they are reasonable creatures. But the understanding which we have by nature is not enough to bring us to the kingdom of heaven. For we fall far short when matters that concern the heavenly life come into question: We see that every man has wit in matters and affairs of the world, and every man will look about him. Again, although divers could find in their hearts that their own consciences were dead, yet notwithstanding, God has so engraved a kind of feeling in their hearts, as our lives must needs be bridled, and even the wickedest and worst-natured of us all shall, of force, have some remorse or heartbiting, and be constrained whether they will or no, to allow the good, and condemn the evil. True it is that when they have committed any fault, they will labour to hide it with vain excuses. But if a man asks them whether murder, extortion, robbery, whoredom, deceit, and perjury are virtues or no: they will say, they are vices worthy to be condemned. Every man will talk so. For it is God's will that there should be such knowledge printed in man's heart, to the

end that all should be condemned without excuse, and be forced to be their own judges. But (as I said afore) this is not enough to lead us unto God, and to open to us the kingdom of heaven in such wise, as we may know how to be saved, or how to call upon God. Then are we stark blind in that behalf: for our insight reaches not beyond the world. Therefore, God must be fain to work in us and to give us new eyes to spy out the things that are requisite for our salvation. And that is the cause why Saint Paul prays to God here to give them enlightened eyes.

Wherein he presupposes that men have already some entrance, not to attain so high as is requisite: but to have some seed of Religion in them, and to perceive that there is a God. Furthermore, God must be fain to give a greater light, and such a one as we are quite void of, by reason of Adam's sin: for we are plunged in such darkness, that we go completely astray from the right way, till God has reached us his hand. You see then that the thing which is contained here is that God has done more for us in giving us the eyes of understanding than in making us men, and putting us into the world, because thereby he reforms us and gives us a clear and sure insight, as to those whom he has chosen. For it is a privilege which is peculiar to his own children, and not common to all men. And truly we see that when God utters his power, it is not known but only to such as have enlightened eyes, according to this saying of Moses, "Thy God has not given thee a heart to understand, nor eyes to see, even unto this day." We know that miracles were wrought in the sight of the people: yet notwithstanding, the passing of the Red Sea, the issuing of the water out of the rock, the falling of the Manna down from heaven, the thick cloud by day, and the fiery pillar by night, the abundant coming of the flesh unto them, and the horrible punishments that God laid upon the rebels, and upon such as had given full scope to their own lusts, all this the people understood not.

Moses, telling them that they had need to refer themselves to God, that they might be enlightened by his spirit, says, "I see that even unto this hour God's gracious doings have been buried among you through your unthankfulness: but that is because men are blockish, and do never understand aught that belongs to their welfare, till God has worked in them. Therefore it stands you on hand to rid yourselves of all overweening, and to crave understanding at God's hand, acknowledging yourselves to be unable to reach so high as to judge rightly of God's works, and to profit yourselves by them, until he has given you a heavenly sight in your minds."

This is the sum of the things that we have to mark in this strain.

Now hereupon it is easy to gather how the wretched world has been beguiled by the opinion of free will, which has been put into their heads. For the Papists will well enough grant that without God's grace we cannot walk as we ought to do, but yet they say therewithal, that we may well further God's grace by our own free will, and so they make a medley of them together. When they mind to define free will, they say it is a mingled thing, so as we have reason and wit to choose the good, and to refuse the evil, and that therewithal we have also power and ability to perform and put in execution the thing that we have purposed. But we see after what manner Saint Paul speaks here of man's reason, which they term the queen that overrules and bridles all our thoughts and deeds. He shows that she is stark blind until God has renewed her, and not that He does but supply our wants where any be, as though there were some piece of power in us. Had it been so, Saint Paul would have said that God furthers our light, or that He increases it, or that He adds to it whatsoever it has need of. However, he speaks not so: but he says, God gives you enlightened eyes, showing thereby that it is a free gift, and not only that our Lord must be fain to bear with our infirmities and to put

some further portion thereto, but also that we, being blind, can see nothing at all until He has opened our eyes, and that we are guided and governed by the said manifestation of His Holy Spirit, which we have touched on heretofore.

And now forasmuch as men run always flinging over the fields and busy their heads about many unprofitable things, Saint Paul shows us whereto we ought to apply wholly both our understanding and wit, namely about the seeking how to know what the hope of our calling is. I have told you already that men are, as you would say, born to curiosity, and that they rove and range, and frame many wicked gazes in their heads, and that is the cause why many men do martyr themselves out of measure, ever learning, and never attaining to the knowledge of the truth, as says Saint Paul. Therefore let us mark well, that all the true knowledge which we must seek, is to attain to the hope whereunto God has called us. For the scripture serves not to feed us with vain and superfluous things, but to edify us to our welfare: that is to wit, to make us perceive God's goodness, that we might be joined unto Him, and He be our true happiness.

And hereupon we may gather also, that until such time as our Lord has enlightened us by His Holy Spirit, we can find neither way nor path to come near the heavenly life, nor even so much as guess what it means. Wherefore it is for our behoof, that our Lord should put us in possession of our salvation by the power of His Holy Spirit. I told you heretofore how that faith serves to give us an entrance into the kingdom of heaven, and into the heritage that is purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ, and that God must be fain to give it to us by His Holy Spirit. Then, since it is so, let us mark that we have need not only to have the Gospel preached unto us, but also that God bore our ears, so as we may hearken to the things that are contained in the

same, and He open our eyes to see the things that He shows us: and to be short, that He may both begin all, and bring all to pass.

However, for as much as men (as I said afore) do by their fond imaginations take more upon them than they ought to do, and on the other side despise God's gifts: Saint Paul magnifies here the hope whereof he had made mention before, saying: "What the riches of the glory of His heritage are among the Saints." No doubt but that when there is any speaking of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, we will say, they are high things: however, that is but to exempt ourselves from them, if we could escape: so as we could be contented to know naught of the things that concern our salvation. We are insatiable when anybody feeds us with vanities and lies: but if God calls us to His school, we shrink back as much as we can possibly, yea and we set this before us as a shield, that we are rude, and that we have but a small and overly gross understanding, and that the secrets of God's word are too deep and incomprehensible for us. We have skill enough to say so: and yet it is all but hypocrisy and feignedness. And for proof thereof men will always judge after their own liking, so as if anything is propounded to them from out of God's word: "Is it so," say they? "And how is that possible?" They reason, they scan of it. Behold, it is God that speaks, and yet they will not without gainsaying, receive the things that are shown to them in the name of God.

We see then that they do but lie, in saying that they are dull and gross-witted: for they think the clean contrary. The starkest idiots (say I) and the very dolts of them all will still be wiser than God. Again, on the other side, what causes the Gospel to be despised, but that a number of pert and fantastical fellows think it to be but a simple doctrine, and that it has not fineness and subtlety enough for them? So much the more need therefore have we to bethink us of the

thing that is shown to us here by Saint Paul: which is, that the glorious heritage whereunto God has called us, is an infinite riches. For besides that we are nothing else but mire and rottenness, sin shuts us out from all hope of salvation. And so long as we are God's enemies, what can we look for at His hand but utter confusion? Yet notwithstanding it pleases Him to make us fellows with the angels of heaven, yea and more than that too: for we are made members of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the end we should be partakers of His life and glory. How excellent riches are these? When we shall have employed all our wits about them, ought we not to be too much ashamed, seeing that God has uttered so inestimable goodness towards us?

So then, Saint Paul, to waken up men's drowsiness, and to rebuke and correct their unthankfulness, for that they commend not the hundredth part of God's grace, as they ought to do: tells us that if we think better upon it, we shall find that his speaking after that manner is to stir us up to pray to God to enlighten us, because that without Him, we should not be able to come anything near faith, nor near any knowledge at all.

Thus we see now Saint Paul's meaning, which he pursues and continues much more in adding, what the excellence of His power is in us that have believed. And again, according to the effectual working of the strength of His power. He gathers and heaps up many words here together, which import all one thing. Nevertheless, it is as it were a correcting of man's lewdness, which labours to deface God's goodness as much as they can, insomuch that whereas they are not able to deface it altogether, they diminish it in such wise as it appears not, as if it had but a spark whereas it ought to have full light.

But by the way let us mark, that whereas Saint Paul sets down here the Saints and believers: he means the faithful whom God has

already called to Him. And therein he shows that even when we have faith, all our holiness proceeds from God's mercy, and men bring nothing of their own growing. Truly this title of Saints is very honourable: but yet it behoves us to go to the wellspring of holiness: for in ourselves we have nothing but uncleanness. God's children must needs be holy: yet must they consider from whence they have it, whether they have of their own purchase and policy, or of God's gift. Saint Paul shows here, that the praise thereof ought to be yielded simply unto God. For it is not for naught that he says so often, "I am holy." And again, we know that Jesus Christ was sanctified for us, to the intent that we might be washed and scoured from all our uncleanness. Thus much concerning the first point.

Afterward followeth the cause of our faith: namely that men attain it not otherwise, than by the drawing of a secret motion, according as it is said, that we must learn of God, not only because His word contains all wisdom, and God does thereby teach us faithfully the things that are for our behoof: but also because our Lord expounds it moreover, saying, "He that heareth it of my Father." He Himself spoke it, which was the wisdom of God: and yet He shows that the things which He uttered with His mouth, could not prevail, except God spoke within a man by His Holy Spirit. Now if Jesus Christ could not profit men by His teaching, further forth than God's Spirit wrought within their hearts; what shall the preaching do which we hear at the mouth of mortal men, who are nothing? Men then must plant and water, and God must give increase, as Saint Paul says in the third chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

Furthermore, as I have told you, that we must draw all our holiness from out of Jesus Christ, in whom we shall find all the fulness and plenty of it: so also let us understand, that by that saying we are warned, that we are not called to filthiness, to take leave to do evil:

but to be as it were shoed out to the service of God. Most men can well enough brag that they are faithful, and that word runs roundly upon every man's tongue: but faith is a more precious thing than we think: for it purifies our hearts (as it is said in the fifteenth of the Acts) to the intent we should be as it were shoed out and set aside, to give ourselves wholly to God's service. But hereby it is meant that men are as it were of a corrupt and infected lump, till God has drawn out the one sort from the other. Then differ we nothing at all from them that are as deeply plunged as is possible in all manner of evil and wickedness. We are all alike (say I) as touching our nature. But they that believe in our Lord Jesus Christ must be as it were sorted out from the rest of the world, as Saint Peter also says in his First Epistle. Again, we have seen heretofore, that we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ, to the intent to be drawn out of this world, according also as He says in Saint John, where He prays to His Father, not to take us out of this world, and out of this transitory life, but to keep the naughtiness of the world from bearing rule in us, and to exempt us from it.

You see then that the thing which we have to bear in mind, is that holiness is the true record of our faith. And therefore whosoever is called a Christian, ought to be consecrated unto God, and not to intermeddle or defile himself with the uncleanness and filthiness of the world. True it is that our holiness shall never be perfect, so long as we are in this world: for we do always draw the lines to us, and although sin overmasters us not, yet it dwells in us, and we keep continual battle against it, to get the upper hand. But however the world goes, yet when God once has sanctified us, we must apply ourselves to His service, we must endeavour to cleanse ourselves more and more from all vices, and we must give ourselves wholly unto Him, so as we be no more as worldlings, who take leave to do what they list. This in effect is the thing that Saint Paul meant to say.

Moreover, no doubt but that in this place he makes comparison between such as are drowned in all ignorance, or rather are so hardened, that they have no mind at all to submit themselves to the obedience of the Gospel, but do fight furiously against it: and the faithful which are as silly sheep, hearkening to the voice of the good shepherd. Saint Paul then condemns here all scoffers and scorers who despise God, and are as dogs or brute beasts, without any feeling of religion. When we see these things, they are all of them mirrors unto us, to make the hairs stand up upon our heads, by making us know what we should be if God pitied us not. And therefore when we see folks scorn God so openly, and rush forth at random into all lewdness, let us acknowledge the infinite goodness of our God, in that He has separated us from the company.

Wherefore when we see one sort sotted in their unbelief, and another sort full of pride, bitterness, and stubbornness against the Gospel: let us understand that we ourselves should be like them, but that God has reached forth His arm upon us.

But now let us mark well the words that Saint Paul uses herein, saying, "the excellent greatness of His mightiness, according to the effectual working of the power of His strength." It should seem that the Holy Ghost meant to thunder down upon this devilish opinion wherewith the world has at all times been besotted: that is to wit, of free will. For the heathen men presumed so far as to say that God had indeed created them to be in the world, and that it was in His power to give them good or bad fortune, as they termed it: but that it was in every man's own power and free choice to follow virtue, and to behave himself in such wise, as no fault might be found in him.

Lo, how the heathen men parted the stake between God and themselves. The lesser matter, which is the setting of us here beneath

to crawl here like frogs, they left unto God: but the greater matter, namely our attaining unto heaven, and the ruling of ourselves in all virtue, that, said they, was in man's own ability, and belonged only to himself. The Jews and Papists have not been altogether of this mind: for (as I have touched already) they confess that we have need of God's help: but yet for all that, they will have us to mingle some piece of our own holiness with God's grace, and to be able to work jointly with it, as they say, insomuch that when it comes to the reckoning, the chief part shall always be found in ourselves.

But let us see how the Holy Ghost speaks of it. To what end uses He all these terms of highness, power, strength, effectual working, and mightiness? Wherefore heaps He up all these together, but to show that men are mad when they will take more upon them than becomes them? There is not that word here, which serves not to abate our cackling if we boast of never so little a drop of goodness. For if men say, I have yet some good moving in me, I have some piece of virtue: behold, Saint Paul speaks of highness: as if he meant to show that all the goodness which we have is above the world, and has not its root nor spring in ourselves, but comes from above, as Saint James says. Again, if men say, we have some power to withstand our own vices, and to fight against temptations: Saint Paul says here, that our strength, our power, and our might come of God, and that He must be fain to bestow it upon us, and we to receive it of Him. If men say still, yet by straining ourselves we may be able to do somewhat: Saint Paul tells us, there is no effectual working, there is no bringing of the thing to pass, unless God gives it to us, according to his speaking of it in the second to the Philippians, where he says, that it stands us on hand to walk in fear and wariness, because it is God who gives both the will and the ability to perform the will, according to His own good pleasure: that is to say, He begins the work, and brings it to the end and knitting up.

To be short, let us mark, that look how many words there are here, so many great thunderclaps and lightnings are there to beat down and to sink all the pride of man, to the intent that being confounded in ourselves, we might give God the glory which He deserves, and with all lowliness frankly and freely yield ourselves guilty, acknowledging that all goodness comes of Him, and that we are beholden to Him only for it. Thus you see how the effect of the matter which we have to mark upon this strain is to abase ourselves in such wise, as we might have no desire to part halves with God, to say that He does but help us, and that there is some portion of His grace and Holy Spirit in our own free will: but to yield Him purely and simply the whole praise of our salvation.

Furthermore, let it also make us to despise the world, that we may content ourselves with the hope of the everlasting life which is purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know that although men be generally subject to many afflictions, and that this life of ours be not without cause termed a vale of wretchedness: yet God exercises His own children with greater abundance of adversities than He does the other sort: for they also have need to be always put in mind to renounce the world. If we should live here too much at our ease and pleasure, what would become of us, seeing we miss not to fall asleep here, notwithstanding that God do prick us and quicken us up so many ways, to pass hence in post without resting here below? You see then in few words, how God will exercise us many ways after He has called us to the faith of the Gospel, for else we would be weary of serving Him, and it would seem to us that His love were but a very slender thing, if we should not learn to give over all other things as little or nothing worth, and to embrace Jesus Christ.

Therefore let us learn that Saint Paul's intent here is to draw us in such wise unto God, as nothing may let us to walk in our calling: and that if we have not all things to our liking in this world, we may learn to esteem the inestimable benefits of our God better than we have done, that we may say with David (as he speaks in his sixteenth Psalm) I have my heritage, which suffices me: seeing that God has given Himself to me, I have so excellent a portion, that I pass not for going through all the afflictions of the world. Poverty, sickness, reproach, fear, and threatenings, all these things shall be sweet to me, so I possess my God, and He makes me to feel that He has chosen me, and reserved me to Himself, and is minded to have me partaker of all His goods.

Thus you see in effect, that by this text we may be heartened and strengthened unto patience, to bear mildly all the afflictions and adversities of the world, and not to be grieved or out of conceit: and that although God makes us now and then to drink of a bitter cup, and gives us cause to sigh and lament, yet we must not fall to repining and grudging, but assure ourselves that God has given us a good comfort, in that He has called us to be partakers of His kingdom, and so uttered His power already in us, as we ought as it were to advance ourselves above all earthly things, and to look down at them as at our feet.

And for as much as we do not yet perceive such fulness of God's grace as were to be wished, therefore Saint Paul sends us to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. And surely if he had not added that God has uttered His power in His only Son, after such manner as we have heard it, what a thing were it? For we might allege in way of reply, how so? Where are these riches of God? For we are not only bereft of the goods of this world, but also we are as a dry and barren ground in respect of the grace of God's Holy Spirit. If there be any portion of it

in us, it is so small, as we ought to be ashamed of it: and yet for all this, we are moreover plunged in our infirmities. If you speak of God's power, it ought to get the upper hand of all sin in us. But we are so weak, that we are as good as beaten down. Again, it were meet that God's image should shine forth in us, and we bear such store of filthiness and such blemishes about us as is a pity to see. We should be wholly consecrated to God, but the world holds us back, and we are as it were ensnared in it.

Lo how the faithful might be abashed when any talk were ministered concerning God's grace, if they stayed there, and were not led forth to Jesus Christ. Not without cause therefore does Saint Paul add here, that God did then utter the excellence of His power, when He raised our Lord Jesus Christ from death. And he speaks purposely of His resurrection, because in His death we see nothing but astonishment. For there appeared nothing but weakness: but by His vanquishing of death, He showed Himself to be the Son of God, yea and the Lord of glory and life, who had all power in Himself. And that also is the cause why Saint Paul says that God did set Him at His right hand. For it had not been enough for Jesus Christ to have been raised again, except He had a continual and abiding dominion. True it is that even in His resurrection, we have a record that He is the Son of God: but yet for all that, we must pass one step further, namely that He had not a blast of power and away, but that by His rising again, He attained such superiority, that all the world is governed by Him, and He is now set down at the right hand of God His Father, to maintain and preserve His servants that call upon Him, and put themselves into His keeping, and has sufficient power to overcome Satan and all the world, and all our enemies.

Now then we see Saint Paul's meaning: that forasmuch as we might be cast down, and our faith at leastwise sore shaken, if we should

look no further than to ourselves: therefore he sets Jesus Christ before us, as the true pattern, wherein we may see the thing that as yet is unseen in ourselves: that is to wit, God's inestimable power which surmounts the whole world. For first, He is raised from death: and secondly, He is set at the right hand of His Father. Now the speaking of God's right hand is a resemblance taken of men. It is certain that God has neither right hand nor left, for He is infinite, and fills both heaven and earth, and again, He has no body, but is a spiritual being. Therefore we must not imagine any place certain, when God's right hand is spoken of. And when it is said that Jesus Christ sits there, it is to show that He fills all the world with His power. True it is, that as in respect of His manhood, He is in heaven: and it is one of the Articles of our faith, that He is ascended into heaven. But yet notwithstanding, although He be absent from us in His body: and that there is a great distance betwixt us: it is no let but that He fills all things with His Holy Spirit, and dwells in us Himself, and that we are nourished by His own substance, according to this saying, that His flesh is our meat, and His blood our drink.

You see then how that God's right hand is not some certain place for Christ to sit in, but the sovereignty which He has obtained to govern the whole world. And (as I said afore) it is a similitude borrowed of men, as when a prince makes his vicegerent, he sets him at his right side, as who should say, Lo here the second person of my realm whom I will have men to obey. God then in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, meant to show that He is our Father. True it is that the whole fullness of the Godhead is in Jesus Christ. However, forasmuch as we are heavy and slothful, and unable to attain to the majesty of God, therefore it is said that Jesus Christ has obtained all sovereignty, so as we are sure that He has us in His protection, and that being under His hand, we are safe, and all the devils of hell (do what they can) cannot prevail at all against us. For who is it that has

all power? It is even our head. Although then that we who are His members be weak: yet is there strength enough in the head, which is the chief part of the body. And so you see for what cause it is said that Jesus Christ is set at the right hand of God His Father: namely to show us that we need not to seek far for His help, seeing He governs all things both above and beneath, and we are committed to His charge here.

He says that God has uttered His high and infinite power in us. However, forasmuch as that suffices not, by reason of the infirmities which we feel, and for that there is so much amiss in us still, and we are not yet come to the full measure, no nor to the hundredth part of it: therefore to the intent we may be the better assured of all the things that we want, we must consider them in Jesus Christ: Are we then subject yet still unto death? Behold, Jesus Christ is received up into everlasting life: for the very cause why He became a mortal man as we be, was that the life which He has, might belong unto us. Does sin dwell still in us? Behold, Jesus Christ has no spot nor blemish in Him. Are we weak? He is the power of God His Father, and look whatsoever He received in His manhood, which He took of us, was for our sakes and to our behoof.

To be short, look whatsoever we want, and whatsoever may comfort or quicken us, we shall find it in our Lord Jesus Christ, because we should not be in care and perplexity, as though we were excluded from the benefits that Saint Paul has made mention of heretofore. Finally, we should never have any settled trust, except we knew that the things which are wanting in ourselves, are in our head. For the measure of God's gracious gifts is very small, yea even in the perfectest folk, and in such as are forwardest, and have profited most of all. Since it is so then, we should always hang in a hammering and doubt. But when we know that all is accomplished in our Lord Jesus

Christ, and that He is as it were the first fruits, and that we were sanctified in Him, and that in His person we have received the things beforehand, which shall be given us in all plentifulness hereafter when He has taken us out of this world: there verily lies our certainty, whereupon we ought to rest, that we be not shaken down with any temptation.

To be short, we are taught by this text, that although God's grace be weak in us, that is to say, although He has put but a small beginning of it in us, and not so large an abundance as were requisite or to be wished for: yet notwithstanding the same gives us a taste and savour to trust in Him. For there cannot be so little grace of His Holy Spirit in us, but that (as says Saint Paul in the eighth to the Romans) we know the same is as a gage or earnest penny beforehand, of the life that He has promised. True it is that this lump of sin dwells still in us: but it ought to content us that God vouchsafes to bestow never so little of His Holy Spirit upon us.

Furthermore, for as much as we cannot be sure of all these things, considering the slenderness that is in ourselves, and the infirmities and wants which we have: therefore we must lift up our eyes to Jesus Christ. Yea, what avails it us, that we may find all perfection in Him? For we are too far off from Him. We are far from Him as in respect of distance of places, and in that respect does Saint Paul say, that we are absent from Him, because we walk but by faith, and not by open eyesight and beholding. But yet for all that, we are members of His body. Then seeing it is so: like as a root cannot be separated from the tree, but sends forth its sap into all the boughs and branches of it: even so let us understand, that the end whereunto our Lord Jesus Christ has in such fulness received the spiritual gifts that belong to the heavenly life, is to communicate them to us so far forth as

needed, even from degree to degree, according as we shall have profited in the faith.

And herewithal let us continually bear in mind, that we must stoop and humble ourselves, and be contented to be still far off from the perfection whereunto it becomes us to aspire, and to be as hungry folk, so as we feeling our own necessity and lack, must run to our God to beg at His hand, knowing that He is able to increase it from day to day, and that if it were not so, we should be undone out of hand, and all should go to wreck and vanish away, but that He continues the thing that He has begun. You see then how it stands us on hand to be joined to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to know that there is an inseparable bond between Him and us. And inasmuch as He once became poor to make us rich, as it is said in another place: that is the very means whereby all the riches that are in Him, are at this day communicated unto us. Not that we have the full fruition of them, as I said afore: but because it is enough for us that we have some small portion of them, to make us taste the love of God, and to know that He will not fail us in anything, but that since He has given us a warrant that He is come near unto us, and dwells in us by His Holy Spirit, as we have seen in the second to the Corinthians: He will also fill us even unto the end.

His using of the word enrich is to show that there shall always be want and neediness in us. Nevertheless let us trust boldly to this promise, that He which has begun the good work in us, will go through with the same, yea even unto the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that is said to give us some refreshing when our life is (to our seeming) overlong, and we would fain that the said perfection were already shown openly in us, and that Jesus Christ were come again. But it is said that unto that day we must always be journeying, and go on still forward further and further, and beseech God that He

suffer us not to fail. Sure we are that we shall never fail to sustain want and necessity: but yet will He succour us in such wise, as we shall perceive that if He has once vouchsafed to behold us with the eye of His mercy, it is to accomplish the work of our salvation throughout, and to let us know that He has not knit us to our Lord Jesus Christ for nought, but that His so doing has been to the end that every one of us might even now, according to the measure of his faith, possess the goods that are peculiar to Him, till He has filled us to the full: which shall be when He has knit us fully to Him.

But now let us cast ourselves down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our sins, praying Him to make us so to feel them, as it may draw us from them, and cause us to direct our life obediently according to His commandments, so as we may show by our deeds, that He has not bought us so dearly in vain, but that we give over all our own fleshly lusts, and yield ourselves wholly to the service of Him that has once adopted us for His heritage. And therefore let us all say, Almighty God our heavenly Father. Amen.

The Eighth Sermon upon the First Chapter.

19. And that you may know what the excellent greatness of His power is towards us believers, according to the working of the mightiness of His strength,
20. Which He uttered in Jesus Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places,
21. Above all principality, and mightiness, and power, and lordship, and above all names that are named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.
22. And hath put all things under the feet of Him, and set Him over all things, to be the head of the Church,
23. Which is the body of Him which fills all in all.

I began to tell you this morning, how God has sufficiently declared unto us, that if we have and possess His only Son Jesus Christ, we have the full perfection of all good things, so that if we cast our eye upon Him, we may see all that is to be wished. Therefore, although there are many things blameworthy in us, and we find nothing but frailty in ourselves, yet we shall have a sure and substantial support to lean unto, in that our Lord Jesus Christ calls us to Him and tells us that the things which He has received from God His Father are common to us. And although we do not yet enjoy them fully, we cannot be disappointed of them.

To be short, I told you also that our Lord Jesus Christ is set at the right hand of God His Father, to the end that we might be sure that all things are under His hand, that He rules the whole world, that all good things are from Him, and that He is able to thwart all annoyances. Insomuch that if we are under His protection, we may defy the devil and all our enemies.

And now to the intent we should learn to content ourselves the better with Jesus Christ alone, and not wander here and there as we are wont to do, Saint Paul adds expressly that He was set above all mightiness, sovereignty, principality, and power. No doubt he means the angels; however, he has used this manner of speech to hold us the better to our Lord Jesus Christ, so that no fancy might turn us from Him. As if he should say, although God has imparted some portion of His glory, dignity, and power among the angels, it does not diminish in any way that which He has given to Jesus Christ. Therefore, we shall find in Him all things that are needful, so we need not to seek them here and there, nor is it lawful to join any companion with Him. All preeminence, and whatsoever else may be thought or devised to be most noble and excellent, is there—in our Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is to be sought unto, as Paul himself says also in the first chapter to the Colossians.

For it is not only recently that the world has sought occasion to turn away from our Lord Jesus Christ, under the pretense of seeking to the angels of heaven. We see how God's creatures are always drawn to some superstition, and men make idols of them, because God executes His sovereignty by the angels, and they are as it were His hands, His officers, and His instruments. That is the cause why men think they have done much by committing themselves to Saint Michael, or to Saint Gabriel, or to I know not whom else. For, as I said, it is not a vice newly devised. The devil, who is the father and

author of lying, has entangled men at all times with such fancies, and even Christians have followed the example of the heathen men's doings in that respect. For the heathen have always surmised the angels to be as half-gods, and thought to have them as their mediators by which to come unto God, because they were not worthy of themselves. And in the same manner, talk the Papists at this day. Now, the very same abominations began to be built upon the earth even in Saint Paul's time. And for that cause, he shows that it is not lawful to match anything with Jesus Christ. Even though the angels be magnified, and be called virtues, powers, lordships, and dominations, and men give them what other titles they like, they must stoop and be inferior to the head, and the chief dignity must be reserved to God's Son, because all knees must bow before Him, not only of worldly creatures but also of heavenly.

We see then that the cause of Saint Paul's packing together of so many words in this place to express the angels with, is that we should be better held to our Lord Jesus Christ, and rest wholly upon Him, without wandering one way or another, under the pretense that the angels have excellent and noble gifts. And so we see and may gather upon this strain, that all the dotage of the papacy in imagining patrons, advocates, and mediators unto God, sprang up every whit of it from none other cause than for want of knowing our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the things given unto Him by God His Father. For we have no mind to repose ourselves upon Him, except we know to what end He has come. But the Papists have on one side imagined themselves to be separated from our Lord Jesus Christ, not knowing that He has become our brother, to the end we should repair familiarly unto Him. On the other side, they have robbed Him of His office which is allotted Him in the Holy Scripture, and made but a dead thing of it.

So much the more therefore does it behoove us to mark well these sayings: that we be made all one, and gathered together into one body with the angels of heaven, and with the holy fathers that lived under the Law, and that we and all the prophets, apostles, and martyrs, must with one common accord glorify our common head Jesus Christ, and resort unto Him. He must be set up on high for every man to look at, and we must not wilfully put blindfoldings before our eyes, but take away all impediment, that His glory be not in any wise dimmed. The very means then to overcome all hindrances that Satan shall cast in our way to stop us from coming to Jesus Christ, is to consider that there is no dignity or worthiness in the whole world, neither above nor beneath, which is not made to stoop, to the end we should all of us be joined unto Him, with one accord. Thus you see in effect what we have to gather upon this text.

True it is that by those words, we are made to understand also, that God distributes offices among His angels as pleases Him, so that one has a greater charge than another. Yet it is not in our power to know how the case stands with them. Let us be content to know it according to the measure of our faith, and only give ear to God's word, and in all soberness learn of Him, without giving bridle to our own fond curiosity, as a number do, whom we see disputing finely of the angels, as though every one of them would be marshal of God's house, to place every one of the angels according to his degree. For there is not a more devilish presumptuousness than to babble in that sort of God's secrets, further than God has made us privy to them by His word. Therefore let us hold ourselves contented, that the angels (however noble they be) are ordained to be the ministers of our welfare, by means of Jesus Christ. And whenever we intend to have the familiarity (or acquaintance and help) of them, let us not do as the Papists do, who have their peculiar prayers to make unto them. Let us repair to Jesus Christ, for by that means shall all things

become common between them and us. When having spoken of the Church, we say, I believe the communion of saints: it is certain that the angels are comprehended therein, seeing that God employs them to do us service. And why does He so? It is not because we are worthy of it, but because He has gathered us all together under Jesus Christ. That therefore is the very bond of concord and brotherhood between us and the angels.

Now hereupon St. Paul adds that Jesus Christ has obtained a name, that is to say, a majesty, which is above all names, both in heaven and on earth. Here St. Paul briefly shows us that all our wisdom is to know the benefits brought to us by the Son of God, and which we possess in Him alone, so long as our faith is wholly settled upon Him. As it is said in the Acts of the Apostles, there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. For, as I told you this morning, inasmuch as God is incomprehensible and dwells in light which we cannot approach, as St. Paul terms it, Jesus Christ must as it were step in between Him and us, so that we may boldly approach Him and know that He is not far distant nor far separated from us. Therefore, let us mark that whereas here mention is made of a Name, it is because God will be known in the person of His only Son. It is said herewithal that there are not many Godheads. As touching the essence or being, we have but only one God. And yet in Jesus Christ, we have the living and express image of the Father, so that we find there whatsoever is expedient and requisite for our salvation.

It is said that we ought to glory in our knowing of the only one God, but that is accomplished in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, because when men go about to seek God, they enter into a terrible maze unless Jesus Christ is their way and leader. Thus, we see now whereat St. Paul aimed.

It is added also that the same is not only for this world but also for the other, whereby it is meant that the knowledge which we have of Jesus Christ will suffice us for the heavenly life. Now, it might seem at first blush that there is some contrariety between this text and that which is said in the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. For there he says that at the latter day when the world shall be judged, our Lord Jesus Christ shall yield up the kingdom to God His Father, of whom He holds it. And here he says that Christ is established in all authority, even for the world to come. But these two agree very well. For whereas he says that Jesus Christ has a name above all names, and that He is the image of God His Father, that is because of our rudeness and infirmity.

Also, when He is called God's lieutenant, that is because we could not be at rest unless we knew that God has His hand stretched out to succor us at our need, and we perceive that the better in Jesus Christ, inasmuch as He has come near unto us and has become our brother. God then does not so reign by means of Jesus Christ that He should give over His own office and sit idle in heaven Himself. It would be a foolish notion to think so. And truly, we see how our Lord Jesus Christ speaks thereof in the fifteenth of St. John: "My Father and I," says He, "have always our hand at work." There He shows that the ordaining of Him to be ruler of the world was not to the end that the Father should in the meantime sit unoccupied in heaven, but it is said so in respect of us, to the intent that we should not doubt but that God is continually near at hand to us when we seek Him in faith.

At the latter day, and after the judgment, we shall have new eyes, as says St. John. And forasmuch as we shall be like unto God and be transfigured into His glory, we shall see Him as He is, which thing we cannot do now, because we have too dull wits. Therefore, it is enough for us now that we behold Him as in a glass and darkly, as says St.

Paul, and that we know Him in part. You see then that the yielding up of the kingdom by our Lord Jesus Christ unto God His Father, is that we shall behold God's majesty and substance which is incomprehensible to us as now. For we shall have our nature changed, and we shall be newly fashioned in the heavenly glory, and we shall be quite and clean rid of all the corruption wherewith we are encompassed about as now.

And yet for all this, it is not meant that Jesus Christ shall be abased, for He shall then be much better in His perfection, according as it is said in the third to the Colossians, that our life is hid in God with Jesus Christ, and that when Jesus Christ appears, then shall our life be discovered likewise. To be short, when we have come to the sovereign bliss that is purchased for us, then shall we have the thing that lies as yet but in hope, and Jesus Christ shall gather all things to Himself, so that we shall then be partakers of His glory, every man according to his own degree and measure. Thus you see how these two texts agree very well, namely, that God has given Christ a name above all names, and also that He shall yield up the kingdom to God the Father. And why? For we shall then see His heavenly majesty, which we are not able to conceive as now because we are fleshly. Also, we shall perceive that whereas Jesus Christ has appeared unto us a mortal man, He has been so glorified in His human nature, that in very deed He is God, of one same substance with His Father. This, I say, shall be fully known then, whereas now we have but a little shadow of it.

Furthermore, let us learn that when Jesus Christ was exalted by God His Father, it was to the end that His advancement should serve to our everlasting salvation. And therefore, in the ninth of Isaiah, He is called the Father of the world to come, to the end we might know, not only that He is given unto us for this transitory life, but also that

the substance of the faith which is grounded in Him, is in heaven. And there we shall feel the fruit of the thing that is now hidden, and which we taste as yet but in part, and that we shall enter into full possession of all the goods that are given to Him already. Thus, you see why St. Paul has purposely made express mention of the world to come.

He adds immediately that God has put all things under His feet and made Him head of the Church above all things. His speaking here of the subjection of the whole world is to show that whatever we need, if we can resort to our Lord Jesus Christ, He is able to succour us, for He has the means to do so. Yea, and we must mark well how it is said in the eighth Psalm, that God has care of all things, even unto the sheep, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea. To be short, all creatures are put under His feet. And to what end? The Holy Ghost meant to draw us thereby, as little babes, and to show that the spiritual benefits (which we ought to have in greatest estimation) are communicated to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

His saying then is that we might not eat one bite of bread, save in the respect that we are members of Jesus Christ. For it is as if he intended to train us up higher by degrees, inasmuch as all things are given to our Lord Jesus Christ, with the condition that if we are indeed members of His body, all things that He has belong to us, and that if we do not separate ourselves from Him, He will hereafter make us partakers of far higher and more excellent goods: that is to say, we shall be named God's children and be taken as such, becoming the temples of His Holy Ghost. And what a thing is that? What a thing is it that we may come freely unto Him and call upon Him boldly as our Father? What a thing is it to be enriched again with the gifts that we were bereft of by the sin of Adam? What a thing is it to be matched in fellowship with the angels, instead of being

under the tyranny of Satan and the thralldom of sin? How can we have these so high and noble things, seeing we cannot claim so much as a morsel of bread as our own without theft, save that we are members of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Now then we see what St. Paul aimed at in saying that all things are made subject to our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, let us learn now to give God thanks in the name of His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, whom He has sent not only to feed and nourish our bodies but also to be food to our souls, that they may live everlastingly. And by that means, let us learn to accustom ourselves to acknowledge that our Lord Jesus Christ has the means to succour all our necessities. Then, if the devil makes so violent an assault upon us that we may be afraid of utter quailing, let us understand that our Lord Jesus Christ has an invincible fortress with which to defend us against him, and armies with which to make us invincible in all battles. Therefore, when we are weak, let us resort to His strength. When we lack any grace, let us desire Him to give us what He thinks necessary. When our enemies play the mad beasts, and it seems that we should be quite and clean swallowed up as it were in gulfs, let us beseech our Lord Jesus Christ to hold us under His protection, and to hold Satan and all his upholders as it were chained, so that He suffers us not to be overcome by them. You see then how all things were made subject to our Lord Jesus Christ, not for His own use (for what need had He of them?) but for our sakes, to the end that He should give us whatever He knows to be for our benefit, and that we should also learn to seek all things at His hand, and that when He sees our enemies have the advantage over us, He should repress them, as He well can.

Furthermore, whereas St. Paul says here that He was ordained head in the Church (or over the Church) in all things, it is a continuation of his argument to bring us wholly to Jesus Christ. As if he should

say, "It is true that God's gracious gifts are distributed abroad, and that the angels and mortal men also may be ministers of them to us: but yet, however the case stands, we must always resort to the source." The veins that are dispersed throughout the whole body may well give strength to every part, for they are as it were the conduits of the blood. However, the brain must always be the wellspring of life. It is well seen that in a tree, the sap is spread throughout. And yet, although the root does not ascend up to give nourishment to every branch and leaf, all the nourishment comes from the root. If any man would say that the whole tree is maintained alive by any one branch, the clean contrary is seen. It is true that a great bough may well give nourishment to the branches and twigs that are about it, but it is not proper that this should prejudice the root. No more should the members of a man's body prejudice the head, though every member does its duty.

Here St. Paul says that our Lord Jesus Christ was given to the Church to be her head above all things, as if he should say, "It behooves us all to resort unto Him." In this case, there is neither St. Paul, nor St. Peter, nor the Virgin Mary, nor St. Michael that has anything of their own. For they are all needy and hungry, save so far as Jesus Christ fills them. Therefore, all of them, both great and small, must be compelled to draw from His abundance. And that is the cause why, in the selfsame text which I quoted out of the first to the Colossians, St. Paul says it pleased God the Father that all fullness should dwell in Him. For the title of Head is not only a style of fleeting honour, but it serves to express the power of our Lord Jesus Christ all the better. Therefore, just as a natural head not only has superiority and preeminence above the whole body, but also yields nourishment to the whole and keeps the man alive, even so it is between our Lord Jesus Christ and us, inasmuch as all should go to wreck if we did not depend upon Him. Although it may seem that we have received right

excellent gifts at God's hand already, yet notwithstanding, all is but wind and smoke unless we hold out in the union of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Herewithal it behooves us to note also that inasmuch as Christ is called a head, it is fitting that all others should obey Him, and that we should yield unto His doctrine, that He may rule all things as the head rules all the rest of a man's body. For the feet go, and the hands stir, and to be short, there is no part which is not willing and forward to do whatever the head shall appoint it. The same must be done in the Church: Jesus Christ must rule, and all men must quietly obey Him.

And so we have to note in this text, first, that our salvation depends so much on Jesus Christ that there are neither angels nor men, however holy they may be, who do not need to receive from His hand the things that they lack in themselves. Therefore, when we stand in need of anything that is requisite either for the present life or for the heavenly life, either for our bodies or for our souls, there is no running to St. Peter nor to St. Paul, but we must go straight to our Lord Jesus Christ. Mark that for one point.

Secondly, let us also learn to allow ourselves to be ruled and held in awe by the hand of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we may show ourselves to be true members of His body. He cannot be our head without also being our Shepherd and having all authority over us. Just as I told you that the devil has laboured to deface the glory of God's only Son under the pretence of angels, so on the other side, he has sent us an idol into the world to be a barrier in our way, so that Jesus Christ might be separated from us. For the Pope is not ashamed to spew out this blasphemy, that the Church should be but a headless body if he himself did not reign over it and have universal

dominion over it, so that everyone looked to him, and his seat was above the whole world. And that is as much as if he should say that Jesus Christ has no more to do here, but ought to hold Himself content with heaven and let His successor rule in His stead. But herein we see how he overshoots himself, attempting to abolish the whole sovereignty of the Son of God.

Therefore, it stands us in good stead to bear well this text in mind, where St. Paul says that Jesus Christ is appointed to be head of the Church above all things. It is true that the Pope will affirm himself to be but an under-head and that Jesus Christ is not thrust out of His place. But let us look back to what I have already touched upon: Jesus Christ will not have an imaginary title but will have His power reserved to Himself, which belongs to Him. For a head requires not only to be set highest but also to have all men receive all things from Him. It behoves us all to understand that He is the very root of our life, the fountain from which it behoves us to draw, notwithstanding that He sends forth His spiritual benefits and goods among us by such channels or conduits as He thinks good. Thus, you see what we have further briefly to bear in mind.

This matter is laid forth more at large in the first chapter to the Colossians. For St. Paul shows there that our Lord Jesus Christ was appointed to be the head even from the beginning of the world, forasmuch as all things were created in Him, and not only because He is our redeemer today. For if Adam had not fallen into the ruin into which he has drawn us with him, yet God's Son would have always been the firstborn of all creatures. Not that He Himself is a creature, but because He is the foundation, according also as St. Paul adds the reason thereof, which is, that in Him the angels were created, and in Him they have their being or abiding. You see then that the Son of God should not have ceased to have all preeminence

both above and beneath, though we had not fallen with our father Adam into such confusion as we are in.

But now our Lord Jesus Christ must be our head in another manner: that is to say, to reconcile us with God His Father, and to gather us together again unto Him, from whom we were estranged by sin, so that He was our deadly enemy until we were brought into favour again by means of Jesus Christ, by the forgiveness of our sins. And besides this, St. Paul declares in the same text that Jesus Christ was ordained head of the Church, to the end that all fullness should be in Him. Thus we see how we ought to be knit with the angels, with the ancient fathers, and with the prophets, with the condition that our Lord Jesus Christ must nonetheless not only continue the first and chief but also have all things referred unto Him, and we communicate together in such wise that every one of us keeps his place and we all be members of one body, and that there be no more heads thereof but only one. For if we add any fellow to Jesus Christ, it is a bereaving Him of the thing that God His Father has given to Him alone. Let us be content that He makes us partakers of all His benefits, upon condition that we acknowledge all things to come from Him and seek all things in Him.

In the forty-fifth Psalm, it is well shown that we are all fellows with Jesus Christ and that we receive some portion of all the good things that were given unto Him. But yet for all that, it is not to be said that He is fellow and fellow-like with us, and that He cannot be discerned from His apostles, as the Papists prate in their foolish proverb. But it is to the end that we should know that none of all the good things which we can wish are far from us, but that they are offered to us by Him, and that He is so liberal that He desires nothing else at our hands but that we should receive the things that are for our own welfare. According as He Himself says, "Come unto me all ye that are

athirst, come drink water, yea even without money or money's worth, drink your fill of water, wine, and milk." There our Lord shows how it is He that we must resort unto, and that if we look upon Him, His majesty is too high and too far off from us. Jesus Christ, therefore, must be our means, and forasmuch as He is come down to us, let us also repair unto Him. According as it is said in the seventh of St. John, "Come unto me all ye that are athirst, and whosoever drinketh of the water that I will give him, he shall have his belly so full that fountains of water shall flow out of him." Conditionally that men seek faithfully in Jesus Christ for the things they need, He will give us not only so much as shall serve the turn of every one of us for himself but also so much as we shall be able to bestow upon our neighbours too, and to succour their want.

Now for a conclusion, St. Paul adds that the Church is the body and the fulfilment of Him who accomplishes all things in all people. By terming the Church the body of Jesus Christ, he reiterates the point I have already touched upon: that we need not make long detours or difficult journeys to obtain the things we need. For since we are united and joined to the Son of God, what more do we require? We must acknowledge this principle, that we have neither life, nor gladness, nor any good thing, but only in God alone. Having established this, let us see by what means we may attain to Him, and that is by the means of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus you see the reason why it is said here that all fullness dwells in Him, and that it is His duty to unite us to God and to draw us back from the scattering in which we find ourselves. Therefore, we cannot deviate to convey any part of what is reserved for Jesus Christ alone to St. Peter or St. Paul without robbing God of His due. It is true that we may not acknowledge this, but our hypocrisy will not acquit us before God. We may well pretend many excuses, but in confessing

that we ought to seek all our welfare at God's hand, we condemn ourselves.

Well then, if we claim that we are not worthy to press into God's presence, it is true, and if we ask how we may be able to fly without wings, that is true too. If we say, then we must repair to St. Peter or St. Paul, we speak of our own accord. For God says the exact opposite. "I send you to My only Son," says He, "for in Him shall you find all that you need. Fear not that you shall have any scarcity if you are once filled with the grace that I have placed in Him, and which abides in Him." This is why the Prophet Isaiah speaks purposefully of wine, water, and milk, as if to say, we have all fullness of life in Jesus Christ.

As for those who wander to St. Peter and St. Paul, seeking patrons and mediators, they not only wrong Jesus Christ by distributing the gift that is wholly given to Him, but also rob God of His honour. For since it is His will that all fullness should dwell in Jesus Christ, it is certain that we openly defy Him when we do not abide within the boundaries He has set, by subjecting ourselves to the person He has given to us to provide all that we need.

Yet, the thing which he adds should be a greater and larger comfort to us when he says that the Church is the fulfilment of Him who accomplishes all. By this word fulfilment, he means that our Lord Jesus Christ, and also God His Father, account themselves as incomplete unless we are joined to Him. And that is a testament to God's infinite goodness, which is beyond marvelling at. First and foremost, God does not need to borrow from others, for He is perfect in Himself; He lacked nothing even before He made the world. When He made it, did He do it for His own benefit or advantage? No, it was solely so that we should know His goodness, power, wisdom, and

righteousness, and be witnesses to it. He has set us here as on a stage, to see His glory in all His creatures. Yet, He could very well forgo us.

But suppose that God should borrow from others to perfect Himself, and that He were like mortal men, none of whom can forgo company. Suppose that God were such a one, what are we? How can He fare better by being joined to us? It is as if the sun were matched with a quagmire. For what have we but infection and filthiness? What else are we but things so corrupted by Adam's sin that it is horrible to think? How then can we bring any such perfection to God? Although there is nothing but frailty in us, although we are froward and lewd, although there is nothing in us but all manner of filth, and although we are loathsome in His sight, yet it is His will to have us joined to Him, even on the condition that He should be perfected in us by His and our joining together in that manner.

As if a father should say, "It seems to me my house is empty when I do not see my child in it." A husbandman will say, "It seems to me I am but half a man when my wife is not with me."

In the same manner, God expresses that He does not consider Himself complete and perfect without gathering us to Him and making us one with Himself. He takes His entire pleasure in us and wants His glory to shine forth in us, so that His beams may spread out on all sides. Although the whole glory is in Himself, He desires it to be seen that we should have our part and portion of it. Thus, you see in effect what St. Paul meant by calling the Church the fulfilment of God and of Jesus Christ.

Now then, can we be excused before God when we say that we cannot come to Him, seeing we are His body in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ? If one of our feet, being diseased, would run I know not

where and roam up and down, saying, "I go to seek a remedy somewhere else," and for performance thereof, would be cut off from the body; if (I say) the members of a body had any understanding and discretion and could speak after that manner, would it not be madness that the foot should say it would be rent from the body to seek elsewhere the thing that it needs?

Even so, when the Papists and other idolaters allege that they must serve their turn by the saints and have various mediators and means to bring them to God, it is as if they should say, "Jesus Christ is nobody, nor have we any access or entrance to Him." Are the members separated from the head? Truly, St. Paul has here accused and condemned all those of unthankfulness and unkindness who, under the pretext of unworthiness to come to God, devise new means, separate themselves from Jesus Christ, and diminish His power by rending it into pieces. St. Paul condemns them for not accepting the benefit and privilege offered to them, in that our Lord Jesus Christ has condescended to become one with them as with His own body. Now then, let us learn to have such familiarity with our Lord Jesus Christ as to resort to Him at all times whenever we are aware of our faults and needs.

Furthermore, to ensure that His majesty is not defaced thereby, St. Paul adds that He ceases not to accomplish all things in all men. On the one hand, we see that when men are endowed with God's gifts, they start thrusting themselves into His place and want to be esteemed in His stead. After that manner do we behave, and we deceive ourselves into thinking that the gifts which God has bestowed upon us freely are as a prize or booty to boast of and to advance ourselves more than is lawful. On the other hand, when we hear of Jesus Christ, how He was abased for our sakes, how He went

down into the dungeons of death, and how He condescended to be subject to all reproach, it seems to us that we may well despise Him.

St. Paul, therefore, to humble our pride and to show that Jesus Christ was not so abased that His glory was diminished, says that nevertheless He does all in all things. Wherefore, let us learn to receive the blessing, grace, and benefits given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. Therewith, let us acknowledge that we are not only made from nothing, and that our life is but a fleeting and vanishing shadow, but also that all the virtue and excellence we think we have is like a green flower, which withers as soon as God breathes upon it. Therefore, let us not imagine ourselves to be rich when we are poor; let us not vaunt ourselves of our own free will; let us not presume upon our own merits or any of the flimflams devised by the devil in popery. Instead, let us draw from the fountain that cannot be drained dry, that we may find what we need to quench our thirst whenever we are dry.

Finally, there are two means by which God does all in all things. Just as He Himself created the world, so also must all things be guided and governed by His hand. If it is asked who causes the sun to rise and set every day, who guides the whole order of nature, who orders the days, months, and years, and who makes the interchange of day and night: It is God who does all in all things. The same must be said of all other things we perceive in the universal governance of the whole world. Therefore, we must not imagine that God was a Creator for just a moment, but that He continues to sustain the things He created.

However, St. Paul speaks here of the spiritual goods which are, as it were, the peculiar heritage of God's children. God does all things in us: not only by the common order of nature, but by enlightening us

with the belief of the Gospel, by sanctifying us, cleansing us from the vices and wicked lusts of our flesh, by drawing us from the world, and, in short, by providing us all things requisite to our welfare and salvation. Thus, you see how He does all in all things. As if St. Paul had declared in one word that the faithful are nothing, can do nothing, and have nothing of themselves. He speaks not here of the sun, the moon, the trees in the fields, or any other fruit, nor of beasts, nor yet of men as the children of Adam, but of those whom God has begotten again by His Holy Spirit. So, whatsoever concerns salvation or belongs to the heavenly life is not to be had but only at His hand who has all things in Himself and does all in all things, as is said of Him here.

Therefore, let us learn to empty ourselves, to offer ourselves in sacrifice to God with true and right humility, to yield Him His deserved praise, so that none of us separates ourselves from Him through our own unkindness, but all of us honour Him by confessing that we hold all from Him, that we are joined to Him by our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our everlasting God, acknowledging that it is He from whom all good things come, and that it is He also to whom all thanks ought to be yielded and rendered.

Now therefore, let us cast ourselves down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our sins, praying Him to make us perceive them more and more, and that this may cause us to have such a dislike of ourselves, that we may earnestly and heartily seek to give ourselves wholly to our Lord Jesus Christ.

And, forasmuch as He has already called us to Him by His Gospel, may we so frame ourselves thereafter as to renounce all superstitions, and to assure ourselves that all we can imagine to bring us to the kingdom of heaven are but deceits of Satan, and that

it is enough for us to have Jesus Christ alone to make our recourse to.

As it was the Father's will to advance Him on high, so that all men should look to Him, may we also have our eyes fastened upon Him and apply our whole minds in such a way that we may have no other way nor preparation than by Him alone, nor swerve one way or the other. When we are once brought into the right way, let us hold on continually toward our mark until we are fully come there.

May it please Him to grant this grace, not only to us but also to all people. Amen.

The Ninth Sermon, which is the First upon the Second Chapter.

1. Even then when you were dead through your offences and sins,
2. Wherein you walked for a time, according to the course of the world, after the Prince of the power of the air, which is the spirit that works now in the children of unbelief.
3. Among whom we also had all of us sometime our conversation, that is to say, in the lusts of our flesh, doing the will of the flesh and of the thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath, as others were.

4. But God, who is rich in mercy, through his great love wherewith he loved us,
5. Even when we were dead in sin, has quickened us together with Christ, by whose grace you are saved.

We have seen already that to fully understand God's infinite goodness, we must always consider what we are ourselves, and what our state is until God has pitied us and succoured our wretchedness. Until men have examined themselves and understood how wretched and miserable they are, they will never yield God the hundredth part of the honour that He deserves. Therefore, let us remember well this lesson: to yield God the praise due to Him, each of us must consider what we would be by ourselves if God had not reached out His hand to us. And truly, what is our nature in general? It is to think nothing but all manner of evil, and that is the matter which St. Paul addresses here.

In the first chapter, the matter St. Paul continually addressed was that we cannot sufficiently exalt our God, considering the mercy He uses towards us. Now, to better express this and to touch us more deeply, he shows us, as in a picture or a mirror, what men are until God has prevented them with His grace and called them back to Himself. Therefore, he shows that we are plunged into such a horrible dungeon that merely thinking of it ought to shock us and make our hair stand on end. For surely, we must be moved and inflamed to bless God's name for seeking us in the depths of Hell to draw us up to the kingdom of Heaven.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, to show in what state He finds us, says that He has come so that the dead should rise at His voice. You see then, that the office which the Son of God takes upon Himself is to draw us from death to life by the doctrine of His Gospel. Accordingly, He

adds that those who believe in Him have passed from the death in which they were held down and have entered into the heavenly life. Not that the faithful already enjoy it here, but because they possess it in such a way by hope that they are thoroughly assured of it.

When our Lord Jesus Christ says that His voice has the power to raise the dead, He uses a similitude. For whatever life we imagine ourselves to have, if we are separated from God, we are in spiritual death, no matter how much unbelievers imagine themselves to be more than alive in their own wisdom and virtue. They harden themselves and boast to the utmost. But let us see where the wellspring of life is. It is in God, and they are alienated from Him. Also, let us see what the true life of man is. It is not that he should be subtle and fine-witted, able to manage his matters well in this world by his own cunning and policy, purchase himself renown, or be wise and well-advised to give counsel to others. It is not that he should excel in all human sciences and arts or be esteemed and renowned as a man of noble courage or as one possessing other virtues commendable among men. It is a higher thing that we must begin with, namely, to know that God is our Father, that we are defended and preserved by the light of His word, and enlightened by faith to know the way of salvation. We must assure ourselves that our whole welfare lies in Him, seeking it there with all humility, and also know the means to attain it: that is, by having our Lord Jesus Christ in whom the whole fullness of grace is offered to us.

Thus, you see what the spiritual life of man is and where it lies: namely, in the light of God's word and in the working of His Holy Spirit, so that we are refashioned according to the image that was lost and utterly defaced in us by Adam's sin. Is that to be found among worldly men? Even among those most honoured? No, surely. Therefore, it is not without cause that our Lord Jesus uses this

similitude, saying that we are raised from death by means of the Gospel. For no matter how much we flourish, bear a fair gloss before men, and seem to have much for which to be held in esteem, we are but wretched corpses. There is nothing but rottenness and filth in us, God loathes us, we are damned and forsaken before Him, the angels abhor us, all creatures curse and ban us, and all things ask vengeance upon us because we defile them. There is such corruption in man that heaven and earth must be infected with it until God has changed them.

The meaning of our Lord Jesus Christ's saying is that until we are renewed by the Gospel through the faith that proceeds from it, we are as dead men. There is not one drop of life in us that deserves the name of life. In short, we are as good as buried in our graves and must be brought out of them again, by which we understand that we are cut off from God's kingdom and that there is nothing but filth in us. Yet, God deigns to be united with those who put their trust in Him and His goodness. That is our rising again.

In short, we must always consider that man brings death with him even with his birth. Not only because he is mortal but also because he is separated from God. We are mortal beings, and it is so even in the respect that we must pass through this world and depart from it whenever it pleases God. But we are also dead beforehand. And how is that? Because our souls are altogether sinful. There is neither thought nor affection in us that does not tend toward evil; all is repugnant or rebellious against God and the rule of His righteousness. When we imagine one thing or another, we can never devise anything in our minds but sin and unrighteousness, as it is said in Genesis that God knew that all that man had in his thought and imagination was sin. Now, since it is so, let us understand that although we had knowledge of good and evil and had far greater skill

and discretion than we have, we are so marred that all our desires and lusts rebel against God, as if to make war against Him. Seeing then that we are so corrupted in our souls and that there is neither thought nor affection which is not utterly wrong, let us not think it strange that God, with His own mouth, declares us to be dead, despite our foolish overweening imagination that there is some life in us.

That is the very thing that St. Paul addresses now, saying that the Ephesians were partakers of the aforementioned grace, though they were dead through their own sins and iniquities. As if he should say, "To the intent you may better appreciate the value of God's grace and what it brings with it, think not only upon your present state but consider that if God had left you as you were of yourselves and had not helped you at all but had let you follow your own ways, you would have been undone. Consider what your nature is, for you were dead, and there was no hope that you should be quickened again because it is not in the power of man's own free will to give himself life again when he is once dead. Know therefore that God drew you out of the dungeon of all destruction, yea, rather out of the bottom of hell, when He deigned to adopt you to be His children and to call you to the knowledge of His Gospel."

We see that this saying of St. Paul's is conformable to the doctrine and record of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So then, let us always run back to the wellspring whenever we are tempted to glory in our own virtues and imagine ourselves to possess something worthy of advancement. Let us return to our natural state and consider that we would have been undone, and still would be to this day, if God in His infinite mercy had not drawn us out of the confusion in which we were ensnared, delivering us by means of our

Lord Jesus Christ. It is purposefully stated "in offences and sins" to stop all men's mouths, so that no one might withdraw themselves from the common array or think that anything is as grievous as the corruption of our nature, which can only be stopped by death. If St. Paul had set down only one of the words, either "offences" or "sins," immediately there would have been answering and replying. Some would have thought themselves exempt from the common array, and others would have said, "Very well, though there is some sin in us, though there is some fault in us, it does not therefore follow that we are utterly condemned and cursed by God. Will He use such rigour and extremity against us?"

But St. Paul has joined both words together to show that there is nothing in our nature but wickedness and sin, and in short, that there is not one drop of life to be found in it. Therefore, it is as though he meant to aggravate or make the matter heinous, which men would on their part make light. For if we have even a small portion of virtue, or even a shadow of it, we will exalt it above all the mountains of the world. But if there are any vices in us, though they be ever so gross and apparent, we make very light faults of them. Therefore, it was necessary for St. Paul to beat down this presumptuousness of men and to show them that they are wholly steeped in sin. Although he speaks here to the Ephesians, he speaks generally to all men.

In truth, he expresses it better by saying that we walked according to the course of the world. For the evil lurks unobserved until it reveals itself by its fruits. The reason why men cannot humble themselves before God as they ought is that they flatter themselves until they are convicted and are compelled to bow and lower their heads despite their resistance. We see what hypocrisy is in us, insomuch that we would persuade ourselves that black is white and never find

ourselves at fault as long as our misdeeds cannot be laid open to our faces, nor any man stop our mouths by proving them to our heads.

To have many wicked thoughts, or to be tempted to do this or that evil, we think it is no sin at all. In short, St. Paul has justly stated that the Ephesians walked in their sins to show that he speaks not of a matter which ought to be unknown to them. For in beholding their own lives, and what they had been, and what path they had followed, they should be driven to confess that they were utterly forsaken and cursed before God. Therefore, whenever our hypocrisy hinders us from submitting ourselves to God and from humbling ourselves by acknowledging our sins, let us learn to look into our lives. Truly, although we perceive a million faults that we have committed, it is nothing in comparison to what God knows. Yet, to awaken us better, so that we may not be deceived by our own self-soothing, as we have been wont to be, let us always judge the root by its fruits. Seeing then that we are guilty of offending God in so many ways, let us conclude that there is nothing but frowardness in our nature.

To show better that he speaks not here of any one sort of men, but of all mankind, St. Paul adds that it was according to the course of the world. The word he uses here signifies the course of time. As if he should say, just as we see the sun daily rise and set, and as we see winter and summer follow one another, so it is an ordinary custom, yea, even the nature of man, to be utterly froward, spiteful, and rebellious against God, and there is nothing in him but all manner of lewdness and corruption. It is not for men to say, "Hush, evil custom has gotten the upper hand." And again, "This serves for some men, but not all do so. There are some nations more sinful than others, and some men more stubborn and malicious than others, but yet there will always be some virtue found in some other men." No, says St. Paul, for it is the common course of the world. As if he should say,

it is so natural (to all men) that there is no disputing whether one man is bad and another good. For just as a fish is made to suck up water, so are we suckled, or rather made drunk with all manner of iniquities and sins. We are so filled and stuffed with them that we burst again.

Thus you see how St. Paul meant not to rebuke one sort of men, but to show all men without exception what their state is until God has redressed it. Therefore, let us open our eyes and look into the thing that St. Paul says, and we shall perceive that all our worthiness and nobleness is described here. Here our arms are blazoned: that is to say, we are but dead men until God quickens us by His mere grace. Again, to the end that we should know this death proceeds from nowhere else but our own sins, it is said that we are all corrupted, that there is nothing in us but faults, sins, and offences, and that our whole life bears record thereof, so the fruit shows what the root is. And on the other side, that our deviation is not just for once and no more, but that we wholly tend towards evil. We are inclined thereto, nay rather, we are carried headlong into it, and we are driven with such a rage that we never cease striving against God until He has brought us into subjection to Him by His Holy Spirit.

And St. Paul thinks it not enough to say so, but adds things which ought to make us tremble yet more, saying that it is according to the prince of the air, according as he has all power in the world, according to the spirit that rules all the unbelievers. His talking in this manner is to show that until God has quickened us by means of our Lord Jesus Christ and until He has gathered us unto Him, the devil has dominion over us. See, I pray you, what the dignity of men is until Jesus Christ has ransomed them. They do not die once and away, but everlastingly, and He must be fain by His Gospel to make them partakers of the salvation which He has purchased for them.

Then, until God has worked in us by His grace, whose are we? The devil's: he is our prince. To be short, he has all authority over us and rules us with such tyranny, as there is nothing but hauling of us to him by force.

But St. Paul uses this word "Spirit" purposely, to show that the devil rules all our thoughts, all our affections, and all our desires, that he possesses us, and that we are all wholly his bondslaves. In a word, we cannot stir one finger, we cannot once move, we cannot think one thought, but the devil is at our elbow and hauls us in such wise that we utterly become deadly enemies to God. When we hear these things, it is no time for us to fall asleep and flatter ourselves, nor to be so lusty and presumptuous as to go to law still with God, as though there were some goodness in us, and that He were bound to acknowledge our virtues.

Must not men be too far out of their wits when they continue still in their hypocrisy, and will need to stand to their tackling against God and win Him by their replying after the Holy Ghost has thundered so dreadful and horrible a sentence upon our heads? Then, if a man be considered in himself and in his own nature, what shall he be able to say? Behold, a creature cursed of God and worthy to be cast out of the common account of all other creatures, even of worms, flies, lice, and vermin. For there is more value in any vermin in the world than there is in man. For man is a creature wherein God's image is defaced, and the good that He had put in it, corrupted. There is nothing in it but sin, insomuch that we are the devil's limbs, and he not only rules us but also possesses us and is our prince.

Are we once thoroughly persuaded of this in our hearts? Shall we not, on the one side, have cause to run quaking to our Lord Jesus Christ and to hold us shrouded under the shadow of His wings? And

on the other side, must it not need to be a beastly blockishness if we are so thankless as not to magnify God's goodness in that He has drawn us out of such a dungeon unto Himself, to make us fellows and brethren not only of the angels of heaven but also of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of glory? By this means, He puts away all reproach and, instead of being hateful to all creatures, makes us bear His mark and be honored and embraced by the angels as their brethren and to be avowed by our Lord Jesus Christ as members of His body. So then, now we see St. Paul's meaning.

And further, to the intent that all replying should cease, he shows what the power of the devil is. For he could have said in one word, "You have lived after the manner of the world," which means devilishly. But instead of naming the devil in one word, he says first, "according to the prince that has his power in the air," and "the spirit that works even now in the rebellious children." In saying, "the prince that has his power in the air," he disheartens us of all hope. For it is not for naught that the devil is named the prince of the world. Yet, it is not because he reigns over the sun, the moon, the stars, the skies, and the earth, but because he holds us captive in his bonds because we are not worthy to be governed by God. If Adam had continued in the soundness wherein God created him, God would have held us as His children. But after the fall of our first father, God left us, and Satan took possession of us.

It is true that Satan cannot do anything at all without God's leave. For when he is named the prince of the world, it is not meant that he fights in such wise against God, as if it cannot be known who is the stronger. That would be a cursed blasphemy, like these heretics who, seeing such phrases in the scripture, have imagined that the devil sometimes resists God, and that he has such force and power that God is sometimes compelled to give him place. But such words are

stark madness. Nevertheless, this sovereignty of Satan is God's just vengeance. As it is said, He delivers us into the hands of our enemies when we cannot abide that He should reign over us. And so is that thing fulfilled and verified in us all. Forasmuch as God has printed His mark in us, we ought to be governed by His spirit. But our father would need to exalt himself, he would need to set up his bristles against God, and he was not contented with his own state and bounds. Forasmuch therefore as he rebelled in that wise and could not find in his heart to abide the sovereign dominion of God, he was given up to the devil and made subject to him. Forasmuch as he could not abide that God should reign over him, he was fain to have another master, and that subjection must reach unto all men in general.

So then, let us mark that the sovereignty and tyranny of the devil is a just vengeance of God upon men for their sin. Let that serve for one point. And therefore, let us not imagine that the devil has the reins of the bridle laid loose on his neck or that he has liberty to do what he likes, though God withstands him. But that we are left up and given over unto him. And to the intent we may better know this subjection, St. Paul says that he is in the air, as he will speak more at large again at the end of the Epistle. He could have said simply, "according to the prince that has great power," as our Lord Jesus says that he is the strong man which possesses the world in peace. You see then that the devil is called a prince because he has such power as we are not able to withstand.

And besides that, St. Paul gives him his place in the air. Not that the devils are enclosed in a specific place, for we ourselves see that they enter into men's bodies, even into the bodies of swine, as our Lord gives them leave and power. But he speaks purposely of the air to make us understand that they are above our heads. If we have an

enemy, we will see if we can overthrow him. But if he already has his foot upon our throat, if he treads upon our bellies, if he is already upon us, what remedy is there then? None at all on our part. That is why St. Paul speaks here expressly of the air, as if to say that men may well brag and lift up their heads, and be brazen-faced in advancing themselves, but yet the devil is above them with all his power. To be short, he shows that we are utterly given up to that cursed bondage.

To make the matter clearer, he adds "according to the spirit." For what is the reason that we do not perceive the state which he speaks of, but because we are fleshly? If there reigned a tyrant over us who would lay a tax upon us today, another tomorrow, sack men's houses, and the next day cut this man's and that man's throat, ravish men's wives, and commit other enormities and outrages, we would perceive it well enough. And why? Because we are quick to feel the things that touch our flesh, and so earthly that we cannot perceive anything unless it concerns this present life. That is why we do not perceive our own miseries: for they are invisible. We do not think that the devil is such a tyrant, nor as horrible as he is, because we do not see him.

But St. Paul tells us that we must look higher than this world, and that we must have other eyes than those that behold visible things, and that it is necessary for us to look upon the devil, though he is a spirit. And although he has neither arms to strike us with, nor legs to walk with, nor any such other things, yet he fails not to be the worst tyrant that can be devised in the whole world. And why so? Because he enters unseen. If there were a man who could enter into other men's heads and hearts, even into their thoughts and affections, without sword or staff, without venom or poison, without threatening, or anything else, or if he had a hundred deaths in his

hand and could make them enter without feeling how: I pray you, would not such an enemy be much more to be feared than such as come furnished with great force and make a great noise? Yes, surely.

Now St. Paul tells us that the devil is such a one, for he is a spirit, says he. So then, let us not be so fleshly as we have been accustomed to be, nor let us judge according to our own rude and foolish fancy when that spiritual enemy is spoken of. But let us assure ourselves that he is able to do us much more mischief without any comparison than if we could see how he came towards us and how he entered into us. So then, forasmuch as he is a spirit, let us be so much more afraid of him.

To the intent that the faithful should be better disposed to come to this foresaid point, that is to say, to know their own confusion until God has provided for it, St. Paul adds yet one more confirmation of his saying. As soon as we have received the faith and are enlightened by God's Holy Spirit, if we have any desire to do well, we shall immediately endeavor to serve our God. And it will seem that that is enough. But if a faithful man looks into himself, he shall find enough to mislike and to sigh and groan for. According as I have told you before, even St. Paul confessed himself to have been unhappy and cried out, "Who shall set me free from this prison of death?" The faithful then shall always find enough in themselves to mourn before God. Yet forasmuch as God has put some goodness, some well-meaning, and some good intent into us, the same half covers the lewdness of our nature, so we do not know for a long time how wretched our state is, so long as we think only upon ourselves, I say, upon ourselves, such as we are after God has partly reformed us by His Holy Spirit.

That is why St. Paul sends us to behold what the unbelievers are. If we look upon the world, we shall see some given to covetousness, and some to pilling and polling, and not only the little thieves that are whipped and hanged, but even such as are robbers in houses, in markets, and in places of justice. We shall see that there is neither faith nor loyalty among most men, but that all men are given to pilling and polling, without any respect of equity or uprightness. We shall see some rush out into whoredom and dishonesty, some into drunkenness, and some into other lewdness and loose behavior. We shall see men rap out oaths, perjuries, and other cursed things.

Again, we shall see secret conveyances, poisonings, spites, malice, treasons, and wicked practices. To be short, we shall see some so devilish that they fling themselves headlong altogether as though they meant to make war willfully against God. These are things that may astonish us. And although we are dull, yet ought we to have some remorse when we see things so far out of order in the world. Nevertheless, St. Paul says that if we consider what is done and how all things are turned topsy-turvy, and what liberty the world takes to withstand God, it behooves us to apply the same to ourselves and to conclude thus: the same should happen to me, yea, even as much as I see in those who are most wretched.

For when we look upon the diseases that are abroad, how some are eaten with cankers and other filthy diseases, and others have as terrible sicknesses as can be, we must ponder upon them and say, "As ill, yea, and worse too, should happen to me if God did not pity me." For all of us do carry the seed of them about us, and that not only in our bodies but also in our souls. For there may be some diversity of complexions so that some shall be stronger and lusher than others, but the soul of man is utterly corrupted and marred. So then the sins that reign in us are all of them warnings to make us cast

down our eyes and to be ashamed before God and His angels, yea, and to make us hate and utterly abhor ourselves. Thus you see why St. Paul has added here that the devil works now still. He uses the word "Now," as if he should say, "My friends, if in looking upon your present state, you find anything well, and that keeps you from humbling yourselves thoroughly, and from feeling how miserable you should have been if God had not shown pity and mercy towards you, see what is done about you, see how the unbelievers behave themselves, and you shall find them to be like wild beasts and enemies of their own salvation. You shall find them stark mad against God and against all right. To be short, you shall see such great enormities as shall astonish men and make them say, 'Alas, is it possible that it should be thus?' And so you see what you are."

Say not, "Fie on thee, naughtipack." You may well find fault with such a one, but you must add immediately for a sauce to season it, "How great has God's mercy been towards me?" Then let us never condemn the sin that we see everywhere in other men without considering, "If God had not bridled me, I would have fallen as deeply as I see others have fallen." Therefore let it stir us up immediately to pray that God does not lead us into temptation. Let us acknowledge God's infinite goodness in that it pleases Him to reign over us in such wise that we do not fall into the horrible falls which we see about us. For when we look upon the wickedest in the world, yea, even upon such as we are driven to abhor as monsters, we must (as I said before) conclude thus with ourselves, "Alas, as much should befall us if God remedied it not."

And so you see how we ought to put that lesson into practice. St. Paul speaks expressly of the rebellious children to show that there will be no obedience in us, except God puts it into us, reforms us, changes the naughtiness we were given to before, and continues and

increases the goodness that He has begun. Otherwise, Satan has so taken possession of us that he must needs draw us like brute beasts.

It is true that St. Paul adds soon after that this applied not only to the heathen (even though God's grace was most apparent in them) but that even the most excellent men were included in this, and (moreover) that the Jews (who thought themselves to have a singular privilege of exemption from the common curse of men) were also forlorn and damned until they were redeemed by our Lord Jesus Christ. Here we see even better the point we touched on not long ago: that is to say, there is no mention made of any one sort of men alone, but the Holy Ghost thunders upon all men, so that all of us should be beaten down from the least to the most. But this cannot be discussed fully now.

Therefore, we must for conclusion take what St. Paul is teaching: which is that God has quickened us. By this, he means to let us know that we do not bring life with us from our mothers' wombs, but that by reason of sin, we are in death when we come into this world, which is worse than if we were not at all. There is no gainsaying this because we shall not find anything in ourselves but corruption and wickedness, and the more a man stirs it, the more it stinks. We shall be more loath to see the great and deep dungeon of all iniquity which is in us.

Therefore, it stands us in hand to be quickened and to have life given to us, not of nature, but of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, because we are renewed by Him. We must know that God has taken us out of a wretched and cursed state, and thereby forget all vain glory. Let us not think that we will ever yield to God the praise that He deserves until we abhor all our own wretchedness and come to

the point of knowing that the devil reigns over us until God plucks us out of his paws and sets us free from his cursed tyranny.

Is there anything more irksome than to say that we are subject to the devil and that he reigns not only over our bodies, as some worldly tyrant might do, but also over our souls and all our thoughts? For he is a spirit, and there is nothing in us that is not corrupted by him and filled with his poison. Since we know this, let us consider also that God, having found us in that plight, has nonetheless not disdained us, nor let it prevent Him from succouring us. As St. Paul uses the same reasoning when he says that we were God's deadly enemies when Jesus Christ redeemed us.

So let us conclude that God respects nothing but our miseries when He calls us to Him. He does not look to see whether we seek Him or not, for how could that be possible? We draw back entirely. He does not look to see whether we are able to do Him any service or not, for we are rank rebels against Him. He does not look to see whether there is any good inclination in us, for all our thoughts and desires are deadly enemies fighting against His righteousness. What does He look at then? What moves Him to succour us? Even the infinite number of miseries that He finds in us and the horrible confusion in which we are: these are the things that incline God to show us mercy.

So let all mouths be stopped, and let us not presume to bring anything in this matter as though we had bound God to us or that He found something in us for which He should show us favour. For He must take everything from His own, and do all from His own infinite goodness because He sees us miserable, damned, and utterly forlorn. Let that stir us up to do good, and to provide a remedy not only for our diseases but also for our death. For if we were only corrupted with sin and vice, the malady would already be incurable. But besides

that, there is a death, yes, a spiritual death, which cannot be recovered by all the means and remedies of the world. God must put His hand to it, and that so mightily, that it may be known that He saves us by a miracle.

And now let us cast ourselves down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our sins, praying Him to make us so feel them that we may forsake them, and be rid of them daily more and more. And that in the meantime, He of His goodness will bear with us, and not examine us too strictly, but by little and little abate and correct the naughtiness that reigns too much in us, and not suffer us to be slaves to Satan, but set us free by our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom we hold all our spiritual freedom.

And so let us all say, Almighty God, heavenly Father, etc.

The Tenth Sermon, Which Is the Second Upon the Second Chapter

3. We also walked with the disobedient, doing the pleasures of the flesh and of the thoughts, and were by nature the children of wrath as others are.

4. But God, who is rich in mercy, through his great love whereby he loved us,

5. Even at the time when we were dead by sin, quickened us together with Christ, by whose grace you are saved,

6. And raised us with him, and made us sit with him in heavenly places in Jesus Christ.

I began this morning to show you how St. Paul meant to extend God's goodness to all men, so that no one should have cause to boast of himself, as though he had any worthiness alone by himself. Truly, if ever there were any nation in the world advanced above others, it was the Jews, for God had accepted them for His own household and called them a holy lineage and His own inheritance. In that respect, therefore, the Jews seemed well worthy to have preeminence above others. However, to the end that none should darken the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, he says that even they also were the children of wrath, so it stood them in good stead to be drawn out of the dungeon of confusion, whereof I spoke this morning. To be brief, St. Paul shows here that even those whom men would deem to be the most excellent can bring nothing of which to brag or to purchase themselves estimation before God, but are all received to grace to be made heirs of the heavenly life by means of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now here a question might be asked: Why does St. Paul set the heathen men on even ground with the Jews, seeing that God had set such odds betwixt them? For it might seem that all the promises were annulled: and that would be doing wrong to God, rather than to men. If we grant (as of necessity and reason we needs must) that God's choosing of Abraham's offspring was not in vain, and that His telling of them that He accepted them to be of His household and Church was not to deceive them, they must needs be nearer and more familiar to God, and they must needs have some mark whereby to be gathered unto Him. It seems then that St. Paul should not have

abased the Jews after that sort. But in another place, he shows that all this agrees full well if we consider the Jews (on the one side) in the state of God's chosen and peculiar people, and (on the other side) what they be (of themselves) and what they have deserved before God. For in the Epistle to the Romans, after that St. Paul has given sentence upon the whole world, showing that there is not any one who is not damned and forlorn, he moves this question: Seeing then that God gathered Abraham's lineage and dedicated it wholly to Himself, what shall become of them? Shall there be no holiness in them? For it seems otherwise that God had but dallied, and that His saying in the holy scriptures, that He had not dealt so with any other nation, was nothing worth. But St. Paul says that, in truth, men ought to commend the grace that God vouchsafed to show forth upon His people: and so consequently that they are to be preferred before all the whole world, so far forth as they are endowed with the benefits which they had by God's promises. However, he adds forthwith, that inasmuch as they are descended from Adam's race, and are sinners, as well as all other men, and there is nothing in our whole nature but corruption and frowardness, all men must be fain to stoop, and all of us must needs acknowledge that one of us cannot be singled out from another, according as we have seen heretofore in the second chapter to the Galatians, where St. Paul told St. Peter thus: "Yea, we be Jews by nature, and it seems that we ought to go alone by ourselves, seeing that God is our King, and has sanctified us, and vouchsafes to dwell among us." Well then, it seems at the first blush that we should shake off the Gentiles, as unclean persons, and such as have no acquaintance with God. But let us come to account (says he) and there is none of us all but he is endangered to God, and must needs perceive himself to be a wretched sinner. Since it is so, God must be the judge of all men, and we must needs sink before His majesty till we are reconciled to Him by our Lord Jesus Christ. To be brief, St. Paul's meaning in this text is not to deface God's grace, but

to show that the Jews had not any other means in themselves whereby to obtain the salvation and heritage of heaven than only by being members of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that they must always be fain to take themselves first for cursed and damned. For the worthiness which they have is but as a windfall, and they are born in sin and subject to cursedness, no less than all other men, and God's accepting and choosing of them to Himself was a special and (as they say) a supernatural gift. You see then that by nature the Jews are forlorn as well as the rest of the whole world, and yet nevertheless that God has also received them to mercy.

By the way, we must mark that under the word Nature, St. Paul shows not only that we are sinners by custom, so that every one of us thrusts his fellow out of the way, and we are too much inclined to follow the evil rather than the good, but also that there is a further matter in it, which is that every one of us brings sin with him even from his birth. To eat and to drink are things that accompany us, but yet is sin more rooted in us than all the things that belong to this life. Truly, the heathen men will think it strange that the young babes, which are not able to discern between good and evil, nor have any discretion or will, should already be sinners and damned before God, according to St. Paul's saying, who calls them the children of wrath. But yet we must needs yield ourselves to condemnation whether we will or no. As soon as babes are able to make any sign, it is certain that they will show enough and too much, that they are froward and naughty, and that there is a secret poison lurking in them. And that although they cast it not out at first, yet they are as a brood of serpents. Since it is so, let us understand that St. Paul does not without cause call us the children of wrath, as well as the Jews, not excepting the very infants out of the number, whom men term innocents, and take them so to be. For we must not regard our own opinion, nor the things that we see before our eyes, but we must give

glory unto God, who is the competent judge thereof, although we find it incomprehensible. However the world goes, we must always come back to what is said in the fifty-first Psalm, namely that we not only offend God daily in diverse manners, but also are loathsome to Him beforehand, even before we have either done or thought anything, because we were begotten in sin and cursedness. And by that word Children of Wrath, St. Paul means that we are the heirs of death, and that God must needs be our enemy, even as soon as we are conceived. Yet God is not cruel, nor does He hate the things that are of His own making. That is true if we had such pureness in us as was in our forefather Adam, according to this saying, that all things which God made were good. God then should hate His own workmanship in us. But we must conclude that since He hates us and is as it were armed to take vengeance on us all, we have well deserved it. And that although sin cannot be pointed out with the finger, as you would say, yet God knows it well enough, and we must hold our mouths shut at it. That is in effect the thing that we have to gather upon this text, in applying it to St. Paul's meaning. For if the Jews, who seemed to have or ought to have some peculiar prerogative, are nevertheless included under the general state of men, what can we allege who are born Gentiles, if we will presume to bring any bravery before God? So then, we have well wherewith to be confounded double, seeing that they, in comparison of whom we are nothing, have nonetheless no entrance into the kingdom of God but by His only free mercy, and by being reconciled by means of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is yet one more question or doubt. For how should the Jews be God's enemies, seeing He had avowed Himself already to be their Father? Some might say that the seeing of the things that were figured, and the truth and substance of them, remained as yet to be accomplished. But we have to mark further that although God had

adopted the Jews in Abraham, yet they were received in Jesus Christ, and that grace was grounded upon Him, according to this saying, "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." And we have seen in the Epistle to the Galatians, that the said seed must be referred to our Lord Jesus Christ, for without Him there is no unity but utter scattering asunder. Since it is so, it is not to be marveled that the receiving of the Jews into the Church, as well as the receiving of the Gentiles, is attributed here by St. Paul to the only freely bestowed goodness of God.

However, there is yet a second point, which is not to be forgotten: which is, that although the Jews had obtained such grace, yet they abode in suspense till the coming of the Redeemer. And for that cause, we shall see in another place that those who were near, and those who were far off, were reconciled by Him. For we know that there is no atonement to be made with God without the shedding of blood. Now the sacrifices of the Law could not put away sin, nor pacify God's wrath and cursing. When men offered the blood of an ox, or of a calf, or of a lamb, it was not to make atonement with God; there was no such power in the brute beasts, for the thing that is corruptible does not attain to the soul. Therefore it is to be concluded that the Jews were God's children by hope, and yet that they were utterly separated from Him until the atonement was made in the person of the Redeemer. And by that means did God show Himself favorable towards them, as He did towards the rest of the world. And for that cause also does St. Paul add that God, being rich in mercy, has quickened them, as He did the Gentiles, even according to His great love wherewith He loved them.

The chief point (as I told you this morning) that St. Paul handles is that we should learn to be ashamed, yea and to loathe our own wretchedness, by resorting to our original state, and by considering

in what plight God finds us, and out of what a dungeon we pass when God reaches us His hand. And the second is that we should magnify His goodness so much the more because it is an incredible thing that He should vouchsafe to cause the doctrine of life to come down to the bottom of hell to quicken us, for we were sunk down there. Therefore we must mark well these words, where it is said that God, being rich in mercy, quickened us when we were dead, according to the great love which He bears us. True it is that this title might always agree unto God, because He neither abates nor increases, and so shall God be evermore rich in goodness. But we must also mark the circumstance of the place, and the matter that St. Paul treats of here, which is that God has uttered the inestimable treasures of His mercy upon us according to the greatness of our miseries. And for that cause also he adds the great love wherewith He loved us. For there must have been such a goodness in God as is able to ravish us, seeing it surpasses all our capacity, and that we are not able to taste a hundredth part of it, though we give ourselves never so much unto it. And why? For when St. Paul says that God loved us, he speaks expressly of himself and of such like, who had been chosen from among that people, whereas the greater part of them was cut off. For although the Jews were the firstborn and had preeminence above us, as by right of inheritance, and that we be but as silly things born out of season, as St. Paul speaks of himself, yet nevertheless we see that they are now banished from God's kingdom and have become a precedent that ought to make the hair stand up upon our heads when we behold the wrath and vengeance of God that is uttered upon them. Therefore, whereas St. Paul and some small number more were chosen from among the Jews, it was through God's love which had the greater appearance towards them. Likewise, nowadays, if the Gospel were preached purely throughout the whole world, and faith given indifferently to all men, so as there were none but he should be touched immediately with the Holy Ghost, and all of us were alike, it

would seem to be as the course of nature. And just as meat and drink are common to all men, so it would seem that we had this of our own natural motion, and that it were not a special grace of God. But when we see so many countries hunger-starved, so as there rains not one drop of good doctrine upon them, but rather the wretched people are fed with lies and trumperies of Satan, and that on the other side God enlightens us here and waters us with His word, whereof comes that but of the great love whereof St. Paul speaks here? Again, many men have their ears beaten with the Gospel, and yet it is apparent to men's eyes that they become hard-hearted by it and wax worse and worse. For it is certain that a man shall not see so horrible monsters in the papacy as where the Gospel is preached and professed, for they will say they are reformed, and yet they seem to be devils incarnate, and we need not to go far to see such sights. So then, let us mark here that we must not surmise that any of us has aught wherewith to please God more than his fellows, nor presume to make any account of ourselves. Instead, we must always repair to the fountain that cannot be drained dry, and not go to the pits that are full of holes and can hold no water, or rather which have nothing but slime and filth in them, (for all the gloriousness and bravery of men is no better) but draw from the said love of our God, and confess that God must not be persuaded or moved by other folks, but only that it pleased Him to love us freely by receiving us unto Him and by enlightening us with His Holy Spirit in the faith of the Gospel. And so you see what Saint Paul meant to note here.

Now on the other side, to prevent men (who are always subtle-witted, seeking some shifts and starting holes or other) from excusing themselves by being under the tyranny of the devil, or alleging that the same ought not to be laid to their charge, Saint Paul shows that the said bondage ceases not to be wilful. I showed you this morning that notwithstanding all our free choice, and

notwithstanding our reason and will, yet we are as it were fettered to Satan's service, so as we can do nothing but all naughtiness, nor should we be any better by nature than the arrantest thieves in the world if God had not pitied us, accordingly as Saint Paul sets forth all other men unto us as a looking glass, yea, even such as despise God and all order, and are driven by Satan into all outrage, saying that we should be like them if God had not been merciful to us.

But now there are many who grudge against God and go to law with Him, saying: If free will is so defaced, what shall become of us? If men were able to give themselves unto goodness, and yet made none account of it but gave themselves to evil, surely it would be good right and reason that they should be held for guilty. But if they cannot but do evil, why should God condemn them? At least they ought to be borne with, seeing it is apparent that they are held under Satan's dominion, even from their mothers' womb. Lo, what many men allege in hope to wash their hands. Yea, and they are not contented to justify themselves by vain shifts, but they also rail against God, as though He were the cause of their damnation. But Saint Paul, to prevent such slanders, says that those who are under the bondage of Satan and of sin cease not for all that to be condemned by good right. For they are not constrained thereunto by force: they are subject indeed, but that is with their own good will. And that is why he says that even such as are brought back again to our Lord Jesus Christ have walked in the lusts of the flesh; that is to say, that before God had changed them, and brought them to His obedience by His Holy Spirit, they walked in their own wicked lusts. True it is that men will grant their nature to be sinful, but yet they say it suffices that the will be otherwise. All men will grant that it is the will which puts the difference between vice and virtue. But when the philosophers spoke after that fashion, they were of the opinion that we have a free and frank will. And that is the thing that deceived

them because they knew not that we were marred by the fall of Adam, and yet notwithstanding cease not to be justly accursed, forasmuch as our offending of God is with our own good will. And therefore also he adds again, doing the desires of our flesh and of our thoughts.

As if he should say that those who are possessed of Satan, and held under the slavery of sin, cannot allege any compulsion. For why? It is their own will that drives them thereunto. Thus you see in effect how Saint Paul meant to stop the mouths of all mis-speakers, to the intent that men should not pick any quarrels with God by pretending that they ought not to be blamed for their naughtiness, seeing they are subject to it by nature. But let us mark herewithal how Saint Paul has matched thoughts with the flesh, to the end we might know that sin reaches throughout us, and that we have no part of us clean and pure wherein infection is not spread. For the Papists will well enough confess that we are corrupted in Adam, but they say that we do indeed tend always unto evil when we are tempted unto it, and yet nevertheless that if we hearken unto reason, and bridle our lusts by ruling them well, then we shall see plainly that we are not altogether unable to do good. And so the opinion of the Papists is that man's free will is not of such force as it was at the beginning, but that it is wounded, yea and sore maimed, albeit that it has yet still some life, that is to say, some virtuousness, as they imagine.

But we have seen this morning that the determinate sentence of the Holy Ghost is more general, that is to wit, that we are not only sick but also dead, till we are raised again by Jesus Christ. Now Saint Paul confirms the same thing, saying that our wicked lusts and the affections that are termed the sensual appetites, wherein we resemble the brute beasts, are not the only things that harry us here and there, but that we must take the matter more strictly. What are

all our thoughts, all our determinations, and all that ever is deemed to be best in man? They are (says Saint Paul) stark wickedness. For if God should let us go after our own thoughts, it is certain that there is not a more horrible confusion than that would be.

So then, we see that men are not humbled here by halves to confess only their frailty, and that they have partly need to be succored and helped at God's hand. Instead, we see they are utterly damned before Him, since their thoughts are here called wicked and froward, and that they have nothing in them which provokes not God's vengeance against them. So then, let us on the one side yield ourselves guilty, assuring ourselves that we were justly bereft of all God's graces in the person of Adam. And again, on the other side, let us not take the same for an excuse, in hope to escape by such shift, as who should say, we were not the bondslaves of sin, nor we ourselves any whit to blame for it, because we are held down in Satan's snares and nets even from our birth. But it behoves us to consider always that every one of us shall find the wellspring of his disease in his own conscience. Men may hold plea as much as they list, but if they enter into themselves, and ask their own consciences, you shall see them condemned and confounded without any nay. When a man has babbled what he can, so as he thinks he has won the goal, by saying that he has no free will of his own, nor ability to resist God, there needs no more but this one word: What thinkest thou to be the thing that provokes thee to evil? Ho, it is the devil. Thou sayest well. But yet mark a little whether that does so fully excuse thee, as that thou perceivest not right well, that thou wast stirred up and driven to it by thine own self-moving: knowest thou not that the wellspring and root of the mischief is in thyself? When thou art so rebellious against God, that thy thoughts are full of untruth and unbelief, and that so much the more because thy lusts are out of square, and embattled against God and His righteousness, even to make war with Him:

when thou seest all this, must thou yet hold plea further with Him? So then, let us not seek any starting holes, seeing we carry a sufficient judge with us, even within us, namely seeing that every one of our own consciences rebukes us. That is the thing that Saint Paul aimed at in this strain. And thereby we also are warned not to presume aught at all on ourselves, but to bridle all our senses and imaginations, and all the understanding and reason which we ween ourselves to have. For until we have so renounced ourselves, it is certain that we shall never be meet to apply ourselves to the serving of God.

And Saint Paul says expressly that those whom God has quickened are by that means made fellows with our Lord Jesus Christ, for it is even He in whom they have their life. True it is that we ought to seek it in God's being: however, forasmuch as that is too high for us, so as we cannot come at it, no nor anything near it, therefore our Lord Jesus is called the way. And He offers Himself, and tarries not till we seek Him as though He were far from us, but reaches out His arms to allure us to Him, insomuch that in His Gospel He says, "If any man be athirst, let him come unto me and drink." And this is fulfilled in His person, as has been said before.

So then let this speech be marked, where Saint Paul says that those who were dead before were quickened again by Jesus Christ. And here we see yet better the thing that I touched upon shortly this morning: which is, that Saint Paul speaks not of a visible death, of which men may judge by outward sight, but of the corruption that is in our souls, for he finds fault with us all. How then may we attain to the heavenly life? How shall we be raised and quickened again to possess the heritage that is promised us? We see on the contrary part how we are subject to as many miseries as can be. This therefore must needs be meant of the newness of life which he speaks of in

other places. Now it is certain that this life is not yet perfect in us: there is but a little entrance of it, which serves to lead us further and to bring us to the end, which shall be when we come to the full glory that he speaks of here.

And we see also how Saint Paul, setting himself forth for an example, alleges that he had given over all things for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, yea and even the fond opinion which he had of his own righteousness, insomuch that although men esteemed him as a little angel, yet notwithstanding he knew that it behoved him to be saved by God's free grace in Jesus Christ. And instead of all his honour and riches, he had suffered so many reproaches, so many tortures, so many beatings, and so many imprisonings, that a man would have said he had been lifted up above the world. And yet notwithstanding he adds, not that I am yet come to my mark, but I strain myself forward and forget the time that is past. For if I stay upon the things I have done already, saying, I have overcome so many encounters, I have dealt thus valiantly, I have not ceased to preach the Gospel everywhere, I have wrought in such wise that the fruit of my doctrine has come to the whole world, I have passed the sea, I have been among barbarous nations where God and His Gospel were never erst heard of, I have had a number of letdowns, and have overcome them all, I have encountered with thus many enemies and have got the upper hand of them all. If Saint Paul had had all these considerations with him, he would have become cold, for it is an easy matter for us to shrink away when we once think with ourselves, "Alas, I have done enough for my part, now let others march on in their array." And so every one of us would take his leave when he had something or other, I wot not what. But Saint Paul says that he forgets the time past, to cut off the occasion of slothfulness which might come into his head, and says that he strains himself forward and holds his arms open to attain unto it.

And how long did Saint Paul strain himself forward? Even to the end. Then let us mark well that our glory shall never be perfect, that is to say, we shall never thoroughly enjoy the glory that we wait for until the end. And therefore it behoves us always to take warning of our own wretchedness, to mourn for it before God, and to confess that we are beholden to His only goodness for all things. Now then, however we fare, we see that we are reformed unto newness of life by God's spirit, and that although we dwell among unbelievers and are subject to many miseries, yea and have sin dwelling in us, yet there is none of us but he feels that the handsels which God has given us of His Holy Spirit are not vain nor unprofitable.

If any man alleges that before such time as Jesus Christ works in us, we have already some life, as is seen, the answer was made shortly this morning: that forasmuch as all that ever men have by nature is not able to bring them unto God, but makes them rest upon this world, none of it ought to be made account of when the heavenly life comes into question. Then let men clap their hands at us on all sides: yet we are but dead men when God lays the bridle loose on our necks and suffers us to walk after our own fancy and liking. Man may well have some reason, but what can it do so long as it is in its own nature? It will fight against God and against all truth. Yet notwithstanding, man, say they, has a will; howbeit, that the same will is wicked. True it is (as I have said already) that it has no strength in it. Yet notwithstanding forasmuch as man is wicked and froward, and has the cursed root of rebellion in himself, so as he cannot but do evil, he offends God willingly. And seeing it is so, let us boldly conclude that we are in death until we are made partners of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that He deals unto every one of us the Spirit which He has received, in such measure as He lists, according as it is said that God's Spirit rested upon Him, and was given unto Him in all plenty, and that as now He must deal it to

every one of His faithful ones. Therefore according as our Lord Jesus Christ makes us taste of His Holy Spirit, and according as He strengthens thereby, so are we quickened in Him and with Him.

Now hereupon he adds that He has made us to sit in the heavenly places with our Lord Jesus Christ. This serves to magnify the grace that we have hitherto spoken of, yet so much the more. If he had said in one word that we were quickened, it would have been enough, and it ought well to have inflamed our hearts to sing God's praises, to occupy ourselves therein, and to apply all our endeavors thereto. But here is a greater vehemence because of our coldness and laziness. For Saint Paul has shown on the one side that we were dead and held in bondage under the tyranny of Satan. Alas, these are terrible things. And now he sets down on the other side that God has not only loved us but also glorified us in Himself, and that we are lifted up from the bottom of hell, aloft to the kingdom of heaven, where He has lodged us, and given us seats among His angels.

Seeing then that we hear this, needs must we be too much doted, and our wits too much brutish if we do not make a good earnest to glorify the inestimable goodness of our God, and to conclude that we are so beholden and bound unto Him, that although we should do nothing else all our life long but preach the grace that we have felt by experience at His hand, yet it would be nothing at all. And so you see why Saint Paul has purposely set down that we are lifted up to heaven with Jesus Christ.

And hereupon we have a very profitable exhortation to gather, which is that although we are here in the mire and do but crawl like poor frogs, yet ought we to bear this state patiently, forasmuch as on the other side God has lifted us up so high, even us that were nothing, yea, and cursed creatures too. And therefore, whenever we are forced

to suffer hunger and thirst in this world, or be mocked by unbelievers, or put to the abiding of many outrages, let us resort to that which is said here: namely, that nevertheless we are set already in heaven with Jesus Christ, albeit not in such wise that it is apparent to our eyes. For in this behalf we must give place to hope, and to that which is said in another text, namely that our life is hid, and that we must hold ourselves quiet till it appears at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus then you see in effect how it behoves us to understand the things that are spoken here of the diverse state of God's children after they are called to the faith of the Gospel. But by the way, we must not imagine an earthly paradise in this world where we shall have neither trouble nor grief: we must reckon that we shall never live here at our ease, but we must make room for faith, as I said before. And besides this, whereas the Holy Ghost avouches by the mouth of Saint Paul that we shall be lifted up on high, it stands us on hand to cast down our heads, to suffer ourselves to be oppressed by our enemies, and to be overmastered by them with all pride. We, I say, must suffer these things, and yet in the meantime be fully persuaded and thoroughly resolved of this doctrine, that we for all that shall not fail to inherit the kingdom of heaven, for it is impossible that the head should be separated from the members, and our Lord Jesus Christ is not gone thither for His own sake alone.

We must always repair to that principle. Our confessing that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and gone up into heaven is not only to glorify Him in His own person. True it is that first of all it must come to pass that all knees must bow before Him, and that all creatures both in heaven and earth, yea and even in hell, must do Him homage. But yet notwithstanding, the union whereof we have treated heretofore is fulfilled in this, that Jesus Christ having gathered us

into His body, has begun that thing in Himself which He intends to perform in us, namely when the convenient time comes. So then, Jesus Christ has gone up into heaven to open us the gate in these days, which was shut against us by Adam's sin, and that is the very manner of our sitting with Him already.

And therewithal Saint Paul shows in one word what he intended. Indeed, this saying shall be declared more at length in its due place, where Saint Paul himself will treat of it more at large in the next sermon. Yet notwithstanding, we may see what he aimed at, to the end we may have a sure and right mark to shoot at: which is that we are saved by grace, and that no man is able to claim anything of his own. Nevertheless, it is not enough for us to have confessed in one word that our salvation comes from God's free favor, and to have felt it also within ourselves, but we must also therewithal be taken in love with the infinite greatness of the same grace by considering what we are, how all evil comes of ourselves, and that there is no saying nay because our faults do too much convict us, insomuch that if God should execute a hundred times more rigor against us than He does, we could not contend with Him, nor dispute with Him, but that we should always have this record of our own consciences, that we are justly worthy of death, and that the same is due unto us by our desert.

Then seeing it is so, let us hold fast this doctrine, for we shall have profited greatly for our whole life if we once know that there is not only some one naughty touch but an infinite number of evils in us. Therefore, let us learn to dislike ourselves, to hate and abhor ourselves, and afterward when we come to the grace that is shown us in our Lord Jesus Christ, let us understand that without that, the devil should need to have full and whole possession of us and reign over us as he had done before. Also, let us beware that we profit

ourselves by such grace, so as it may serve to put away all our cursedness. And then let us assure ourselves that not only shall all our miseries turn to our benefit by our Lord Jesus Christ, but also that He will give us such strength, as we may well glory in our state: and although we are driven to fight against many temptations, and that we are frail on our own behalf, yet nevertheless we shall overcome them in such wise as we shall have cause to yield God thanks by our Lord Jesus Christ, insomuch as being joined unto Him, we cannot fail to come to the full perfection of all good things.

Now let us cast ourselves down before the Majesty of our good God with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us so to feel them, as it makes us not only to confess three or four of them, but also to go up even to our birth, and to acknowledge that there is nothing but sin in us, and that there is no way for us to be reconciled to our God but by the blood, death, and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore as often as we feel any heartbitings to turn us aside from the grace of God, to cite us to His judgment seat, let us have no other refuge than to the sacrifice whereby our Lord Jesus Christ has made atonement between God and us. And whenever we are weak, let us desire Him to remedy it by His Holy Spirit, which is the means that He has ordained to make us partakers of all His gracious gifts by: and let us so continue in the same, as we may be an example unto others, and labor to draw them with us to the faith and unity of the doctrine, and by our life and good conversation show that we have not gone to school in vain, in so good a school as the school of the Son of God. That it may please Him to grant this grace not only to us, but also to all people. Amen.

The Eleventh Sermon,

which is the Third upon the Second Chapter

8. Surely you are saved by grace through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9. Not by works, lest any man might boast.

10. For we are His workmanship, created in Jesus Christ to good works which God has prepared for us to walk in.

Saint Paul has shown earlier that our salvation is the true looking glass wherein we behold the infinite glory of God, for it is His will to be known by His goodness above all things. For that reason, he has shown that God chose us before the creation of the world, not in respect of anything that could be found in us, but to satisfy His own mercy alone.

Here, therefore, he concludes that matter and explains what he meant when he told us that our adoption depends on and proceeds from God's choosing us in His own everlasting purpose. That is to say, to the intent that we should be, as it were, completely humbled and confess that whatever we are and whatever goodness we have, we owe it wholly to God and His only free goodness. That is why he says that we are saved by grace, not of ourselves, but by God's gift, and not by works.

It would have been enough to have excluded all the goodness and virtue that man could imagine. But since it is hard to beat down the pride to which we are so much given, St. Paul repeats this matter

again, in order that it might be better understood and confirmed at greater length. And at the same time, we have to note how he links faith over against it, both to show the means by which men come to salvation and also to emphasize further that men do not bring anything of their own, but that whatever they have need of, they must beg it at God's hand. For faith beats down and abolishes all men's presumption about their own deserts, as we have seen at greater length in the Epistle to the Galatians. [Gal. 3:10, 11] For there St. Paul shows that faith supplies the place of works, because we are all condemned. And indeed, there is no other righteousness than to obey God's commandments in all perfection. But no man acquits himself thus, and therefore we are all cursed before God, and so God must relieve us by His goodness. And when we receive by faith the grace offered us in the gospel, we confess thereby that we have need of Jesus Christ, because there is nothing but perdition in ourselves. Also, when he says in this text that it is by faith, he shows that if comparison is made between God and man, we must come, as it were, stark naked, and there must be nothing in us but shame and abashment until God has received us to mercy.

Now to confirm this, the apostle adds that "we are God's workmanship, and that He has fashioned us in Jesus Christ in order that we should walk in the good works which He has prepared." It is as if he said, God must go before us with His own free grace. For what can we do, seeing we are as rotten carcasses until God has renewed us again by the power of the Holy Spirit? So then, if a man intends to find any good in himself, he must not seek it in his own nature, nor in his former birth, for there is nothing but corruption, but God must reform us before we can have a single drop of goodness in us. Since this is so, we have to conclude that our salvation has no other spring, and no other foundation, than God's

mercy alone, seeing we cannot by any means help ourselves. Thus you see in effect what St. Paul meant.

Nevertheless, let us note that here he not only intends to show that we have need of God's grace in part and are succored by it because there is some infirmity and lack in ourselves, but he also erases all that men can ever imagine in themselves concerning their own merit, worthiness, and good works. He shows that we are utterly unprofitable, and that our salvation is not only helped forward by God, but also that it is begun, continued, and perfected by Him, without any contribution of our own. And that is the very thing that is expressed by these words, "You are saved by grace, and not of yourselves." It is certain that here St. Paul opposes God to men. And to maintain the right that belongs to God, he shows that when we have brought forward all that we can, even the things that seem to be most ours, all of it goes up in smoke. For St. Paul does not speak here of some piece of merit or worthiness, but says flatly, "not of yourselves." As if he would say, when men set up their horns so high, and imagine they can bring something or other with which to make God a debtor to them, it will be found that there is nothing but confusion in them from the crown of their head to the soles of their feet.

Therefore, let us note well in the first place, that St. Paul meant here to put away completely all the glory and loftiness of man, that God alone might be exalted. And he does not think it enough to say that God is our Savior, for that saying would have been somewhat obscure, but when he says that it is of grace (that is to say, of God's free gift) he shows that he does not seek the cause anywhere else but in Him. And that is the reason why in the second part of the sentence, he puts down "gift," and contrariwise says we can do nothing of ourselves. God exercises His pure free goodness in saving

us, and if we think ourselves to be any help or furtherance to it, it is cheating God of His right, which is an intolerable sacrilege for which we deserve to be deprived of that which we have received. For since we can by no means make God any recompense, we ought at least to yield Him homage for the things that we hold through His goodness alone, and when He sees us so humbled, He is contented with that pure and simple confession of ours. But if we are so ungrateful as to take upon us that which belongs specially to Him, surely it is a just punishment if He utterly shakes us off, as the man who scorns to do fealty and homage for his land is rightly dispossessed of it.

Now if in these corruptible things of the world, and in things of little value, the party is punished who withholds the doing of his duty to him to whom he is bound, what shall become of us when we fall to stepping into God's place by attributing to ourselves the praise of our salvation, and dispossessing Him of His right? Is it not a devilish outrage, which makes us worthy to be utterly ruined? So much the more, therefore, is it necessary for us to note well what is said in this passage, which is, that we are saved by grace and that we contribute nothing at all to it, but that God gives us all that can ever belong to our salvation. And why? Because we can do nothing at all: we have neither good works nor deserts to plead for ourselves.

Furthermore, this message is well worth considering when he says, "lest any man might boast." From this, we must gather that it is not enough for us to attribute some part of our salvation to God; we must reach the point of yielding completely, without making any claim to it at all. We must allow all our own glory to be abased, so that only God may have preeminence. As we have seen in other texts, especially in the place of Jeremiah, it is stated that God is not glorified as He ought to be, nor is it possible for us to glory in Him until all that we think we have of our own is cast down and done

away with. Neither the virtue, nor the wisdom, nor the ability, nor the righteousness of man must be put forth if we intend for God to retain what is His own and which He reserves for Himself.

Therefore, we see that all the partnerships the world would make with God are but foolish fantasies and illusions of Satan, who labors to make us believe that we are able to do something of ourselves, to the intent of plucking us completely away from our God. For as long as a man imagines himself to have any drop of goodness of his own, he will never give himself over to God, but will be puffed up with vain presumption and rest upon himself. Satan has won much at our hands when he has persuaded us that we can do anything of ourselves or that we can make any means to attain salvation. His aim is to make us stop seeking the things in God that God offers us. By that means, we remain empty, according to the Virgin Mary's song, where it is said that those who are filled with self-conceit shall remain hungry, and God will laugh their vain presumption to scorn. We cannot be fed with God's grace unless we long for it and feel our own lack, according to the saying of the Psalm, "Open your mouth, and I will fill it." So, let us note well that men will be disposed to receive from God's hand all that is required for their salvation when they reserve nothing for themselves but acknowledge that all self-boasting must be put away.

And (as I said before) by that means, the partnerships that the world pretends to make with God fall to the ground. For the Papists are driven to confess that without God's help they can do nothing and that they are too weak to withstand Satan if they are not strengthened by the Holy Ghost. They can find it in their hearts to grant that they cannot deserve anything at all except God supply their wants and also that they need the forgiveness of their sins. But yet, for all that, they cannot abide to give over their free will, but

imagine that they can partly further themselves. Thereupon, they are always building some desert, and although they grant that God's grace prevents them at first, they always mingle it with some endeavor and good will of their own. When they flee to God for the release of their sins, they bring Him their own satisfactions for the same. So, you see that the Papists will not freely and wholly yield and give over to God the praise of their salvation, but keep back some part of it, commonly the greater half, to themselves.

But Saint Paul goes further here and shows that we wrongfully defraud and bereave God of His glory until we have forgotten all the false opinions with which the world deceives itself. Therefore, the only way for us to glorify God is to acknowledge that we are nothing of ourselves. Humility or lowliness is not a feigning or false pretense, as many suppose, who think they have contented God by saying in one word that they are wretched sinners and as weak as possible. Instead, we must be fully resolved that all that men imagine in their own brains concerning deserts, free will, preparation, help, or satisfaction is nothing but lies and trumpery of Satan. When we once know this, we will submit ourselves as we ought to do, and then God will keep His estate as He deserves, and we also shall yield Him the honor that is due to Him. But this cannot be done unless all that men conceive and imagine concerning good works, with which to deserve well at God's hand, is utterly erased.

Moreover, let us note that if we wish to be partakers of the salvation that God offers us, we must bring nothing with us but only faith. For (as is said in another place) faith takes no help from good works. Although it has a record of the Law, it does not bring anything to God by which to bind Him to us, but rather witnesses that we are utterly empty and have no other hope than only in His free goodness. Just as a man who is pinched with great distress, so that he can scarcely

stir a finger and has nothing but his tongue to cry out, "Alas, that somebody would help me and pity me," even so must faith rid away all the overweening we have in ourselves so that we may receive whatever God offers us, and all the praise thereof may be reserved to Him. That, therefore, is the lesson we must take away.

And hereby we are warned not to be unthankful when God calls and allures us so gently, but to run to Him as poor hungry souls, and to have an earnest mind to be succored by His hand, because it pleases Him. For what is the cause that our Lord Jesus Christ profits not a great number, but that they have deaf ears when God encourages them to come to Him? And verily, some of them are so beastly, that they care not for the heavenly life, as long as they have here whereof to feed and to drink like swine, or wherewith to wallow in their own delights and pleasures. As for the spiritual goods, which we ought to labor for, they mean nothing to them. You see then that one sort shuts God out of the doors because they are dulled with the allurements of Satan, and drunken, or rather utterly bewitched, with the delights of this world, either in pomp and honor, or in riches, or else in whoredom and other looseness. And the other sort think they have wherewith to make God beholden to them, as we see many hypocrites do, who cannot give over the vain self-trust with which they are swollen like toads.

Therefore, to be short, let us mark well this word faith, so that the pleasures and ease of this world do not hold us back from lifting up our hearts to God. And that is the very way to fasten our anchor in heaven. For we can never have the said substantialness of faith, which Saint Paul speaks of, except we pass swiftly through the world, and know that our heritage and resting place is elsewhere than here. Moreover, let us shake off all vain imaginations that may come into our heads, for they serve but to turn us away from Jesus Christ, so

that we may not come to Him, nor He have any entrance at all unto us. That is the lesson we must gather from this text.

Now for further confirmation, Saint Paul adds that we are God's workmanship. He does not mean this of God's creating of us, and of His setting of us in this world, but his meaning is that men, as they are born in Adam, are unfit for the heavenly life, and that if they think to get anything by that, they deceive themselves too much because they are but as dead creatures, and as carrion wherein is nothing but rotten filthiness. For proof hereof, we need to seek no further matter than this present text, where he says that we are created in Jesus Christ. Here, therefore, Saint Paul makes a comparison of the double birth that is in all the faithful. For we have all of us one general creation, whereby we live in this world, and God creates us anew again when He vouchsafes to give us newness of life by His gospel. I mean when He prints it in our hearts and minds by His own secret working, for the word alone is not enough to do it.

So then, as in respect of our first creation, there is no difference between the Jews, the Turks, the heathen, and us. We are all of us taken out of one lump, we are all the children of Adam, and we are all heirs of God's wrath and cursed by nature, as we have seen already heretofore. Then if men examine themselves and search what they are by their first birth, they shall find that there is nothing in them but sin and wickedness, and that the wisdom which we think we have is but beastliness. And the light which we think we have to discern between good and bad is but stubbornness and stark spitefulness against God. And so you see we are corrupted in all parts of our soul.

Now then, what can we do to find favor at God's hand, and to make Him beholden to us? For if we can do nothing but evil, it is but a kindling of His wrath more and more against us. We are worthy of

endless death already before we come out of our mothers' wombs. Although we perceive not the sin that is in a young babe, yet he has the seed of it within him, and God avows that all of us deserve to be drowned in the bottom of hell. Then if the little babe is so rightfully condemned beforehand, even before he has seen the light of the world, what is to be said of us when we are born and show that we are sinful indeed, and that our nature is altogether sinful? And when we come of age, what can we do to fall into composition with God, so that we might help forward His grace, and that our doing so might be a means to further our salvation? Look at what Saint Paul means by this text, where he says that we are God's workmanship.

As if he should say, "Poor creature, you think to play the partner in this matter, by putting yourself forward to allege some deserving, and that you are able to begin and to approach unto God, so that He on His side must be beholden to you. When did you begin that? If you say you began it before you were born, you deserve that men should spit in your face. If you say it was afterward, between the age of seven years and the age of twenty or thirty years, at what time you were enlightened with the gospel: you are on the contrary part sufficiently disproved, that you could not have one drop of willingness to do good, but that all your thoughts and desires were utterly rebellious against God, and as men of war fighting against His righteousness. Therefore you have done nothing else but fight against God ever since you were born. Again, if you take it to be from the time that you were a little babe, unable to discern between white and black, yet you were of the cursed race of Adam. And so turn yourself whichever way you will, and reason must needs drive you to perceive that you were unable to do anything toward God, and consequently that all that He has wrought for your welfare ought to be attributed to Him alone, without challenging any drop thereof to yourself."

Thus, we see now why Saint Paul, in this text, calls us the work or workmanship of God, according also as it is said in the Psalms, that those who were the household folk of His Church were also His flock. For there the Prophet singles out the children of Israel, whom God had gathered together by His own mere goodness, to set them apart from other heathen nations. It is certain that God found no other cause to keep that lineage to Himself or to prefer them before others, save only that He, of His own mere mercy, had chosen them. As much is to be said of us today.

And that which he adds, namely that we were created in Jesus Christ, ought to touch us yet more deeply. For there he shows that our creation in Adam brings us only to destruction, and therefore it is necessary for us to be fashioned and created anew, namely in Jesus Christ, who is the second Adam, as he himself terms Him in the first letter to the Romans and in the fifteenth chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians. You see then that this word "create" is enough to stop the mouths and put away the boasting of those who brag about their worthiness. For when they say so, it presupposes that they were the makers of themselves. He who claims for himself any freedom of will and takes upon himself to have any means or ability to do good (of himself) is essentially saying that he is a creator. But there is no man who does not abhor such blasphemy. The blindest and maddest individuals in the world regard the word "creation" as a holy and sacred thing and will say that God is the very Creator or maker of all things.

Yet you hypocrite, you confess the same with your mouth, and yet you lie, forasmuch as you think that you have some free will to further your own welfare and salvation. And so you deny the first article of our faith: for you make God but half a creator. They will readily confess with their mouth that God is the Creator, yes, and as

far as this earthly life is concerned, they will say they hold it from Him. But now there is a much more excellent life, namely the one we hope for and possess already by faith, even if we do not yet fully enjoy it. And how much more precious and worthy is that life, wherein we shall be partakers of God's glory, than this wayfaring life we lead in this world, which is but a shadow that vanishes away?

Now if you ask the Papists from whom they have the heavenly life, they will say, "We have it partly of God's grace and partly of our own free will." Since they attribute some part thereof to themselves, and think to share the credit with God in such a manner, we must conclude that they consider themselves their own creators. But hereupon they will reply and protest that they never meant any such thing, and that they would rather die than utter any such blasphemy. Yes, but in the meantime, which is the thing of greater value? To create oneself as a mortal man in this world or to purchase everlasting life? Saint Paul tells us that if we can do anything by our own free will and power, God is not fully our Creator.

But he says, we are His workmanship and of His making, even in respect of the heavenly life. We ought to bear that always in mind, for Saint Paul speaks not of this transitory life, but of inheriting the kingdom of heaven. We see then that the Papists defy God in their pride, like villainous blasphemers as they are. And therefore, for our part, if we intend to be partakers of the grace which is purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ, we must be rid of all self-importance and acknowledge that our beginning to do well springs from God's vouchsafing to call us to Him, and from His prevenient grace.

To be short, Saint Paul's meaning is that all those who think themselves to have deserved anything from God assume that they are people of great ability, whereas in truth, they are already dead and

are nothing at all. What can a dead man do? And surely we are dead (as I have declared heretofore) until God quickens us again by the means of faith and by the working of His Holy Spirit. Now if we are dead, what good can we do, or how can we dispose ourselves to do anything? Again, we are nothing at all, for the word "create" implies that all that is in us is of God's doing. Just as when it is said that He created the world out of nothing, it means that where there was nothing at all before, He gave being to that which was not.

Even so, with respect to the spiritual life, to be created means that we were nothing at all before. Now, if we are nothing, shall we be able to bind God to give us this or that? Are these not things utterly against nature? Then let us mark well that to know how we are saved by mere grace, and that we have all things from God's gift and His free goodness, we must come to this point, namely that God gave us our being. This is attested to by the example of Abraham in the fourth chapter of Romans. In Abraham's body, we see what is in our souls. When Jesus Christ was promised to Abraham in his son Isaac, you know he was a man altogether drooping and barren, and his wife also was far advanced in age.

Therefore, that either he on his side should beget, or his wife on her side should conceive a child, are things impossible. But he believed God, who calls forth the things that are not, and gives them being. Seeing then that Abraham was as a withered block, and had no strength nor vitality in him, and yet received the promise that was made to him: therein it behooves us to see that we cannot be partakers of God's grace, except we acknowledge our own inability, and are first of all utterly abased in ourselves, that our Lord may begin our life and continue the same until He has brought it to full perfection.

Furthermore, let us mark well that his saying "in Jesus Christ" is to send us back to the corruption which we have by inheritance in Adam. For we can never find it in our hearts to yield ourselves guilty until we feel it proceed in ourselves. Moreover, it serves to show that this benefit is not common to all men, but only to those whom God has chosen, accordingly as we have seen already, that we were chosen before the making of the world. Now then, this does not extend generally to all Adam's offspring but only to as many as are renewed in Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is all one as if St. Paul should show that we need a remedy because we are already forlorn and damned when God, by means of Jesus Christ, plucks us out of the dungeon wherein we were.

This serves to confirm even better what we have seen before, which is that we cannot be faithful except God makes us new again, so as we hold from Him all things that belong to the heavenly life and all the spiritual goods which we have. Now, seeing we are created in Jesus Christ, it is all one as if it were said that all the righteousness, all the wisdom, all the virtue, and all the goodness that is in us, we draw from that fountain, and that God does not scatter them abroad at random but has put the fullness of all things belonging to our salvation into Jesus Christ. Thus, when we are once made members of His body, we are also made partakers of all His benefits. Without Him, we are cut off from all parts of our salvation, as though we were rotten and stinking wretched carcasses, and there was nothing in us but filth, as I have declared before. Thus, you see what we have to mark further when St. Paul says that we are not only God's workmanship but also created in Jesus Christ.

Now he adds, "to good works which He has prepared for us to walk in." His setting down of good works in this place is to show what folly, or rather what madness and frenzy, it is in men to think they

can bring good works on their behalf, as if they had them in their sleeves, or as if they were of their own growing. For needs must God have prepared them (says he), and that we should have them at His hand. It is all one as if he should say, go to, show here your prowess and virtues: enter a little into account with God: seeing your pride will not be daunted, but you have always some bristles set up still, bring forth all that you think may make for you.

Well, you say, and we will bring our good works, as the Papists are wont to do, who allege in this way: what? how now? shall we not be saved by our own merits and by our good works? And whence do you draw them, says St. Paul? Have you coined them in your own shop? Or have you some garden of your own planting, from which to gather them? Or do they spring, I know not how, of your own travail and policy, so as you may further yourselves by them? No, but on the contrary, know you that God has prepared them. And is it fitting that you should reply against Him, when He has pitied you and shown Himself bountiful towards you? Is it fitting that you should presume to step forth to pay Him, as though you had wherewith of your own?

When a man has been well kept and tended, and his host has lent him money at his need, and he has received it at his hand (to pay him withal), shall he afterward boast that he has paid his host? There is a host who not only is contented to do his charity upon a man but also, after he has found him both at bed and at board, will say to him, "Here, hold wherewith to pay: to the intent it may not seem to you that my charitable dealing has been to make an underling of you, I will receive payment for it at your hand, yea, but yet the same shall come out of mine own purse." Now, shall he to whom such frankness has been used go and say he has well paid his host? Yea, and with what money? Even with the same money that was put into his hand.

So stands the case with those who put forth their good works, to say that God has not saved them freely, but that they themselves were a help to it. Yea, but where do they get those good works? That was the thing that St. Paul aimed at when he said that God prepared the good works. True it is that God prepares men's conversations by the Law, wherein He gives us a certain rule how to walk according to His will: and it is all one as if He prepared the way for us to go in as we ought to do. But that would be of no use to us, except we received the good works themselves at God's hand. When God commands us anything, we may well have our ears beaten with the sound of it, but it will never enter into our hearts, for we are full of pride and naughtiness, and, to be short, it is impossible for us to obey God until He has softened our hearts and utterly changed them.

And that is the thing which is declared to us by the Prophets, and in all the holy Scripture. God, therefore, must be fain to make another preparation: that is to say, when He has taught us and told us what is good and what He likes, afterward He must reform us, and so guide and govern us by His Holy Spirit, that there may be one accord between our life and His Law. Then, until such time as God prepares good works after that fashion, that is to say, until He gives us them by showing us His will, and also makes us do them by His power, we must needs be utterly unprofitable.

Now, since it is so, let us learn to humble ourselves before God, both for what is past and also for what is to come. For that which is past, let us acknowledge that God has plucked us out of the gulf of hell, and that whereas we were by nature damned, He has vouchsafed to have us be His children. Therefore, let us not be so overweening as to think that we have this or that, but let Him be glorified as He deserves. Let us assure ourselves that He has pulled us back from death, with the intent that the beginning, wellspring, root, and only

cause of our salvation should proceed from His only freely bestowed goodness.

Thus, you see, in effect, that it is a point of true humility to give all the glory of our salvation to God. And for that which is to come, it behooves us to know that we could not stir one of our little fingers to do any good, except we were governed by God, and received the good works themselves at the hand of Him and of His Holy Spirit. So then, as often as we feel our own weakness, let us flee to Him for refuge. When we have done any good, let it not puff us up with any pride, but let us always think ourselves so much the more strictly bound to God, even doubly. He that is yet very weak must confess himself exceedingly bound to God's mercy for bearing with him, but he that goes before others, and is as a mirror of all holiness, must confess himself much more bound to Him.

For why? He has nothing of his own; he holds all things of God and of His only free goodness. Wherefore, let us all our lives long walk in such a way that we may still, from year to year, from month to month, from day to day, from hour to hour, and from minute to minute, continually acknowledge ourselves bound to God for the goodness which He has given us of His own mere mercy, and let us think ourselves beholden to Him for all things.

Let us mark by the way, for a conclusion, that St. Paul's intent here is not to decipher all the causes of our salvation one by one, but to abate men's lustiness, that they might not make any brags, or any countenance as if God is in their debt. Therefore, it is enough for St. Paul to have stopped all men's mouths in such wise, as they may not take upon themselves to have anything of their own. For contrariwise, whenever God gives us good works, although they be the fruits of His mere goodness, yet can they not purchase us

anything at His hand. We must always ground and settle ourselves upon the forgiveness of our sins. There lies all our righteousness.

To be short, there are two things requisite in yielding God the praise that is due for our salvation: first, that we acknowledge ourselves to have all things from Him; and secondly, that we acknowledge that all the good works, and all the good will which He has given us already, serve not to purchase us favor at His hand, nor for us to trust upon, but to show us that He needs to uphold us and to bury and forget all our sins, and that by that means we are justified before Him, because He acquits us, notwithstanding that we deserve to be condemned a hundred times.

So then, to be short, when it is told us that there is neither free will nor anything else in man, it is to the end that we should learn to give all glory to God and not have any cause to vaunt ourselves anymore. Afterward, upon knowing this, we should understand that we would be in continual trouble and perplexity were it not that we are sure that we shall always obtain grace and mercy by coming to God with tears and lamenting. And how so? Because He vouchsafes to acquit us, and although He could thunder down upon us and drown us, yet He buries our sins by means of our Lord Jesus Christ and receives us always with mercy.

Thus, then, you see how men ought in all points, and in all cases, to be confounded in themselves and to be ashamed of their own lewdness, that they may glorify God; and therewithal acknowledge that they should always be in doubt and anguish, except that God evermore pities them, and that the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ is the sacrifice whereby we are reconciled to Him. That, therefore, is the true way to uphold and avow God to be the Savior of the world; and that also is the way for us to attribute all things to the

grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as He deserves: namely by erasing and putting away all the glorying which we pretend to have in ourselves, and thereupon to confess, not only that all the goodness which is in us is of God's putting into us, but also that He must be fain to bear with our infirmities, because we cease not to provoke His wrath until He makes that satisfaction available, which was made by the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But now let us cast ourselves down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our sins, praying Him to make us feel them more and more, until we are so pulled down that there may be no more show of sin in us; and that in the meantime, we may nevertheless seek the aid and help of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that, forasmuch as He has partly enlightened us already by His Holy Spirit, it may please Him to increase His grace in us more and more, until He has communicated it wholly unto us; and in the meantime, so uphold us and govern us by His Holy Spirit, as our whole endeavor may be nothing else but to frame our life after His holy law; and that He may not consider the great number of our sins which we commit, never ceasing to stray away to our own undoing, but hold us back by His secret power, until He takes us away out of this world, and joins us with our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the fountain of all perfection, that we also may be perfect in Him.

And so let us say, Almighty God, heavenly Father, etc.

The Twelfth Sermon,

which is the Fourth upon the Second Chapter

11. Wherefore remember that you who were sometime Gentiles in the flesh, being called uncircumcision, in respect of that which is called circumcision, made by hand in the flesh:

12. Were at that time without Christ, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants that contain the promise, without hope, and without God in the world.

13. But now in Jesus Christ, you that were erstwhile far off, are made near by the blood of Christ.

Although the things that are preached to us generally concerning God's grace ought to move us to magnify his name and to acknowledge the benefits that we have received from him, yet if a thing is done privately to us, then ought we to be touched even more thereby. The same order is followed by Saint Paul here. For we have seen this morning how he made clear that all that is in man is nothing, so that there might be only one foundation of salvation, which is the mere goodness of God. Now he applies the same particularly to the Ephesians, willing them to reflect on the plight in which God found them: as if after speaking of all mankind, he should send every one of us to his own experience. Indeed, that which is spoken here to the Ephesians concerns us also, like as if a man, having told us of the forlornness into which we are plunged by Adam's fall, should say: "Consider also what you were, and in what

sort you lived in all beastliness, before such time as God called you to the knowledge of himself."

The thing then which we have to mark is that Saint Paul, having shown how all men from the greatest to the least ought to confess that they have their salvation through God's only goodness, adds another particular declaration, wherein he shows what every one of the faithful ought to know in himself. True, the thing which he has said for that time would not agree in all points to our days, but yet Saint Paul's answer will always have its course and serve a good purpose. For although we have been baptized from our infancy, yet we come from such as were once cut off from God's Church. For the Jews were set apart from all other nations of the world as a people whom God had ordained to himself. We were then all heathen (I mean in respect of our forefathers) before the Gospel was preached to the world. But now again we see what confusion has come upon us through the unthankfulness of such as were called to the truth of the Gospel, and how we have strayed away in such a sort that we have been as good as cut off from God's Church again. For the baptism that we received in our childhood stood us in no other stead but to make us doubly guilty before God. For they that were plunged in the superstitions of popery and in all the idolatries that are committed there had as good as renounced their baptism and were become renegades. And we cannot excuse ourselves for having been forsworn unto God, seeing we were strayed from his obedience. Therefore it is not for us to make any boasting or to seek any excuse to cover our wretchedness withal, but rather to confess freely that we were as deadly enemies to God and worthy to have been utterly given over by him because he had reached out his hand to bring us back again to the way of salvation.

So then, first we take this text as it lies to apply it to the Ephesians, and afterward look to take profit from it ourselves. Now then, let us see the contents and substance of these words: "Bethink yourselves and remember how you were once Gentiles."

First, he puts a difference between the Jews and those whom God had suffered to walk on still in their own darkness. For it was a special privilege that God gave to Abraham's offspring when he adopted them, to say to them, "You shall be my people whom I favour as though you were of my own household." Those then who came not of Abraham's line were as good as banished from God's kingdom and Church. And he adds, "in the flesh," not as he speaks in diverse other places where he uses that word in reproach, but to show that God had shown by a visible fashion how wretched their state was and that they needed not any great depth of wit to perceive it. For circumcision, he says, served as it were to rid men of their uncleanness. Furthermore, that sacrament was ordained of God to show that all the seed of man is cursed and that we cannot be rightly made holy and pure but by the cutting off and putting away of the things that we have by nature. To be short, just as nowadays we are taught by baptism to renounce whatsoever we have by birth, so also was circumcision a token to show how all men were filthy and loathsome till they had forsaken their own kind.

Now then, Saint Paul's meaning is that the said visible sign showed well to all the heathen that they were, as it were, unworthy to approach unto God and that he did not deign to receive them into the company of the faithful. For the Jews had not invented circumcision of their own brain, but (as I have said before) God had set them apart from the rest of the world, and all was by reason of the privilege of his own mere grace and goodness.

Hereupon Saint Paul adds further that they were at that time without Christ. This serves to show yet better that men are horribly scattered and can do nothing but run astray until God has knit them together in the body of his Son and adopted them to be his children. For we know that Jesus Christ is the light of the world and that all righteousness dwells in him, and that he is our redemption and life. So long, then, as we have no acquaintance with him, we must needs be like poor blind men in the dark; we must needs be as good as dead; we must needs be naked of all holiness, righteousness, power, and all goodness. And forasmuch as our freedom depends upon him, we must needs be held under the tyranny of the devil and of sin until he has ransomed us from them. For this cause, therefore, does Saint Paul send us here, under the person of the Ephesians, to Jesus Christ, to the end that those who are not partakers of God's Son should know that it were better for them to be drowned a hundred times than to continue always in that state. And why? For since we can have neither life nor soul health nor righteousness nor ought else that is allowable but in Jesus Christ, it is all one as if he said that we have nothing but utter naughtiness and destruction in ourselves.

He adds thereto the commonwealth of Israel, showing thereby that all the promises made to the Jews were grounded upon Jesus Christ. And therefore they that do not belong to his body are forthwith deprived of all God's promises and cannot conceive any hope of life but only by imagination, wherein they beguile themselves. And verily, he adds the instruments (or covenants and conveyances) of the promises, as if he should say that God had not called the Jews as it were in a hidden manner but had passed a solemn conveyance or evidence which served to leave all the world in condemnation. Therefore, forasmuch as God had advanced Abraham's lineage, it must needs be that the rest of the world was so much the more confounded, like as if some princes or some cities should make a

league, all others that are not comprehended in it are as good as deprived of the benefit that is contained in it. And when God declared that he took the Jews to be his flock and that he would be their Father and Saviour, he declared also that no part thereof could come to the Gentiles, whom he had, after a sort, forsaken, and to whom he had not vouchsafed to show the like mercy. Finally, he says that they had been without God, which is the full measure of all mischief. For what shall become of man when his God has so shaken him off that there is no access for him nor no coming to him again? And that not only is he forsaken of his God, but also he cannot but plunge himself deeper and deeper into the bottom of hell and make war against God, as though he were in defiance with him, because he is stubborn and rebellious against all goodness? Thus you see that the thing which Saint Paul sets forth here, to the intent that the Ephesians should profit themselves by the things that he had said this morning concerning the only cause of our salvation, is that there is none other thing for us to trust unto but only God's mere grace.

But now let us come to ourselves. I have already declared briefly that our fathers were in the same state that Saint Paul sets down here. And therefore we have no cause to brag of, as oft as we think of what root and origin we spring. For if the very Jews be at this day a record of God's wrath and horrible vengeance, which he lays upon them for their unbelief, is there not much more cause for us to cast down our eyes, who are but as things born out of time? For the Jews are of the holy root that God had chosen, and we are but grafted into it in their stead. If God has not spared the natural branches, what will he do to us that have been brought in as it were against nature? Lo, how Saint Paul exhorts us to lowliness, to the end that we should learn to submit ourselves always to God's mere goodness and frankly and freely confess that our welfare consists therein. Also, I told you secondly, not only that our fathers were strangers to the hope of

salvation because they were not adopted as well as the Jews, but also that the horrible scattering which came upon the whole world, and which reigns in it still at this day, ought to beat down all pride and presumption, that God's grace may shine the brighter upon us. Now then (as I said), although we are baptized and have the badge of God's goodness and free adoption, yet, notwithstanding, we have been wretched idolaters and were gone away from our Lord Jesus Christ, and the things that we had in greatest estimation turned to our greater damnation instead of being for our welfare. Therefore, we have good cause here to bethink ourselves.

Furthermore, for as much as we are short-witted in magnifying God's grace, let us weigh well this word which Saint Paul uses here to bring us to remembrance of the things which we might forget. For when we are endowed with God's grace, and it has pleased Him to give us some good desire to walk in His fear, and He has worked so in us by His Holy Spirit, as men may perceive that there is some goodness in us, it may make us forget by and by what we were before, by means whereof God's grace is as good as buried. To the intent, therefore, that our present plight hinders not our continual praising of God and our esteeming of His goodness and grace as it deserves, let no length of time darken the benefits that we have received of God, but let us as it were enter into an examination of them every day. And although God has changed our state at this day so that we are no more the men that we were before, yet notwithstanding let us bear in mind that before God had pity upon us, we were as silly sheep that went astray, and as beasts that are utterly lost, and that without the same small beginning, we had been damned ten hundred thousand times before, had not God prevented us and given us a remedy for the cursed state wherein we were. You see then, that the thing which we have to consider upon the said speech, whereby Saint Paul puts the Ephesians in mind of what they were before, is that although God

had put away the thing that should have made them ashamed, and marked them beforehand with His Holy Spirit, so as they were become as precious pearls, yet notwithstanding He will have them to bethink themselves, (like as indeed it is, the fruits of repentance which the scripture sets down), that when God has reached us His hand, and brought us home again from our straying, we cease not to bethink ourselves of our former sins, even in such wise as we may be sorry, abashed, and ashamed of them.

Whereas he says, that the Gentiles have good cause to hold down their heads, because they were sometime without assurance of God's goodness and love, thereby we are put in mind that we receive a singular benefit at God's hand when we have the use of His sacraments, which are as warrants that He takes and avows us to be of His household and Church. True it is that if we abuse them, we shall pay dearly for it, but yet whatsoever comes of it, when the sacraments are put to the end whereunto they were ordained, it is certain that they are as it were inestimable treasures, as I said before. For although we have God's promise that He takes us for His children even from our coming out of our mother's womb, yet there is nothing but uncleanness in our flesh. Now then, have we baptism? There it is shown us that God washes and cleanses us from all our uncleanness, that He pulls us out of the confusion wherein we were with our father Adam, and that He will have us clothed with Jesus Christ to be partakers of all His goods, as though they were our own.

We see then what baptism imports, and consequently how much we ought to esteem this grace of God's coming unto us in such wise, and of His showing of Himself to be our Father in such a homely manner. As much is to be said of the Supper. For there it is shown visibly that Jesus Christ is the true food of our souls, that like as our bodies are sustained and nourished with the bread and wine, so we have our

spiritual life of the very substance of God's Son. Seeing then that our Lord Jesus does as it were from hand to hand show us that He gives us His body and blood to be our spiritual meat and drink, is it not a thing much more worth than all things that are to be found in this world? And herein we see how malicious and froward most men are, for as touching the Lord's Supper, many come to it who rush thither like wretched beasts, not knowing why it was ordained. Some again make but a custom and ordinary use of it, and although they have been taught to what purpose it avails us, yet they do but wring their mouths at it, and all is one to them when it is once past with them. And some others defile it even wilfully. And as touching baptism, we see how the world goes with it. For whereas we ought to think daily, and not only once a day, but every hour of the day, both upon Baptism and also upon the Lord's Supper, to confirm ourselves the better in God's grace, so little does any man set his mind that way, that if baptism be administered in the Church, men make none account of it. Scarcely can one be found among a hundred that can fitly tell and utter what that sign of our adoption betokens. And yet you see what disdain is matched with that ignorance. Must not God after His long suffering of us, and His patient waiting for us, be revenged of such dishonour, when His grace is so lightly esteemed among us? So much the more, therefore, does it stand us in hand to mark well what Saint Paul tells us here when he says that the Gentiles being deprived of the sacraments which God gives to His children for a warrant of His goodness and love, are in miserable taking, to the end we may learn to make much of the privilege which He has given us, not to boast foolishly of it, as hypocrites do, who abuse God's name continually, but to make us to fare the better by a thing of so great price and value, and to make us know that we are no whit better than those who are as poor hunger-starved souls against whom God shuts the gate still, and to whom He does not vouchsafe to impart those pledges of His, wherein He shows and witnesses that

He will be our Father. You see the Turks have circumcision as well as the Jews, and yet it is nothing worth, because there is no more any promise of God going with it, and yet notwithstanding we come of Adam's race as well as they. Wherefore have we Baptism but because God intended to show Himself the more pitiful towards us and to utter the riches of His goodness? Again, the Papists will need to be called Christians, and have Baptism as well as we. And yet in the meantime, they are bereft of the Holy Supper, yea, and they have the abominable Mass, wherein they renounce the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. And what cause is there why we should be so preferred before them, saving that God would have us to be as mirrors of His infinite mercy? So much the more, therefore, it behooves us to walk in awe and wariness, and to set store by the things which God shows us to be of such worthiness and excellency, that we may fare the better by them. Wherefore mark it for a special point when Saint Paul speaks here of Circumcision and uncircumcision. For although he says in other places that Circumcision is nothing, (albeit that was but because it was abolished, and the use thereof ceased, as of all other figures of the Law), yet notwithstanding, at such time as God ordained it, and so long as the Jews used it holily, it was a sure warrant to them of God's adoption, as if He had cleansed them from all the filthiness that is in Adam's race and appropriated them unto Himself.

After he has said so, he adds that they were without Christ and without promises. Here he shows that the sacraments take and borrow their force from God's word. For if there were no more than the bare signs, it would be no matter of great importance. If circumcision had been given to the Jews without any doctrine or instruction, to what purpose would it have served? Surely they would have been none the better for it. But when God says, "I am the God who sanctifies you, you shall be my children, I will receive you, and

take you for my inheritance; and on the other side also I give myself to you, and will be your life": for as much as circumcision had such promises, it was an inestimable treasure to the Jews because the foundation (that is to say, our Lord Jesus Christ) was laid sure, whereon the promises were settled and, as you would say, confirmed. That then is the cause why Saint Paul joins here the commonwealth of Israel, the instruments of God's promises, and our Lord Jesus Christ all together.

However, in speaking of the commonwealth of Israel, he shows that God had chosen one certain lineage which he would have to be holy, and so it was to be concluded that all the rest were unholy. In speaking of the instruments of the promises, he shows (as I have touched already) that we must not look upon circumcision in itself, but we must direct it to the right end of it. It behooves us to know why God would have it used among the Jews, for otherwise, it is but an ape's toy, like the number of foolish devotions which the Gentiles had, whereby they hoped to have had holiness, but all of it was but abuse and trickery because they had no promise of God. Likewise, they say nowadays in the papacy that they have many sacraments and, with them, as many mummeries and baubles as can be, but all that God disallows is but trivial trash. And why? Because there is no word that sanctifies them.

So then let us mark well that to profit ourselves by the sacraments, we must always be taught them by God's doctrine. And thereby we may judge that many are cut off from the Church of God who are now thought to be the highest in it. For in the meantime, where is the instruction, which they should have to be partakers of the benefits that God offers them? They will allege their baptism, and they will say they receive the Lord's Supper. If a man asks them to what end, they understand nothing at all, and that is as an utter abolishing of

the power of the sacraments. So much the more, therefore, does it stand us in hand to come back to this point, namely to learn from the Gospel, to what end baptism was ordained, what fruit it yields us, and which is the right and lawful use of it, and also to consider what the holy Supper avails us. For if we have not God's word, our Lord himself tells us that the sacraments which we receive are as it were debased, and there is nothing but falsehood in them. And like as if a man should set a prince's seal to a letter that had nothing therein, or which had but imaginations and dreams contrived in it, it were an offense worthy of death: so also for as much as the sacraments are as seals to warrant God's promises to us, and to make them of authority among us, if we separate them from his word, it is certain that we are falsifiers before God and his angels. That, therefore, is one thing more which we have to mark upon this strain.

And we must mark also that Jesus Christ is set down with the commonwealth of Israel, and with the sacraments and promises, to show that it is he on whom all of us depend. For it is certain that God never comes at men without the mediator. For since he hates unrighteousness, and all men are cursed in Adam, it was necessary that our Lord Jesus Christ should step in so that we might have some entrance and access to God. And that is the cause why Saint Paul says also that he is the "yea" and the "Amen" of all God's promises. For there shall never be any certainty of God's promises without Jesus Christ. And for the same cause also all things were dedicated in the Law with blood, yea, and even the book of the Law itself. When the covenant was read openly, and published solemnly to the people, the book was sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice, to show that all the doctrine contained in the Law, and all the promises whereby God adopts those to be his children whom he has admitted into his Church, must be confirmed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, do we want the promises to be sure and infallible? Do we want

to be assured of them so that we may freely call upon God and fight against all temptations? We must always resort to Jesus Christ. It is much when God tells us with his own holy mouth that he will reserve us for his own, but yet we must tremble continually at his majesty until we have cast our eyes upon our Lord Jesus Christ and know that God likes us for his sake so that our sins are buried and shall never come to account. Thus you see how the promises, the sacraments, and all that we have, must be ratified by Jesus Christ. To be brief, (if I may make a human comparison, and speak grossly), he is the true sauce to make all things savory that belong to our salvation. For without him, we should continue evermore as men in a swoon, and (as I have said already) we could conceive no hope at all, nor have our minds so settled that we might resort to God for refuge. Not without cause, therefore, does Saint Paul say that such as have no circumcision, nor other sacraments whereby to be consecrated unto God, nor any promises of salvation, are without Christ.

And now he adds a thing which may seem hard and strange at first sight when he says that the Ephesians were without God. For it is certain that although they were wretched idolaters, yet they had a certain opinion that the world was not made of itself. For we know that all men have continually held some seed of religion, and even they who overshoot themselves so far as to wipe out all knowledge of God are first most ugly monsters. Secondly, although they strive to thrust all knowledge of God underfoot, yet must they need to have heart-throbbings that sting them in spite of their teeth, and they be driven to feel that they cannot escape the hand of God.

However the case stands, we are naturally inclined to know that there is a God. And the heathen men have always had their devotions and divine services (as they termed them) to show that they worshipped some Godhead. How then does St. Paul say here that

they were without God? We have to note that it is not enough for men to confess that there is some certain Godhead and to endeavour to discharge themselves of their duty by serving a God, but they must also have a certain settled belief, that they wander not to and fro after the manner that is spoken of in the first chapter to the Romans, where it is said that such as devise strange shapes of God do vanish away in their own foolish imaginations. Now it is certain that all such as are not taught by God's word, by the law, by the prophets, and by the gospel, are out of the right way, and after a sort, at their wit's end, so as they be tossed to and fro like wavering reeds that yield to every wind, and thereupon make sundry shapes of God. For every man builds and forges crooked conceits in his own brain, and we know that man's wit is as a shop of idolatry and superstition, in so much that if a man believes his own conceit, it is certain that he shall forsake God and forge some idol in his own brain. Lo, what we be. And it may right well be said that we be without God when we wander away after that fashion in our own imaginations and in our false opinions. And that is the cause why St. Paul says that such as have had a mind to worship some unknown gods have worshipped nothing but idols and fantastical imaginations, and that God belongs not at all unto them, and so consequently, that they were utterly forsaken by him, like as they had become renegades and had renounced him before. So much the more then behooves it us to travel and take pain to know which is the God whom we ought to worship.

I have told you already that it is not enough for a man to allege that he has a good intent and that he meant to worship God: that will go for no payment, for God likes not the liberty that men take to make themselves believe this or that. Since it is so, we must present ourselves before God with all wariness, that he may show us the way to come unto him. For else we shall but go astray, and he that runs

swiftest shall be furthest off from him, yea, and in the end, break his neck. Lo in what case we be till God has reached us his hand and set us in the right way, that we may not be as poor wandering beasts all the time of our life.

Again, for as much as he has given us a record of his majesty in the holy scripture, it becomes us to hold ourselves short thereunto and not to covet to know anything which is not shown us there. What must then be our lodestar to know God by? To suffer ourselves to be taught by his word and to be so discreet as to receive whatsoever is contained there without gainsaying and not to presume to add anything at all thereto. And we ought so much the more to have that care, since we know how St. John avows that he who has not the Son has not the Father. Then like as I have told you, that because God reveals himself in this word, it behooves us to seek him there; so also for as much as our Lord Jesus Christ is his lively image, let us not enter into over high speculations, to know what God is: but let us repair to Jesus Christ, acknowledging that it is his office to bring us to God his Father, and that it is he by whom we must be guided, and so shall we be sure that we shall not be without God in this world. Now if they that take so much pain, and trot up and down to serve God, be condemned here to be without God because they have not held the true rule, but have been beguiled in their superstitions: what shall become of the dogs and swine that have no awe at all of God, especially since they bereave themselves of all knowledge and degenerate into beasts, after they have had some understanding of the truth, by having their ears beaten with the holy scripture? Of which sort we see a great number nowadays, who to take the advantage of the time, and to make good cheer at their pleasure, could find in their hearts to quench, or to darken the light that God had caused to shine upon them, yea, even to the utter defying of God's majesty, as though there were no more instruction at all.

We see how this cursed seed is dispersed abroad at this day through all the whole world. But (as I said before) if the poor ignorant sort, which never had any certain way, but have been as blind wretches wandering here and there to seek God, and yet he has not showed himself unto them, have none excuse at all, but are condemned at God's hand because they had not a true root, what shall become of the unhappy wretches that despise God in that wise, and are set against him, saying, we know no more what the true doctrine and religion mean. So much the more then ought we to humble ourselves and to know that since God has revealed himself unto us, now that he is joined to us with an inseparable bond, and has shown himself a Father to us, and has vouchsafed to make us members of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and made us one with him, with the condition that whatsoever he has belongs now unto us: we ought to learn to magnify that grace, and to acknowledge what we have been, and what we should be still, if God had not shown himself merciful towards us.

Hereupon a man might demand what St. Paul meant by the word "world": for it should seem that out of the world they were not without God. However, that was to aggravate the matter so much the more, by saying that the Ephesians had enjoyed the light of the sun, all the elements had served them, and they had received so many commodities of God's gift in all his creatures, and yet had not known him. For what else is the world but an open stage whereon God will have his majesty seen? Let us lift up our eyes: do not the sun, the moon, and the stars, lead us to him that gave them the virtues which we perceive in them? For behold, the sun is far off from us, and yet he gives us light. Again, he causes the earth to bring forth fruits, also we see the double course that he keeps: and although he wanders now on one side, and now on the other, yet notwithstanding he keeps his compass continually, and never forgets how far he ought to go on

the one side or the other, as huge a mass as he is. If a ball or a bowl were to be held up, it would need some help: but behold, the sun has nothing to hold it up, but the secret power of God: and yet notwithstanding he is so huge and infinite a mass, as exceeds all the whole earth. Mount he up, or go he low, turn he, or return he, on the one side or the other: yet keeps he his course still every day through the whole world, and every year also on the contrary part, and yet for all this he misses not in any of all those things.

To be short, when we behold the skies, we ought to be ravished with a desire to go unto God. Again, when we behold the things that are nearer us, namely the variety of the good things that God bestows upon us, we have cause to do the like. Finally, without going any further, let us but enter into ourselves. If a man looks but upon one of his fingers, what workmanship and what goodness of God is there? We then are in the world where God utters such abundance of miracles, whereby it is his meaning, to be known and worshipped: and yet notwithstanding we play the beasts, and go on like blockheads without any understanding, not knowing the God that made us and fashioned us, even him that utters and shows himself in all his creatures both above and beneath. Is not this enough then to bereave them of all excuse, who play the beasts in their ignorance, living here but only to devour God's benefits, and in the meantime repair not to him, to do him honour, or to offer him their service? Then is it not without cause, that Saint Paul adds yet further this saying, that such as were so destitute of the knowledge of the Gospel, were without God in the world.

Now thereupon on the other side, he sets down the grace of God, which they had received, to the end, they should know that it was not of their own purchase, nor obtained by their own policy and ability, but that they ought to consider well how greatly they are bound unto

God, for raising them up to heaven from the deep dungeons of hell. If God had but lent us his hand to lift us up when we were fallen but to the ground, and so let us alone in our own state, we should be beholden to him for it. For when we are fallen, and somebody helps to lift us up again, we will thank him, and so ought we to do. Behold now, God has not only lifted us up from the ground but also drawn us out of the gulf of hell. And his doing so is not to make us creep here beneath upon the earth or to make us to enjoy the benefits that he offers us here presently: but to advance us to the kingdom of heaven, as we have seen heretofore, how we are put in possession of it already by faith, and are set in the person of Jesus Christ in the glory that he has purchased for us, for he has entered into it on our behalf. Seeing it is so, have we not cause to magnify God's grace so much the more? So have you Saint Paul's meaning, in that he says, that now by Jesus Christ you become near unto God, even you (says he) which were far off before. Therefore at a word (for as much as the whole, cannot be laid forth at this time) let us understand, that whereas men seem to have some worthiness in themselves, they cannot but stray away to their own destruction, so long as they be separated from God because by nature they are strangers unto him, yea and quite cut off from him.

Moreover, let every one of us know for his own part, how we had forgotten God, and were quite turned away from him until he called us again unto him. When we know this, let us learn to magnify his grace for vouchsafing to reconcile us to himself, and to put away all the enmity that was betwixt him and us, and to make us his children of his deadly enemies, assuring ourselves, that all this is done by means of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the intent we should out of that fountain draw all that belongs to our salvation. And furthermore let us consider also, what furtherance we have by the helps that God has given us to come to Jesus Christ by, and to confirm us in him, to the

end we may have a resolute and sure doctrine. As for example, when the Gospel is daily preached unto us, Jesus Christ is offered there unto us, and he on his side calls us unto him. To be short, he has his arms stretched out to embrace us. Let us understand that: and afterward let us add the Sacraments thereunto, and seeing that Jesus Christ has not only commanded the open preaching of the Gospel, that he shows himself to be our Shepherd, and that he will have us to be his flock, but also confirms the same by Baptism, and by his last Supper: let us take good heed that we make not those signs unavailing through our own malice and unthankfulness: but let us (rather) consider to what end God has ordained them, and let us so use them, as we may grow more and more in faith, and be thereby inflamed with such zeal, as we may endeavour to give ourselves wholly unto God, since it has pleased him also to give himself unto us.

And now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying him, not only to make every one of us know the vices wherewith we be attainted, but also those which he has vouchsafed to cleanse us of, and especially that we may come to our original, and consider that even from our mothers' wombs we bring nothing but sin, and that we cease not to increase it more and more, that when we know it, we may bless his holy name for the knowledge which he has given us, and be so provoked to repair unto him, as we may hold the right way, without swerving from our Lord Jesus Christ, because without him we must needs be banished from the kingdom of heaven and shut quite and clean out of it. So then, let us hold that way, and call upon this good God of ours incessantly, that he vouchsafes to make us feel by experience, that his calling of us unto him, is not in vain: that we, finding such fruit of our prayers, may be so much the more encouraged to flee to him for our refuge, and also to give him thanks for all the benefits

which we receive at his hand. That it may please him to grant this grace, not only to us but also to all people. Amen.

The Thirteenth Sermon, which is the fifth upon the second Chapter.

13 Now in Jesus Christ, you that once were far off, are made near by the blood of Christ.

14 For he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the wall that was between them,

15 That is to say, the enmity, through his flesh, abolishing the law of the commandments which were in ordinances: to the end he might set them both in himself, to make one new man of them.

We have seen heretofore how we are all enemies of God by nature because we have gone away from all righteousness through the sin of Adam, so there is nothing in us but lewdness and rebelliousness. Although men soothe and flatter themselves, it is certain that they cannot bring anything before God which will not provoke His wrath. God must necessarily disclaim us as His children unless we are guided by our Lord Jesus Christ, for we cannot come to God by any other means.

The Jews had some familiarity with God because He had adopted them; it is said that Abraham's offspring was holy. This was not because they were more worthy than the rest of the world, but because of God's goodness in choosing them. Therefore, before our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, the Jews were nearer to God, while the Gentiles were further off. Not that the Jews were better than the Gentiles, as I said before, but because it had pleased God to count them as His own household. You see then that they were near because it was said to them that God dwelt among them, and they were a priestly kingdom. This was also visible through the signs given to them, such as the Sanctuary and all its appurtenances.

Now St. Paul, addressing the Gentiles, says that they have changed their state. Whereas they were once far from God, they are now made near by the cross of Jesus Christ. This serves to magnify God's grace even more. For as I have declared before, if we do not consider the plight in which God finds us before He reaches out to draw us to Him, we shall never know how much we are beholden and bound to Him, nor how great His mercy is toward us.

When it is shown to us that from our birth we are cursed, held under the devil's tyranny, enslaved to sin, and that God is as it were armed against us to be our judge with all severity, then added further that God has drawn us out of the dungeon of hell to advance us to the kingdom of heaven, assuring us that we have our inheritance there, which cannot fail us, and also showing us that we have the certainty of all these things in Jesus Christ, then we must needs be rapt in wonderment, considering that God's goodness surpasses all our understanding. This is what St. Paul continues with here.

This matter is well worthy of frequent remembrance; it is not needless talk to put us in mind to yield God His due honor and to

have a steadfast settledness, so we may call upon Him freely, being thoroughly persuaded and resolved that He will always be a Father to us and accept us as His children if we are members of His only Son, as united to Him by belief in the Gospel.

You see then that the thing we have to mark in the first place is that by the means of our Lord Jesus Christ, because He has reconciled us to God His Father by His death, we are now brought near to the kingdom of heaven, from which we were far off, and without hope of access or entrance there. And although St. Paul has spoken to one nation, yet his message is general. Thus, the Holy Ghost exhorts us today by the same doctrine to consider our own misery, so we may be abashed in ourselves and receive the inestimable benefit offered to us by the Gospel in the person of Christ.

Hereupon he adds that He is our peace, making both one, even those who were far off, as well as those who were near. Just as in the previously mentioned sentence, St. Paul aimed to humble the Gentiles and showed how much they were indebted to God, so here he adds a warning for the Jews to pull down their pride, so they might not think themselves better than other men because God had chosen them. For, as men are always given to advancing themselves beyond measure, that people abused God's grace and convinced themselves that the lineage of Abraham was as a lineage of angels. In short, when it was told them that the Church should be united together both of Jews and Gentiles without exception, they thought that God did them great wrong and injury. Inasmuch that it was often told them that God's choosing of them was neither for their virtue nor for their nobility, nor for anything else He found in their persons, but because He had loved their fathers without any desert of theirs.

Often, therefore, they were warned by Moses and the Prophets not to claim anything at all for themselves, but to acknowledge God's free goodness, to spy out themselves there, to the end they might confess that if they had any prerogative above others, that was not of themselves, nor for their own sakes, but because it was God's good pleasure to keep them to Himself for His own heritage. And yet for all that, St. Paul shows here that the Jews renounce their own salvation if they do not match with the Gentiles in true brotherhood. For why? Although the Jews were near God already and had witnessed that He held them for His children, yet the matter hung in suspense until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then it behooved them to be knit to God by the mediator, or else they would have had no peace in their consciences. For when men examine themselves, they must conclude that God is justly their enemy.

And for proof thereof, what have we in our thoughts, in our lusts, in our souls, and in our bodies but utter corruption? Therefore, it ought to make us quake as often as we think what we are. But the Jews had the ceremonies and shadows of the Law, which were assurances of God's grace unto them. Yes, but if they had stayed there, what a thing had that been? For the blood of brute beasts could not scour away their spots, nor set them in God's favor. Therefore, it stood them in hand to resort to Jesus Christ. And that is the reason why St. Paul shows that the Jews ought not to be so puffed up with pride as to shut the heathen out of the doors, as though they were not worthy to be of God's Church. For Jesus Christ is the mediator as well of the one as of the other unto God His Father. In so much, that without Him, all of us are shut out from the hope of salvation. No man then ought to despise his neighbor in this case, nor to look over the shoulder at him, as the proverb says. But we ought to embrace one another in true unity of faith and love, knowing that each one of us,

from the greatest to the least, should rightly be cut off from God's Church, but that He, of His own mere goodness, gathers us to Him.

After the same manner does St. James exhort the great men of this world to glory in their smallness, because God has taken away the blindfolding that prevented them from knowing their own wretchedness. For we know that men willfully abuse their greatness and believe themselves to be marvelous beings until they come to know God. Therefore, the great men of this world have their eyes blindfolded, which deceives them and makes them take the liberty to do what they wish. Now, St. James says that they have cause to glory in their smallness, for our Lord shows them to be creatures out of all hope, as of themselves, and yet nevertheless takes them into His favor by His own mercy. And let the humble ones (says he) rejoice in their nobility because God has exalted them, inasmuch that whereas they were but wretched worms, and had nothing but reproach in them, God has taken them up and made them new creatures.

You see then that the means to unite us as we ought to be is that each of us in his degree acknowledges himself to be in a wretched and miserable plight, and that when he has yielded all to God's mere mercy, he acknowledges that the same is spread over all today, and that it is not for us to limit or to bridle Him, but inasmuch as He has chosen us, it is our duty to receive those into our fellowship whom He has set in the same array and company with us. That (I say) is the thing that St. Paul aimed at in saying that our Lord Jesus Christ is the peace of all men, yea even as well of them that were near as of them that were yet far off. But yet (as I told you before) he had an eye to the foolish overweening of the Jews, which would have driven away the Gentiles from the kingdom of God. And he tells us that if we mind to have Jesus Christ to be our mediator, to give us entrance to God His Father, and to guide us thither, and that all this should be

grounded upon God's mere mercy, let us not be so foolish as to claim anything to ourselves, as if we were better than other men, or ought to be preferred before them, but let each of us acknowledge that all of us had need of God's infinite mercy, because all of us were shut up under sin, as St. Paul says in another place.

Now, we must apply this well to our own benefit. For some think that men are advanced the more because some of them have been of an honest and unblameable conversation to the world, some born of honorable houses, and others endowed with excellent virtues, or with some skill and cunning. To be short, every man searches and seeks as much as is possible, to allege something why God has accepted him rather than his neighbors. But let us learn that although we were near God in outward appearance, yet notwithstanding, the only way to be in His favor, and to be able to call upon Him, and to hope that He will hold us in His fatherly love even to the end, is that Jesus Christ be our head. And how may that be? It is certain that He has come to save that which was lost. And again, (as it is said in another place) it is a sure and infallible saying, that our Lord Jesus Christ came to call again to salvation the sinners that were in damnation. Since it is so, let us learn to humble ourselves with all modesty, and not only to shrink in our horns, but also to be utterly abased and brought underfoot, that God may be glorified as He is worthy, and that one of us does not perk above another, but make all one body, for that is the condition whereupon we are called.

Furthermore, the title that St. Paul gives to our Lord Jesus Christ, namely that He is our peace, ought to be well considered. Without that, we would always be as distraught, or as blocks. Those who have any feeling of their sins cannot be at rest without feeling severe torments, but are so out of quiet that it would be better for them to

be sunk under the earth than to see themselves continually cited before God's judgment seat and to be distressed in such a manner.

Then, if we do not have Jesus Christ for our peace, surely the awakening of our consciences must daunt us and hold us as if upon the rack, by making us feel that God sets Himself against us as an enemy. Otherwise, it must utterly confuse us and make us brute beasts, so that we not only fall further but also are so bewitched by the devil that we feel no more grief or remorse for our sins. Thus, this lesson, where it is said that Jesus Christ is our peace, cannot be emphasized enough. First, it warns us to be deeply touched by our sins, so that we may be sorry for them, considering that God's goodness calls none unto Him but those who are weary and heavy-laden. Again, when we once know this, we may overcome all distrust and doubting because, whereas we have provoked God's wrath, it is appeased again by our Lord Jesus Christ. Whereas we have contended with God and kept continual war against Him, Jesus Christ has made peace between us. And whereas God hates us for our sins and for our wicked and wayward nature, Jesus Christ puts all that away, so that God may take us, not only as His creatures fashioned after His own image, but also as His dear children, whom He has adopted to be heirs of His kingdom. And so you see what we have to gather upon that statement.

If this point were thoroughly understood, the world would not be so constantly afloat, nor so unsteady as it is. For most men nowadays are carried one way and another, and do nothing else but wander. The Papists on one side have their pride to keep them from continuing straightforward unto God. They will maintain their free will and their own worthiness as much as they can, distancing themselves from the grace of Jesus Christ as much as possible. And God, in the meantime, pays them as they are worthy. For as for those

who are so firmly possessed with that devilish self-meaning that they can dispose of their life in such a way as to be able to come unto God and to deserve somewhat at His hand, and again have their reckonings with Him, when they have done so, all slips away like wind, and they end up in the other extremity, saying, "How shall we be saved if we do not have free will?" And so they are utterly confounded.

Meanwhile, Jesus Christ is all the while unregarded. They make their byways and do not go to Jesus Christ, who is the true way. Forasmuch then as they leave the right way, which cannot mislead them, they must needs wander now to one side and now to the other, and after long tiring themselves, break both their arms and legs, and in the end find that the further they proceed, the further they go back from God. So much the more, therefore, does it stand us in hand to weigh these words of St. Paul, where we are assured that we shall be received lovingly at the hand of our God if we have Jesus Christ for our peace and rest wholly thereupon. And for the same cause, I join thereto the statement of the text already cited, namely, "You shall find rest for your souls." Whereby our Lord Jesus Christ makes us understand that all such as separate themselves from Him and are not contented to have Him for their mediator shall ever be unquiet. Although they assure themselves and bear themselves up with this and that, yet nevertheless they are afterward afraid and find no resting place to stay their foot on, neither have they any safe harbor wherein to escape the storm.

Therefore, it stands us upon to go to our Lord Jesus Christ and to be thoroughly resolved that He is our peace if we intend to call upon God freely and without any doubting. Finally, all men without exception must come to this, as well those who are near God as those who are far off. If there be any who think there is any valor or

worthiness in themselves, surely they will never repair to our Lord Jesus Christ until they have laid that imagination underfoot. Again, on the other side, though we be a thousand times past hope in outward appearance, yet let us assure ourselves that our Lord Jesus Christ is of sufficient ability to wipe away the remembrance of all our iniquities so that God shall receive us into His favor. Accordingly, St. Paul, having said that Jesus Christ came to save wretched sinners, adds that he himself is an example thereof: inasmuch that he who had been a persecutor of the Church, an enemy of the gospel, and a shedder of innocent blood, was nevertheless received, not only into the common array, but as an Apostle, to bear abroad and to publish through the whole world the message of salvation, from which he had erst been excluded.

Seeing then that God has poured forth the treasures of His goodness upon him, we may well assure ourselves that if we trust in our Lord Jesus Christ and seek to be at one with God His Father by means of His death and passion, even if we were in the bottom of hell, we should be rescued from thence, and Jesus Christ would show indeed that His title was not given to Him by imagination. And so you see what we have to gather further upon these words of St. Paul.

Now he adds that Jesus Christ has broken down the wall that was between them. He uses that metaphor to declare that the ceremonies and figures are abolished, so that now nothing prevents us from being united in concord and brotherly love. Soon after, he compares the ceremonies of the Law to enmity. Just as we now have Baptism, which separates us from the heathen, so when God chose the Jews, He gave them circumcision. When we are baptized, we bear the mark by which God wants us to be known as part of His Church and the flock of His Son, Jesus Christ. The same significance and use had circumcision in the time of the Law. The sacrifices testified to them

that God forgave their sins. Since such a privilege was not given to any other than Abraham's lineage, it is said that it was as a wall between them. It was like a fenced ground to keep sheep in, or like a stable to keep cattle in. Even so, it was then. For God, as is shown in the song of Moses, had stretched out His lines to hold the lineage of Abraham separate from the rest of the world. There was God's path, and the ceremonies were as walls or fences to hold that people under the keeping and protection of God. And what were the Gentiles? They went on at adventure, even unto destruction, as it is said, that God had not granted them the favor to manifest His righteousness unto them. St. Paul also shows plainly that God had allowed them to walk in their own ways and that they had been as wretched beasts in that respect.

Now we see St. Paul's meaning when he speaks of the ceremonies, how they were as a wall to divide the Jews from the Gentiles. But now they are all broken down because Jesus Christ, who is the truth and very substance of them, has come to put away all those shadows. The giving of the ceremonial law was not intended for the people to focus entirely on that and put their trust in it, as hypocrites do, who pervert God's meaning. It was to supply the absence of Jesus Christ, as St. Paul speaks of them in the second chapter of Colossians. The Jews had not yet the pledge that is given to us in our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore it was necessary that they should be upheld in good hope until He was revealed to the world. Thus, not without cause were all those things cast down by His coming, for He is now unto us as the day-sun of righteousness. Therefore, it is no reason that we should be led any more by dark shadows. By that means, the enmity is done away, because we are now joined to that lineage which God had dedicated to Himself, and there is no more diversity at all. Forasmuch as we are made the children of Abraham by faith, there is but one spiritual kin among us.

Let us note that Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are the Sacraments that Christ has ordained, are not a division like the figures of the Law. Although we are separated from the unbelievers and from such as never came within God's Church, there is not any one certain nation of the world that He accepts peculiarly by itself, but He wants His grace spread over all. There is no such distinction as there was before, where it could be said, we come of the lineage of Abraham, we are the ones whom God has chosen to adopt. None can say so now, for there is neither Jew nor Gentile anymore, as it is said in many places of the Scripture. Therefore, whoever calls upon God's name purely, of whatever nation they may be, is well-liked and accepted by Him, as St. Peter says in the sixteenth chapter of Acts and also in his first Epistle. Baptism and the Lord's Supper serve nowadays to unite the whole world. Let the most barbarous sort that can be come, and God will receive them. Baptism shall be administered to them, because it belongs to all such as are knit together into the body of the only Son of God.

Now let us apply this text to our edification. First of all, let us understand that the abolishing of the ceremonies, as touching their usage, was the very key to open to us the kingdom of heaven. The accomplishment of them was fully shown in our Lord Jesus Christ, so that it is known better than ever that they were no trifles nor unprofitable things. Yet, for all that, it is not for us to use them, seeing we have the full perfection of them all in Jesus Christ. By that means, we see how God has poured out His goodness upon those whom He had shaken off before. That is the means whereby we belong to Him today. In that respect, the Gospel is published indifferently to all the world, so that our forefathers, who were heathen men, were received into the Church, and we have succeeded in their place. Although it is seen that the world has been utterly forlorn and that there has been a horrible desolation in it, yet God

has made the thing effective which is spoken of in His Law, namely that He continues His mercy to a thousand generations. Thus, you see what we have to remember in the first place.

Secondly, although baptism does not serve peculiarly for any one people, city, or country, yet we are, as it were, marked out by God when He gives us the use of His sacraments to assure us of His adoption and to nourish the hope that He has given us by His Gospel. It is true that those who shrink away from our Lord Jesus Christ do, in a sense, make their baptism vain, but that shall cost them dearly because the pledge and earnest that God gives us to show that we are joined to our Lord Jesus Christ and are clothed with Him (as it is said in the twelfth chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians) is too precious a thing to be so misused. Therefore, all those who dishonour themselves with the name of the Church and yet are disordered and dissolute persons shall one day feel what a treacherous wickedness it is to have so desecrated their baptism, which God had ordained for their salvation.

But let us, on our side, take heed that we walk as people separated from the filth of the world. For, as St. Peter says, the very reason why our Lord Jesus Christ has gathered us to Himself is that we should glorify Him for delivering us out of the darkness of this world and of the devil into His own light. We have seen before in the Epistle to the Galatians how Jesus Christ wants His death to serve to draw us away from all the uncleanness and filthiness of the world. Likewise, in the first letter to the Thessalonians, St. Paul says that we are not called to uncleanness but that we ought to be pure and dedicate ourselves to our God in purity so that we may show indeed that we intend to honour Him with all that He has given us. Therefore, the lesson we have to gather upon these words of St. Paul is that we must not run astray like wild and mad beasts, nor yet kick against Him, but quietly

bear the yoke of our God and approach Him with true obedience. Furthermore, we must curb our own wandering lusts so that we may walk like holy people, like people dedicated to God, and finally as His heritage. Thus you see how this text is to be practiced by us today.

Now he adds purposely that Jesus Christ has done it in the flesh, meaning in our nature, so that we might be sure that in His person we are acknowledged to be God's children. For just as in Adam we are all lost, so by our Lord Jesus Christ, the second Adam, we are restored to the hope of salvation. Indeed, the Apostle shows us that we may boldly trust that God will always be our Father for His sake. For He has not taken on Him the nature of the angels, but the seed of Abraham. Although Matthew in the genealogy of Jesus Christ begins at the person of Abraham, as the wellspring and root, yet St. Luke leads us further and tells us that Jesus Christ appeared not only for the Jews. Truly, St. Matthew does it upon very good reason, namely to show that Jesus Christ came especially to perform the promises that had been made of old time. But St. Luke shows the same thing that St. Paul declares here: namely that when we have gone up as far as to our first father Adam, we shall find that our Lord Jesus Christ was yet still before him. True, He was conceived by the secret and wonderful power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of His mother, but yet for all that, He ceased not to be the true lineage of Abraham, of David, and also of Adam. There is no doubt that we are joined to God by this means, seeing He is our true brother. We need not seek far because we are bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh, as we shall see hereafter in the fifth chapter. Thus, you see in effect what St. Paul meant by adding this saying, that the fulfillment or performing of all these things was done in the flesh of Jesus Christ. For if we should consider nothing else in Jesus Christ but His heavenly glory and divine majesty, what would come of it? We would be abashed and might say He were too far off for us to come unto Him. But now

seeing He has the same flesh that we have and is become very man, like unto us in all things, saving only sin, so as He undertook our passions or sufferings, and our wants and wretchedness, to have pity on us, as the Apostle says, we may assure ourselves that when we offer ourselves unto God, we shall be joined unto Him in the person of His only Son. For just as He is very God, so on the other side He is akin to us, because He came down hither and refused not to be in this state of bondage to the intent that we might be glorified by His means. For just as He not only abased Himself but also emptied Himself utterly, so will He also lift us up into His heavenly glory. For that cause also is He called our brother. This one saying alone ought to break off all distrust when we are in doubt and perplexity whether God will accept us or not. For seeing we have this record, that Jesus Christ is our brother, what would we have more? So then, we may well conceive out of what filth and defilements, yea and out of what a gulf God has drawn us, seeing He has assured us of His fatherly love, whereupon our salvation is grounded, yea and that in the person of Jesus Christ.

For we see how the wretched Papists know not to which Saint to vow themselves. To bar themselves of all excuse so as there may need no other process to condemn them, they make a common proverb of it. For even in that one saying that they know not to which Saint to bow themselves, they show themselves to be faithless and destitute of all advice and stay of themselves, and to be as stray beasts. For they have such a multitude of their Saints that they have made whole warrens of them. It is true that all of them have the Virgin Mary for their advocate; they catch hold of Saint Michael, or of Saint Peter, for their patron, or of some other Saint, as their superstitious mind leads them here and there. However, all that they do is with unquietness of mind, and they shall never find rest because they have no word of God to stay upon. When they find themselves hampered in any

perplexity, they are like wretched forlorn creatures that are utterly at their wit's end because they see well enough that they find no ease at all when they have tossed and turmoiled never so much. But now, seeing that we are sure of the hope which we ought to have because our Lord Jesus Christ is our peace and is given unto us to unite us to God His Father, let us understand that the same is an inestimable benefit, for which we ought not to be afraid to suffer ten hundred thousand deaths if need were.

St. Paul says consequently that the Law consisted in ordinances and decrees, to show that God abolished not the law of good and holy conversation when He minded to call the Gentiles to salvation, but that He did away only the ceremonies that served peculiarly for the present time and were not given but only to the lineage of Abraham. You see then what was abolished. Therefore, let us leave the figures of the Law, such as circumcision, sacrificing, feast days as they were kept then, the difference of meats, lights, perfumes, and all that is set down in writing by Moses. For all those things must have vanished away at the coming of Christ. Yet for all that, let us hold still the Law that God has given us, which is inviolable. That is to say, let us worship Him purely, let us call upon Him, let us put our trust in Him, let us do Him homage for all the benefits that He has bestowed upon us, and let us hallow His name. Again, let us advise ourselves to walk in purity of life, and with such conscience towards our neighbours, as we may do no man wrong or harm, and finally, let us withdraw ourselves from all the defilements of the world. Here you see that the Law which God has given us to rule our life by must continue still, for that is not abolished, but only that which consisted in traditions and in the figures that served but for the time and were to have an end by Jesus Christ. Now seeing it behoves us to give over the shadows that were used and had their full scope in the time of Moses and the Prophets, it is much more reason that the Christian

Church should not nowadays be burdened with men's inventions. According to which, St. Paul tells us that we must content ourselves with God's Law, which serves to show us how we may be unblameable. That is to say, by walking in righteousness, justice, faithfulness, and mercy, and especially by calling upon God purely and after a spiritual manner. Mark that for one point.

Again, he says that the shadows of the Law should, in these days, not only be superfluous but also like a curtain to keep us still in darkness and to prevent us from seeing our Lord Jesus Christ as we ought to do in the mirror of his Gospel. Therefore, let us conclude that the righteousness which God requires at our hands is entirely different from that which the Papists have imagined. For all the things which they term God's service are mere gewgaws. Indeed, what do they serve but to deface the peculiar operation of our Lord Jesus Christ? The poor ignorant souls are held fast to them and focus entirely upon them. When I speak of ignorant souls, I mean the most able among them, even those who think themselves to be of greatest capacity, for they are all entangled like wretched beasts.

Therefore, let us learn to hold to the simplicity of the Gospel and to look upon our Lord Jesus Christ there, as he also speaks familiarly to us, so that we might be advanced by him, boldly call God our Father, and flee to him for refuge, not doubting that he will be near us whenever we call upon him in truth.

Now let us cast ourselves down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgement of our faults, praying that his making us feel them more and more may cause us to forsake them by true repentance and to walk continually aright and to give ourselves to holy conversation. And that, forasmuch as we are so weak that there will always be many vices in us, it may please him to hold us up until

he has taken us out of the world and thoroughly fashioned us like his own image, according to the groundwork which he has begun in us. And so let us all say, Almighty God, heavenly Father, etc.

The Fourteenth Sermon,

which is the Sixth upon the Second Chapter

16 Jesus Christ has reconciled us both in one body, to the end, to knit both the one and the other unto God by his cross, killing the enmity thereby.

17 And being come, he preached peace to you that were far off, and to them that were near at hand.

18 For by him both of us have access to the Father in one Spirit.

19 Therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and household folk of God.

We have seen this morning how St. Paul has told those who were once without hope of salvation that they are so much the more bound to God for his calling them to be among the number of his children, seeing it was not a common and ordinary thing, nor a thing that was expected. On the other side, he also beat down all pride, to the intent that the Jews might not think to themselves that the privilege of adoption was of their own purchasing, nor vaunt themselves though God had preferred them before all the rest of the world.

And now, going forward still with the same matter, he says that we were reconciled, as well on one side as the other, by the death of Jesus Christ, and that in so doing he has knit us together into one body, putting all enmity to death by his cross. This serves to express better the thing that we have seen already. He had said that we must come unto God by means of our Lord Jesus Christ: for without him we are all far off, as well Jews as Gentiles, because we are all sinners,

and God is an enemy to us until his wrath is appeased towards us. Now St. Paul shows that this is done by his bearing of our sins upon his cross. For it is by his obedience that all our iniquities are put away, and it is by his sacrifice that our sins are washed away.

To be short, were it not for the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, we would still be bound in the handwriting that is spoken of in the second to the Colossians. For if we should come to reckoning, who would dare open his mouth to excuse himself before God, or look to escape the damnation that all of us have deserved? For if we should go about to allege but one point, there would be a thousand to stop our mouths, so that we would be driven to stand still all confounded, until we came to the remedy, that is to say, that Jesus Christ has by his death made so full satisfaction for all our debts that we are acquitted and released.

That then is the thing which St. Paul handles now, to the end we might know what manner of access it is that he speaks of. For to press into God's presence, in the case as we are of ourselves, would be too great a boldness. But when it is told us that God will not lay our sins and misdeeds to our charge, because Jesus Christ has put them all away by his death, then it is no rashness at all for us to go unto God with our heads held upright, but we have a good foundation, and a boldness that God likes well.

Therefore, as often as we have occasion to pray, or to fight against any temptations, let us learn to know that we have need to be encouraged to patience, and to be assured of everlasting life, and to repair all wholly for refuge to the death and passion of the Son of God, knowing that until such time as we are dipped in his blood, and washed by the working of his holy spirit, we shall evermore be

loathsome, and God will justly shake us off, and be always a judge to us instead of being our father.

And it is not enough to know that Jesus Christ has made amends for us, and that all things requisite to our salvation were fully accomplished and performed by his death and passion: but we must also receive the benefit thereof in such manner as it is ministered unto us. For what shall it avail the Jews, Turks, and others like them, that God's Son undertook the condemnation that belonged to us? They shall rather be held doubly guilty, because by their unthankfulness they bereave themselves of the benefit whereof they might have been partakers if they had received the promises of the Gospel by faith. But the Jews on the one side blaspheme our Lord Jesus Christ, the Turks on the other side laugh him to scorn, and count him but as a night ghost. And the Papists labour with tooth and nail to deface his power and to rob him of the greatest part of his graces. These, therefore, shall find that the death which the Son of God has suffered serves to increase their cursedness and to kindle God's wrath so much the more against them. Yea, and even those who never heard of the Gospel are utterly excluded from this treasure.

And for that cause St. Paul adds that Jesus Christ has preached peace to those who were near, and to those who were far off. By this, he shows that when the Gospel is preached, we are daily put in possession of the salvation which was purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ, at least if we lay hold on him by true faith that has taken a lively root in our hearts to bring forth good fruit. Therefore, there are two things required. The one is that we know how the matter and substance of our salvation is in Jesus Christ, and the other is that the same is declared to us by the Gospel.

To the intent we may be the surer of this doctrine, St. Paul says, not that Christ has sent his Apostles, or set up a great number to bring us such a message, but that Christ himself has come to bring tidings of peace to all men. Now, it is certain that our Lord Jesus Christ has not executed the office of preaching since his Resurrection, save only among his Disciples, that they might be furnished beforehand to preach everywhere the doctrine that was committed to them. But St. Paul says that he preached to those who had once been far from God. He did not do this in his own person. Then it is certain that St. Paul speaks of that preaching of the Gospel which was done by the Ministers that were appointed by God, and by our Lord Jesus Christ.

And yet notwithstanding he says that it was Christ himself that preached, namely to the end that we should yield greater reverence to the Gospel, and hold it as the truth authorized by God, and every one of us submit himself to it without any gainsaying or replying. For if we have any doubt of it, let us not think that Jesus Christ shall benefit us at all. Therefore, we must assure ourselves of it, and as we have seen in the first Chapter, God's promises must be sealed in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who for the same cause is called the earnest penny of the life that we hope for, and the very sign, manual, or seal that God prints in us, to the end that our faith should be in full certainty. We see then what St. Paul aimed at in this text, in saying that Jesus Christ, being raised from the dead, and having performed the charge that was enjoined him by God his father, was our Redeemer, and also the bringer of the same message to us, not for once and away, but by continual preaching of it, insomuch that he will have his mouth still open even to the end, to witness to us that in him we shall assuredly find all that we can wish to bring us to the heavenly life.

Now then must we not be very blocks, if we are not touched to the quick at the hearing of these words? It is true that the Son of God does not flit from place to place, nor is he conversant here beneath among us in visible fashion, neither were that requisite. But yet for all that, the doctrine which we preach in his name ought to have the same authority as if he spoke to us himself, mouth to mouth. And for the same cause also does he say, "He that hears you, hears me, and he that receives you, receives me," and likewise, "He that rejects you, rejects me." And again, by this means is God my father honored, even by your believing of the Gospel. And contrariwise, he has great wrong and reproach done unto him when the things are doubted of that are so well certified there. The Pope and all the rabble of his clergy allege this for the maintenance of their tyranny. But our Lord Jesus Christ's meaning was to warrant us the message that concerns the forgiveness of our sins, wherewith our ears are beaten continually.

For we shall always hang in a mummering and doubt if we are not thoroughly persuaded and resolved that all things contained in the Gospel are held of Jesus Christ, who is the infallible truth itself. For if we have an eye to men, we shall be ever wavering and doubtful. And for proof thereof, what can they bring us of their own growing, but utter vanity and lies? So then, although our Lord Jesus Christ abides still in his heavenly glory, and we are absent from him in body, yea, and that it be a strange thing to us to say that he dwells in us, and that wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, he is in the midst of them, yet notwithstanding we must be fully assured of this point: that when the pure doctrine of the Gospel is preached, it is all one as if he himself spoke to us, and were familiarly conversant here among us.

Then to be short, our faith must aim at him, as at the very mark or butt of it, and we must rest upon him. And seeing that God his father has sent him to be a faithful witness, look whatsoever is told us truly in his name, we must receive it without any gainsaying.

Furthermore, as we have here wherewith to strengthen us in true constancy of faith, and to arm us against all the assaults and alarms that Satan can give us, so it is a great shame for us when we are deaf to the hearing of the Gospel, or let it alone as a thing hanging in the air, taking it to be but a fable or a thing of no value. And yet for all that, most men nowadays either despise the Gospel or else are so besotted that they discuss it as a trifle, or else make a mockery of it. Some, having heard sermons, or having been taught at some lecture, or by some other means, will perhaps say, "It is possible that this may be true, and as for me, I will not say no to it; but forasmuch as I am no clerk nor divine, it is all one to me, I will let it alone still in its ordinary course."

Some others will say, "Tush, I will hold to the faith of my forefathers, for it is too dangerous a matter to change." Some again say thus, "How so? It is a new doctrine that we never heard of before." And others, not contented with such scornfulness, add outrageous cruelty, and fight openly against it, insomuch that they could find it in their hearts to pluck God out of his seat, whereupon they fall to shedding innocent blood, endeavouring to the utmost of their power to wipe away the remembrance of the Gospel.

But in the meantime, let us understand that whenever the message of our salvation is set forth unto us, if we despise it, we shall be guilty not only of rejecting a benefit that was brought to us by a mortal creature, but also of shutting the gate against God's son when he came to seek us for our salvation. And therefore to quicken up our

slothfulness, and to correct the cursed stubbornness that might hinder our full and obedient yielding to the Gospel, let us mark that the preaching thereof is not a thing done by haphazard, nor do men come of their own selves, as says St. Paul also to the Romans: but God himself visits us, and comes unto us, and our Lord Jesus Christ performs still the duty of a shepherd, and calls us to him with his own voice, because he sees us to be as sheep that go astray. And although we be peaked aside here and there, yet his mind is to gather us together again to be of his flock. Were this well printed in our hearts, surely we should be better disposed not only to receive the doctrine of the Gospel with all humility but also to be inflamed with such a zeal and earnestness that the whole world should be nothing in comparison with us. To be short, God's word would be as sweet as honey to us, and more precious than all gold and silver, considering that the son of God being in the glory of God his father, does nevertheless make us hear his voice, and that not as one that speaks afar off, or with a sound that vanishes away in the air, or in such wise as we have no certain record of the things that he speaks: but as one that comes and preaches to us himself. For look what is done by his authority, and according to the commission that he gave and committed to his Apostles: it becomes us to receive it for his sake, as I have declared before.

Moreover, St. Paul's intent here is to provoke us to receive the Gospel with all obedience, not only for the worthiness of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also for the things that are contained in the Gospel itself: for it is the message of peace, says he. Let us consider what it is to have war with him that made us and fashioned us. If we have an enemy in this world, although he be but a frail man, and have no very great credit, yet we will be afraid lest he should practice some policy or spite against us, or revenge himself by force. To be short, we would ever be unquiet, so long as we had any enemies in

this world. Must we not then needs be too brutish, seeing we fall asleep when God shows himself to be against us, and that he is armed to take vengeance upon us?

If we considered well what it is to have war with God (as indeed our sins cease not to provoke him to displeasure) we should find on the contrary part, what a benefit it is to have peace and atonement with him. Now seeing that this is brought to us by the Gospel, whereby we enter possession of the atonement that was made by Jesus Christ, when he offered himself in sacrifice by his death: it is a thing that ought to inflame us in such wise, as to make us embrace the Gospel with earnest zeal, and to give over our whole mind thereto.

So then considering the coldness and laziness that is in us, let us so much the more think upon this saying, and apply the same to our use, namely, first to know that the son of God refuses not to teach us, and to be our schoolmaster, so we be contented to be his scholars: and secondly that we shall have a doctrine which is more to be desired than all the pleasures, honour, and goods of the world: that is to wit, that we be at peace with God, and that being sure of his favour towards us, we may have recourse and access unto him, and be received as his children at his hand. Well ought we to note that: for St. Paul meant to show which is the true peace, because many men think themselves well at ease, which notwithstanding have no peace with God.

For some are puffed up with devilish self-weening, as the Monks and Friars in the Papacy, who persuade themselves that they have deserved so well at God's hand, as there can no fault be found in them. They then which ground themselves after that manner upon their own virtues and good deeds, think that God is bound to them, and they may well be lulled asleep, because Satan besots them with

the foolish self-trust which they have conceived: and that is because they aim not at God, but have forged an idol in their own head. And in good faith, what are the things that they would content God withal, but gewgaws and baggagely trifles, as if they would still babes with them? The Papists must take a sprinkling of holy water, they must all to cross themselves, they must fast this week, and that week, they must gad on pilgrimage, they must forbear eating of flesh upon such a day, they must babble thus many Paternosters, they must set up a candle to such a saint, they must hear thus many masses, they must say thus many mea culpas.

To be short, when a man has raked them all on a heap, it is certain that they be but the scrapings and offals of all filthiness. And yet to their seeming, God is well paid with them, as who should say, he were an idol, or a little babe, as I said before. We see then that none of all those hypocrites that are so puffed up with presumption, can have any peace with God. But forasmuch as they fetch such windlasses and look not at God, but askew, and though they make countenance of approaching unto God, yet their offering themselves unto him is not with singleness and substantial soundness of heart: they do but beguile themselves with their fond flatterings.

Also there are a sort of these scoffers, which do but nod their heads when men speak to them of their salvation, saying, it is enough, if we may give but one good sigh, but let us not cease in the meanwhile to make frolic cheer, for what a thing were it to pass all the time of our life in such dumpishness? That would do us no good, and therefore let us play the good fellows. Hereupon they fall to unthriftiness, some after one fashion, and some after another. They have a thousand ways to destruction, and all confederate themselves against God as much as is possible. Therefore because there have always been so many, yea and too many, that bring their own consciences asleep: St.

Paul in this place (like as also in the fifth to the Romans) sets down the true peace: which is, that when we come unto God, and must present ourselves before his Majesty, we be sure that he will pity us, and not lay our sins to our charge, but receive us as his own children.

Then if we intend to enjoy this spiritual peace, which passes all the goods of the world: let us learn to have war with ourselves. And how is that? It is first to know that we are damned and forlorn, and that there is no hope of remedy for us, whereby to get out of the pit of destruction again, except we be recovered by means of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we be so bereft of all untoward self-trust in our own deserts, and know that we be empty and stark naked: let us repair as poor beggars unto God: that is the thing that is requisite for the attainment of true peace.

And by the way also let us not think to gain anything by being blockish; so we should fall asleep in this world: but let us understand, that forasmuch as we have no certain time appointed us, it is our duty to summon ourselves evening and morning before God, and to examine our sins thoroughly, and to be both sorry and ashamed of them. When we have once learned to make war thus against our own vices, and to ply it thoroughly without hypocrisy and counterfeiting: then are we in the high way to the peace which our Lord Jesus Christ does publish and preach unto us every day by the Gospel.

And that is the very cause why St. Paul says expressly, that by him we have entrance unto the father. As if he should say, that no unbelievers, no heathenish worldlings, no mockers of God, no dullards which think not of their everlasting salvation, can by any means taste of what value the peace is, which we obtain by the Gospel, or conceive how precious and amiable it is. And why? For

they put too many scarves before their faces, to keep them from being abashed at God's justice, and from being stricken with terror of their sins. To be short, they make themselves wilfully drunken, that they might have a senseless conscience, and they bereave themselves of all understanding, as though they were brute beasts.

But when we consider that all our welfare consists in being able to have all our recourse unto God, and that our coming to him is certain also, yea, and that the way is open for us to go thither familiarly: surely then will we forget all other things, and long to be made partakers of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be united into his body, to the end that God may receive us, and we call upon him with full trust in our necessity, and settle ourselves upon the love that he bears us, not doubting but that whatsoever is offered us in the Gospel, is all one as if God uttered his heart among us.

Now St. Paul, having spoken of the preaching of the Gospel, adds purposely, "In one Spirit." He had said before that we are all knit together in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, namely because he took our nature upon him, and by that means abolished and took away the curse that was in Adam. Nevertheless, the doing thereof in the person of the son of God would not be enough if the Gospel were not a means to him. Therefore, for a third point, St. Paul adds that we must communicate all of one spirit.

For although the Gospel is preached, yet there are many stubborn persons, and others so entangled in this world that they think no more of the heavenly life than dogs and swine do. Others again are so sapped in their hypocrisy that although God calls us all and allures us sweetly to him in the person of his son, the number of those that come unto God is very small. For this cause, St. Paul says that we must have God's spirit. For it is certain that by nature we are

variable, and not only will each one of us have his opinion by himself, but also we change every minute of an hour. By means of this, we are so far from being all of one accord that none of us abides settled in his opinion from morning to night, except he is governed by God.

It stands us then in hand, when we hear the Gospel preached, to have God's spirit to guide and govern us, so we may thoroughly embrace our Lord Jesus Christ, and by him have access to the Father. Now, therefore, we must bear in mind first that when our Lord Jesus Christ exhorts us by his ministers (according also as St. Paul says in the second to the Corinthians), we ought to be well disposed to come unto him, yea, and to run unto him, even with enforcing ourselves above all power of man. For when we have done what we can, yet we shall have no access unto him, but all our endeavour shall rather be a retreating back than a going forward unless his spirit guides us. So much the more then does it stand us in hand to pray to God to touch us with his holy spirit, and to cause him to make us way unto him, as is said in the eighth to the Romans, and as we have seen also likewise to the Galatians.

For there St. Paul puts a difference between God's children and the reprobates. "We," says he, "have the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." We should not know him of ourselves, says he, because there is nothing in us but infirmity, and it would be too great a rashness in us to call God our Father. But when God has once sealed the truth of his Gospel in us by his holy spirit, and enlightened us inwardly, so we know it is he that speaks, and thereto has assured us of his goodness and mercy, then may we freely and with open mouth cry out that he is our Father. And so you see in effect what we have to bear in mind, to the intent that none of us trusts to his own brain when the Gospel is preached unto him, but that in consideration of the rudeness and weakness that is in us, we suffer

ourselves to be governed by God's spirit, which is the chief key whereby the gate of paradise is opened unto us.

And for that cause also it is said that we must be sprinkled with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, as St. Peter terms it in his first Epistle. For the same cause also the Apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews says that Jesus Christ was offered up in spirit, meaning that his sacrifice whereby he purchased us righteousness would still be a vain thing to us if the Holy Ghost worked not in it by his power. And St. Paul, going forward with the matter that has been declared heretofore, adds also that as well those who were far off as those who were near hand had heard the said message, and that the same is set before us also at this day, to the end we might be confirmed in it more and more. And as I have said already, by those who were near, he means the Jews who had had some familiarity with God theretofore because he had acquainted himself with them by giving them his Law, telling them that he received their lineage to be the protector thereof.

However, that was not to knit them thoroughly unto him until he had pardoned their sins, which was done by the means of Jesus Christ. For the Law could yield them nothing but terror and anguish of mind, and curse them throughout, and sink them down to the bottom of hell, as St. Paul says in the third to the Romans, and especially in the third chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians. Therefore, it was requisite that the Gospel should be added thereto. Now it is certain that David and the other holy prophets, and likewise all the kings and the faithful that lived under the old Testament, had not the Gospel so manifestly as we have, but yet in very substance God declared unto them that he of his own free goodness received them to mercy, for the redeemer's sake in whom they trusted. If the Law be separated from the Gospel, it not only

profits them not at all who rest upon it but also serves to beat them down, and to thunder upon them, and to show them how dreadful God's majesty is.

It is in the Gospel then that we have peace, and therefore it stood the Jews in hand to be made partakers of that doctrine. And as for us that come of the Gentiles, we ought (as I said this morning) to acknowledge so much the better the double recognition wherein we stand bound unto God, for that he has vouchsafed to make us fellows with his peculiar people, us (I say) that were as things born out of time, and to put us in the company of those whom he had chosen and adopted before, in such wise as the records of the Prophets are now fulfilled, wherein it is said, "You Gentiles and Nations, glorify you God with his own people," whereby the Holy Ghost foreshowed that there should be such a melody, that all men should sing God's praises, even as well the Gentiles as the Jews, when they were once knit together, and gathered from out of the scattering wherein all of us are, as is said already, and as we have seen before.

We see then what St. Paul aimed at, in saying that the Gospel was preached to all men, both to those who were far off and to those who were near. And that is what he treats of in the tenth chapter to the Romans. For there he shows that we should ever be scanning and never resolved in our faith if we did not know that the preaching of the Gospel proceeded from God's authority and his unchangeable ordinance. "It is not for men," says he, "to put forth themselves, except God sends them." And God has begun to teach the world at all times heretofore, though not by preaching or writing, yet by the only sight of the world itself. No marvel therefore, says he, though God has vouchsafed at this time to extend his grace to all nations, by making them know that he would be their Father.

Now then, like as on the one side, it stood the Jews in hand to know how great a need they had to be reconciled to God by Jesus Christ, and not to be deceived by trusting to their birthright, or to their circumcision, or to any of all these shadows of the Law, but that it behoved them to flee to the only means that I have treated of, namely, that God received them to mercy, for the eternal sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered: so let us on our side learn to magnify God's goodness, seeing he has vouchsafed to cast us to be of his household and Church, notwithstanding that we were cut off and banished from it before. And therefore let us look to ourselves, that we let not this benefit vanish away, nor be deprived of it through our own unthankfulness.

For what excuse will there be for us, if when God calls us to heaven in the person of his only son, so as Jesus Christ tells us, that it is he himself who comes to seek us, as often as it is told us that God will be merciful to us for his sake: we do not run apace unto him, both hot in zeal, and earnest in carefulness, to show how we know that all our welfare, joy, happiness, and glory, consist in being joined to our God? which cannot be but through his free goodness. Again, when we refuse to receive this peace, let us be afraid that Jesus Christ will change his voice: for it is certain that the Gospel always promises damnation to such as do not conform themselves to God's will.

And it is not for nought that the scripture speaks of binding, as well as of loosing; for our Lord Jesus Christ meant to show us that it is the very nature and duty of the Gospel, to pluck us out of the bondage and prison wherein we are held, until he has set us free: and so is it his own office also, as he himself says in the eighth chapter of St. John, where he declares the same thing. However, he adds, that there are bonds also prepared for those who do not take him for their redeemer, nor suffer themselves to be set free by him. And that is

what he means in St. John, when he says, "Whose sins you release, they are released unto them, and whose sins you withhold, they are withheld." Then he shows that when we preach the Gospel, we must first of all declare the message of reconciliation, which is spoken of in the first to the Corinthians, in the place by me before alleged.

Thus you see that the thing which we have to do continually, is to show that God has been so kind unto us, as to be at one with us in the person of his son, yea and to receive us to himself, that we might be washed and scoured from all our filthiness, and be accepted as righteous before him. Lo how wretched souls are unbound, lo how poor captives are let out of prison, lo how those that once were plunged in the darkness of death are brought out again to the light of life.

But on the other side, we have also the commission to withhold sins, by threatening the despisers of God's word with God's horrible wrath, and by telling them that when they have shaken their ears, and think themselves to have escaped, the doctrine that they have heard must be as ropes and fetters to bind them withal. According to this, St. Paul says expressly in another place, that we have vengeance ready for all such as set themselves against our doctrine. Yea, though they be the highest in the world, yet if they set up their bristles against God, and despise him, they shall not escape the damnation that is threatened them, at leastwise when the faithful have once performed their obedience.

And indeed when an enemy summons a people, there is trembling for fear, lest they shall find no mercy, if reasonable conditions should be refused: and what then shall be done, when God comes, not only to will us to yield ourselves unto him, but also to offer himself to us, and will have us to possess him and all his goods in the person of

Jesus Christ? What shall become of us, if we refuse such grace, when he uses such kindness towards us? Must not horrible damnation light upon such villainous pride and scornfulness, when men do not vouchsafe to receive him, even him who not only procures their salvation, but also created them, and by whom they are maintained?

Then let us learn to mark well this doctrine wherein peace is spoken of, to the end we provoke not God any more, nor turn our bread into bane, and our meat into mortal poison: but that we may be truly quickened by the grace which God offers us daily.

And for that cause, Saint Paul concludes that those who are so touched with God's spirit, to obey the Gospel simply and substantially, are no more strangers, but rather fellow citizens with the Saints, and God's household folk. This tends still to the end that I have noted before: that is to wit, that God's name should be glorified as it deserves, and that we should not step lightly to him as we are wont to do. For we think to discharge ourselves with one word, by saying that Jesus Christ is our redeemer. But let us always call to remembrance what we have been, and in what state we were, until Jesus Christ drew us out of the dungeons of death.

For the word "strangers" implies that which we have seen heretofore: namely, that before the Gospel was preached, the Gentiles were without hope of salvation, cut off from God's favour, without promises, without God in the world. Although they lived here, although they were fed and sustained by the good things that God gave them, although they enjoyed the light of the sun, yet nevertheless they were without God. And in the same state are all unbelievers.

So then, Saint Paul, rehearsing what our redemption was when Jesus Christ came to find us and reached us his hand to guide us to God his

Father, is to the end that we should learn to yield him the whole praise of our salvation. Hereupon he says that we are citizens of heaven, companions with the Angels of Paradise, and fellows with the holy kings and Prophets. When there is any talk of the Prophets and Apostles, or of any of the Saints and Martyrs, we have them in admiration, and rightly so: but in the meanwhile, we do not regard why the Holy Ghost sets them before us. The Papists make idols of them, and (to their seeming) they have honoured Saint Paul and Saint Peter well when they have decked them with God's feathers.

But on the contrary, it is said here that when God sets forth the grace that he gave to them, it is to the end that we should consider the benefit that he bestows upon us, in that he musters us in their band. Accordingly, the Apostle in the twelfth chapter to the Hebrews says that they might be unto us as a great and thick cloud of witnesses, that we might follow their example the more cheerfully, and walk on in the way that they show us. Again, when God has made us perceive the inestimable good which he does us, in matching us with the Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, and all the faithful, let us go yet further and consider that he has made us fellow citizens with the Angels of heaven.

A man would take great labour for a citizenship, freedenizenship, or burgesship of this world, and yet notwithstanding they are but incomes of this life. And what is this life of ours? A fleeting shadow which passes away out of hand. Behold, God calls us, not only to sojourn in his Church as strangers, but also to assure us that he admits and accepts us for his children, so that we may with true trust, and as it were with one mouth, boldly call upon him as our father, and keep one tune and melody with all the Saints.

That therefore is the thing which we have to remember upon this strain: which order the Apostle uses also in the end of the Epistle to the Hebrews, saying that we are no more under the law, which could do nothing but frighten us, because there was nothing to be heard there but thunderings and lightnings, which were terrible signs of God's anger. But we, says he, are come to Mount Zion, where we hear the sweet voice of God our Father, who matches us with his holy spirits, with his Angels, and with the souls of his faithful ones, so that we are now of their company, and may speak unto God as it were all with one mouth, because we have one common head.

This is, in effect, the thing that we must bear in mind. And although we do not yet enjoy it, yet notwithstanding we are sure that by means of faith we may walk through this present life as strangers to the world, and that God will not fail to avow us for his children and heirs. Although we are still wrapped here in many vices and imperfections, yet notwithstanding, all the Saints of Paradise do acknowledge us for their brethren, and embrace us for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

Now let us cast ourselves down before the Majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying him to make us so to feel them, as we may dislike them more and more, and on the other side set our whole mind to the considering of the infinite grace which he extends towards us, in calling us unto him, to the intent we may not be so spiteful, nor yet so witless and blind, as not to hearken when he speaks, but rather that we may obediently through faith yield unto the doctrine which he sets forth unto us, wherein lies all our welfare and salvation. May the same doctrine pluck us back from all the lewd lusts of the world, and from all the froward affections that thrust us aside and turn us away from him, so that we may grow more and more in his fear and love, to be fashioned like his image, until we come to his heavenly glory, whereto he calls us.

May it please him to grant this grace, not only to us, but also to all people. Amen.

The Fifteenth Sermon, which is the Seventh upon the Second Chapter

19 Then you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the Saints, and the household folk of God.

20 Built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, whereof Jesus Christ himself is the head cornerstone.

21 In whom the whole building, being knit together, grows into a holy temple to the Lord:

22 In whom you also are built together for a dwelling place of God, in spirit.

We have seen here already how the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of St. Paul, sets before us a looking glass in which to behold the infinite goodness of our God, in pulling us back from the dungeons of death, to make us his children and heirs of the heavenly life. For this cause, it is said that when we are received into the Church, it is as if we were made citizens, not of some earthly city, but even of heaven, to be companions with all the patriarchs and faithful servants of God, yea, and with all the angels of Paradise.

And because the Church is called not only God's city but also his house, therefore Paul adds that we are his household folk, thereby to enhance the grace and favour that God has shown towards us. For to be gathered into God's house, and to have him near unto us, and to have familiar access continually unto him, is much more for us than if we were but generally of some city of his.

We see then, that because men do never sufficiently esteem the spiritual good that we receive by our Lord Jesus Christ, St. Paul meant to show here how it is good reason that we should make more account of the adoption whereby God has so gathered us together by means of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may now be familiarly conversant with him by hope, than by all the whole world.

And he adds another similitude, which is, that we are built to be the temple of God. Sometimes the holy Scripture says that every faithful man is the temple of God, because he dwells in us by his Holy Spirit. But when it is spoken universally of the whole Church, then we are as living stones, and the building is so bound and closed together, that every one of us serves to perfect it. Then one is not contrary to the other. For every faithful body alone is the temple of God, because he ought to be given to all holiness by the working of the Holy Ghost, and (as I said before) God abides in us. However, inasmuch as we ought not to be separated asunder, but rather to be knit together in unity by the bond of faith, it agrees very well also, that we should be named stones. Just as a building is made of many stones, each of which serves a purpose, so we should allow ourselves to be joined to our Lord Jesus Christ by belief in the Gospel, that God may dwell in us, and be there purely worshipped. And we should be fully assured, that whenever we call upon him, we shall always find him at hand to hear us, and that when we are gathered together in his name, we shall evermore have him among us.

That is the thing which St. Paul treats of here when he says, that those who had been heathen men, and cut off from all hope of salvation, were built up by the Gospel to be made a temple for God.

Now we see better than before how God will take us for his household: that is to wit, if we are taught purely by the doctrine of the Gospel, that God avows us for his temples, that he is contented to be worshipped by us, and that he accepts our service in good worth. Therefore, until such time as we have the doctrine of the Gospel to give us entrance to that excellent benefit which is utterly inestimable, we cannot be called neither citizens of heaven, nor children of God, nor belongers to his household.

And it is added, as well to make us perceive what reverence the Gospel deserves, as also to show us that we need not to make far journeys to seek it. For God offers us the prerogative of entering into his house, the door is set open for us, at leastwise if we receive the promises that he makes. We need not to go about heaven nor earth: God tells us and assures us that he has adopted us, to the intent we should lean all wholly unto him. And so you see how we may be familiar with him, and he be joined unto us.

But withal he shows also where we should seek for his word. For faithless men are so spiteful that they seek all manner of tricks to shift themselves from God. And surely we see that many make as though they were willing to serve God, so it might be apparent to them that it is he who speaks: but withal they doubt whether the Law came from him or not, and whether the Gospel is his truth or not. Look how men would shake off God's yoke to the uttermost of their power, by their shrinking aside, and by their loopholes and shifting. They make protestations with full mouth, that their intent is to humble themselves under him, yet they know not, nor can they

discern, which is his word. And why is that? Even because of their malice and unthankfulness.

St. Paul therefore, to bar all such trifling excuses, tells us that inasmuch as God has spoken by Moses and his Prophets, and finally by his Apostles, we ought to assure ourselves that all that is contained in the Law, and in the Gospel, is the truth itself, and that we ought not to be afraid of being beguiled or deceived. We shall hear many replies, for every man imagines whatever comes into his fancy. But God authorized his word sufficiently when he published his Law. Again, he gave sufficient authority to his Prophets, and finally his Gospel was ratified and sealed with enough miracles. Therefore it is not for us to say we know not whether it be God's word or not: For it is in our mouth, it is near at hand to us, insomuch that God has vouchsafed to feed us like little babes with it, by sending us mortal men to speak it to us face to face.

So then let us learn first of all, not to soar in the air when the receiving of God's word comes into question. Let us be contented that he has given us sufficient record of his will by his Prophets and Apostles, and so shall we yield him obedience, though it has pleased him to use such instruments of his Holy Spirit: for our faith cannot be without humility, and God takes a trial thereof, in making mortal men to be the means whereby he communicates himself unto us.

Take it therefore as a principle, that it must not grieve us though God appear not in visible shape, or though he sends us not his angels from heaven. For it ought to suffice us, that we know that the Prophets and Apostles are sufficient witnesses, chosen and ordained to bring us the message of salvation. By the way, Saint Paul shows that there is very good agreement between the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel. Indeed, we have seen heretofore that the use of the

ceremonies is at an end: but yet for all that, the substance of them continues still.

When God caused the Gospel to be preached openly to the world, it was not because he was inconstant, nor because he intended to teach men after a new and strange fashion, with which the Law was not acquainted: for the Law and the Prophets bore witness continually to our Lord Jesus Christ. And thereby also we are reminded to further ourselves by all the things that are contained in Moses and in the rest of the Prophets. For nowadays there are some fantastical folk, who think that for all doctrine, we ought to have no more but the New Testament, and that all the rest is superfluous. It is true indeed that all perfection of wisdom is thoroughly contained in the Gospel: but yet it does not therefore follow that we ought not to be edified by the Law and the Prophets: for we see that the Apostles themselves confirmed their doctrine by their testimonies.

And here when St. Paul says that we must be built upon their foundation, he shows sufficiently, that whatever things our Lord bestowed unto them in old times, is profitable for us at this day, and we must practice it and put it to use. Likewise St. Peter says that they served not only for their own time but also for ours. True it is, that they gave some taste of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the good things that are imparted to us by his means: but yet it is we who have come to the fullness of the time; as says St. Paul in another place. And the same is also a verification of St. Peter's saying, that is to wit, that the doctrine of the Prophets points at us, and we have more full fruition and greater fruit of it, than they that heard it spoken. For we have so great a light in Jesus Christ, that the things which were then dark are now manifestly open and known unto us.

So then, let us study the Law and the Prophets, knowing well that they lead us to our Lord Jesus Christ. For he is the mark that is set before us, and whereat we aim at this day, accordingly as it is said, that Jesus Christ is the end of the Law, and also the pattern that Moses saw on the mountain. It is said that the Law and the Prophets bear witness of him, and even our Lord Jesus Christ himself upbraids the Jews, telling them that forasmuch as they boasted of the Law, they were so much the more blameworthy and less to be excused before God, and their offense was so much the more heinous and unreasonable, because they rejected him, to whom the Law sends us, and to whom the Law would hold us back.

So then, hereupon we have to gather, that to profit well in the holy scripture, we must always resort to our Lord Jesus Christ, and cast our eyes upon him, without turning away at any time. You shall see a number of folk that martyr themselves exceedingly in reading the holy scriptures, they do nothing else but turn over the leaves of it: and yet at the end of half a score years, they are as well seen in it as if they had never read a line of it. And why? Because they do but roam up and down, and aim at no certain end, yea and even in worldly learning, you shall see a great sort that take pains enough, and yet all is to no purpose, because they keep neither order nor measure, nor do aught else but rake together on all sides. By means whereof they are ever new to seek, and can never bring anything to perfection, and although they have gathered together a number of sentences of all sorts, yet there is no hold at all in them.

Even so is it with them that labour in reading the holy scripture, and know not which is the point that they ought to rest upon: namely how it is our Lord Jesus Christ. For like as it is said that all our perfection is in the Gospel: so on the other side it is said, that our Lord Jesus Christ is given to us to be the wisdom of God his father,

as says St. Paul in the first to the Corinthians. And like as it is said of the Law, "This is the way, walk in it": so also it is said of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he is the true way. Again, as it is said, "Lord, thy word is a lantern to guide my steps by": so our Lord Jesus Christ says, "I am the light of the world, he that walks in me, cannot go amiss."

We see then that all that is treated of in the holy scripture, is now verified of our Lord Jesus Christ, to show us how he is the only thing that we have to take hold of. And in very deed, it is not for nought that he is called the living image of God his Father. For although there be nothing but light in God: yet shall we never be able to come to that light, till our Lord Jesus Christ comes down to lift us up there, and give us entrance into the place that was shut fast against us before.

You see then that the thing which we have to gather upon those words of St. Paul, is, that the Prophets and Apostles were chosen and ordained to bring us to God, by means of our Lord Jesus Christ: who is his very image, and therefore the only thing whereon we must settle all our senses and minds, is to be edified in the holy scripture.

And on the contrary part also, let us conclude that all such as give themselves to vain curiosities, and will needs be wiser than God gives them leave to be, must abide still in confusion. Instead of going forward, they go more and more backward, whereof we see many examples, as I said before, and it stands us in hand to profit ourselves by them. For what is the cause of all the corruptions in the world? What is the cause of the great number of errors, of the great abundance of ungodliness, and of the great store of superstitions which reign everywhere, but for that men are ticklish in their own

foolish lusts and fleshly likings, and can never be contented with the simplicity of Jesus Christ, as it is set down in the Gospel?

So much the more therefore ought we to bear well in mind the thing that is told us here: which is, that we must always set our Lord Jesus Christ before our eyes, and in our sight, if we purpose to have an infallible resting stock in the holy scripture, and to further ourselves in it. And herewithal we see also, that we need not to seek here and there for God's word: for we are sent to the Prophets and the Apostles, as if it were told us, that they are our rule within which we must keep ourselves, and that our faith has no leave to start out on the one side or on the other, but must be held bridled under the obedience of God's word, as it is contained in the holy scripture.

Now had this text been well understood, surely the wretched world should not be in such disorder as we see it is. For what is the cause that men have devised so many ways of salvation, but for that they have not known the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, as it is shown us here? And in good sooth, let a man look upon all the inventions of the Papists, and he shall find that there is no end of their superstitiousness: and yet in the meantime, they have as good as forgotten Jesus Christ, or rather buried him in such a sort, as they have had no regard of him. And was it not a corrupting and falsifying of God's truth, when men knew not whereto it tended, nor to what end it was given, namely how it was given to keep us wholly to our Lord Jesus Christ, that we might cleave to him, and find rest to our souls, as he himself says?

Again, on the other side, whereupon do the Papists ground themselves at this day? Even upon their Councils, upon their decrees, upon the things that men have invented of their own brain: and yet they would need to bear us on hand, that all perfection is to

be had there. For as for the things that Jesus Christ and his Apostles have taught, they are but entrances, say they: yea and they are not ashamed to say, that those things are but as an ABC, and that Jesus Christ forbore to speak of the things that were more high and excellent, so as the holy scripture is but as a Catechism for little children, and that to attain to the age of perfection, we must have holy Councils, wherein God reveals the mysteries that were unknown before.

Now seeing that the devil has so utterly bewitched and blinded them, that they have laboured to thrust God's word underfoot, to the end we should stray and wander here and there without any good direction: we have so much the more cause to bear in mind the thing that St. Paul tells us here, which is, that we must dislike whatsoever is added to the holy scripture, assuring ourselves that God has given such charge to his Prophets and Apostles, as he forgot not anything that was profitable or expedient for our salvation. If we desire to profit in his school, we must not put any morsels or pieces of our own, nor fall to borrowing of things here and there, that are contrary to that pure doctrine, but must utterly dislike all such dealing, yea and abhor all manner of patching, as leaven that sours, and mars the whole batch of dough, because God condemns whatsoever men take upon them to add unto the Law and the Gospel, from which we must not in any wise turn away. For it is not without cause said: "This is the way, walk in it." And whereas Jesus Christ says, he is the way, and the light of the world: it is to the end that we should abide in him, without swerving aside in any wise, either to the right hand or to the left.

Another thing which we have further to consider upon this text, where God's doctrine is spoken of, and the Prophets and Apostles are named the messengers of it, is this: that we, knowing what their

office is, should not consent to be taught by such as God never made privy of his will, and whom he disavows, when they go about to add any one syllable to the things which he will have to be noted and held without gainsaying. True it is, that the Church cannot endure without the daily preaching of the doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles in it: and that all they which are ordained to teach, are called masons, carpenters, and builders of God's house. Therefore, in that they be builders of the Church, they are all one with the Prophets and Apostles. Yet notwithstanding, it follows not therefore that they may take what they list of the Law, or take liberty to preach their own inventions: but they must draw their matter out of the pure fountain that is offered us in the holy scripture, that we may be held continually to the simplicity of the Law and the Gospel, and not be tainted with any wandering opinions instead of the obedience of faith, which contents itself with the mean that God has set.

Again, whereas St. Paul says, that Jesus Christ is the foundation and the head cornerstone: it is not meant, that it is lawful to mingle anything with Jesus Christ, as though he should but make some one piece of the building, and the rest be supplied by others: but it serves to show that we must be built upon him, according as Saint Paul exhorts us in the third chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, where he says, that no man can lay any other foundation, than that which is laid already, that is to wit, than Jesus Christ. Hereby St. Paul does us to understand, that men cannot set forth anything whereon to ground and settle their salvation: there is, says he, no other foundation but Jesus Christ.

Again, we know his dominion extends everywhere: and therefore all of us from the greatest to the least must yield unto him, and not forsake the great number of benefits which he offers us, and which we possess by his means.

But yet shall we never understand how Jesus Christ is our only foundation, except we know to what end he was sent, according to the previously mentioned text, where St. Paul says that he was given to us to be our wisdom. And not only that, but also he adds further, that he was given to be our righteousness, redemption, and holiness. As if he should say, that Jesus Christ is our wisdom, whereto we must wholly hold ourselves, because we may see there, that he is the wellspring of all welfare, and has in him whatsoever is requisite to our salvation.

Then if we once know to what end Jesus Christ was given, and the infinite benefits whereof he will make us partakers, we will forsake all other food: that is to say, all that ever man sets before us shall be to us but as vanity, yea and even as dung and filth, because we shall be fully satisfied with our Lord Jesus Christ. Now then, that we may conceive how he is the foundation of the Church, and that we ought to be settled upon him, let us mark that it is because God has revealed himself fully to us by his only son, and put all things into his hand which are requisite to our salvation, or worthy to be desired, to the end that we might draw of his fulness, as is said of him in the first chapter of St. John.

And this, in effect, is the manner how we ought to put this text to use, where it is said, that our Lord Jesus Christ is in such wise the chief stone, that he bears up all the whole building in the corner: and we know that the greatest weight of a building lies upon the corner.

But by the way, let us mark also, that St. Paul meant not to set Christ alone in a row by himself, and to couch other stones with him, that should have mastery and authority as well as he: but simply to show, that there is no more diversity between the Law and the Gospel, as touching the substance of them, but that our Lord Jesus Christ is the

end of all, and that we are so joined and knit together by his means, that all of us are made the Temple of God, and belong by unity of faith to the spiritual building, wherein God intends to dwell. Yet notwithstanding, if our faith rests not wholly upon our Lord Jesus Christ, it is certain, that we cannot be built upon this foundation.

For whereas the Papists invent patrons and advocates to get them favour at God's hand, and heap up a number of means to merit withal: it is all one as if they made themselves strangers to Jesus Christ. Now whosoever turns away from him, and it be but a fingerbreadth, must needs fall into destruction. For it is the property of a foundation to bear up the whole building. Now if the building be too wide, and overhangs it, it must needs fall down. Even so goes it with us. If we are not built upon Jesus Christ, so as our faith be lined and levelled unto him, and we stick to him without adding of one thing or other: he must needs disavow us for any of his, and cast us quite away.

And in good faith, the Papists and their like do well betray their great unthankfulness, by their wandering here and there, and by their adding of new means at their own pleasure. This wrong and outrage which they do to our Lord Jesus Christ, deserves well that we should tumble them down and cut them quite off from God's Church. Therefore if we intend to enjoy the benefit that St. Paul sets forth to us here, let us beware that our faith be so framed to the Law and the Gospel, as to reject whatsoever things man shall have invented, assuring ourselves that it is the next way to draw us to destruction, and that we cannot be grounded upon Jesus Christ to stand fast upon him forever, unless we admit all the things that are spoken and witnessed of him in the Law and the Gospel, without making it lawful for men to add anything at all to it.

You see then in effect, that the thing which we are warned of in these words of St. Paul, is, that we belong not to our Lord Jesus Christ, nor can be of God's Church, except it be by following the pure doctrine of the Law and the Gospel, and by forsaking (as you would say) all the filth and abomination that men have devised by their own dreams and dotages, however fair a colour of wisdom they may bear. For they will find store enough of fine peddlery, to make folk believe that their adding of so many gewgaws is not without cause. But however they fare, if we covet to be joined and united to Jesus Christ, we must so abide in him, as to make no account of any other thing.

And with that, we see also that to be taken for God's children, we must give ourselves to true concord. For St. Paul sets down both these things here: and indeed, they are inseparable. Christians, being taught God's word purely, should with one heart and one mind receive the things that are so set forth unto them, and have brotherly concord among them, to speak as it were with one mouth, and to make one pure and simple confession.

Then, just as hitherto we have seen that we must be built upon God's pure word alone, so it is shown us here that we must not every one of us be bent to his own opinion, but frame ourselves to the unity of faith, accordingly as St. Paul speaks thereof in the third to the Philippians, saying: if you intend to be perfect, aim all at one mark, and be truly knit together in one. For we know how ambition tickles us continually, and every man would fain have something by himself, to set out his own estimation withal. The very cause of all the heresies that ever were, is this pride so deeply rooted in men's hearts, that whereas all of us ought to be learners, every one of us will needs be teachers.

And indeed, he that is to teach other folks, must not set forth anything of his own, but purely impart unto them the things that he has learned of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so, because men are so froward, that they always covet to know more than is lawful for them: therefore they misbehave themselves, and every man would keep a school, to make a show of himself. But it is said here that instead of this dealing, we must be knit together, that we may speak all as it were with one mouth, and confess that we have but one God, and one Father, by showing ourselves to have no more masters, but only Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, it is true that such a concord would not be enough: but I have told you already, at what end we must begin: that is to wit, at the pure instruction which we receive from the Prophets and Apostles. The Papists brag too much of their agreement: and so may they do full well, for the devil possesses them in such wise, that they are wholly sotted in it. Indeed, there is jangling and jarring enough among them, and they snatch at one another like cur dogs, when they are in their own synagogues: but yet they stick together like burrs, in the maintenance of all ungodliness. We see their devilish madness and wilful stubbornness when they reason for the maintenance of their own lies against God's truth.

But St. Paul shows us after what manner we ought to agree: namely not in dreams and dotages, nor in the things that men have put forth of their own store: but in the doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles. Now seeing that the Papists have banished the holy scripture, and although they make a show of receiving it, do nevertheless deface it, yea and utterly falsify and corrupt it by their own inventions: thereby we see they are far from their reckoning, in that they vaunt themselves with open mouth to be God's Church: for seeing they have not the doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles, they have no

mark of the church at all. Although men were ready to receive all things that are in the holy scripture, even without gainsaying: yet if they fall to mingling their own fancies with it: Christianity is thereby already corrupted and confounded.

Now, they not only entangle God's truth with their own inventions, but also utterly overthrow it all: insomuch that God's service is utterly corrupted by them, poor souls are harried to and fro, and our Lord Jesus Christ is robbed, so that they make but a fantastical conceit of him, and attribute his offices to this man and that man, as if it were dealing with some prey or booty. Forasmuch then as we see the Papists so malapertly and madly turn God's word upside down after that fashion: we may well conclude, that although they boast themselves never so much to be the Church, yet God disavows them, yea and utterly abhors them: and that if a man does not get out of that den of thieves, it is impossible for him to be joined to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus you see that the thing which we have to bear in mind, is that to be joined to God by means of his only son, and to be companions with the angels of heaven, and brethren of the patriarchs, holy kings, and prophets, we must be banished out of the hellish synagogues that are in the papacy, where it is apparent that Antichrist reigns, and that Jesus Christ is utterly dispossessed of his right and sovereignty. And verily we see their cursed presumption, in that they have been so bold as to say that the See of Rome is the foundation of the Church. For they abuse these words of our Lord Jesus Christ in the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew: "Thou art Peter, and upon this stone will I build my Church." Now seeing that Jesus Christ says, that Peter shall be built upon himself (that is to say, upon Jesus Christ): he means not to resign his office either to him or to any other body: but thereby it appears, that among the Papists there has not been any

reverence of the holy scripture, nor any desire to be taught, but that all was one to them, so they might set up a tyranny to oppress the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to make clean riddance of it, if it were possible, and that they have made no conscience of manifest blasphemy, insomuch that even little children ought to have spit in their faces, considering the gross beastliness that is, and has been among them. And herein also it is to be seen, how the devil has reigned in full darkness, that God's word was buried, yea and utterly defaced, and the wretched world quite and clean bereft of it for a time, notwithstanding that it was their ordinary food.

So then, let us abhor all those blasphemies, assuring ourselves that we cannot be grounded in but our Lord Jesus Christ, and that when we are once faithfully instructed in him, we need not to borrow elsewhere, because he has brought us whatsoever is requisite for our salvation. And it is not meet that we should do him so great dishonour, as to seek any supply one where or other: but that we should hold ourselves all wholly unto him. That therefore is the meaning of the things that St. Paul speaks here.

And thereafter he adds that it behoves us all to be built and to grow into a spiritual building, even to God, and in the spirit. First, where he says that we must be built, it is to stir us up so much the better to grow daily more and more in faith. He uses also the word "grow," and he means in effect two things. The one is that we must not think ourselves to be so perfect as need be, as some fantastical heads do, whom you shall see so puffed up with overweening that they imagine themselves to be wise enough and disdain to look upon God's word, or to give ear to it to be taught by it. But woe to such pride, for we cannot be disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ without knowing that it behoves us to be grounded in him and to profit in him all the time of our life. For God's word is of such height, breadth, and length, that if

a man should forbear eating, drinking, and sleeping, and busy himself wholly about that, yet should he never know all. So then we ought to travail in it all our life long, knowing that God intends as now only to set us in the way, and that we must go forward by little and little, and be held continually in humbleness and modesty.

Again, St. Paul shows us that to be settled in our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be furthered in all the good things that are given us by him, we must have his word, that we may be built upon it, and grow upon it more and more. To bring the same to pass, we must be teachable, and from day to day labor to seek new help to strengthen our faith withal, which shall never be perfect in this world, as we find sufficiently by experience. Thus you see what St. Paul meant by that which he says here, concerning our growing and going forward in the said building. Howbeit, "unto the Lord," says he, showing thereby that to have a goodly show, is not all that is required at our hands. The chief point is that God likes well of us, and that we be wholly given unto him, so that he has place and room in us, and dwells in us as in his temple.

For the Papists will make a far greater show than we on the other side: they have great multitudes, wherewith they are puffed up to the uttermost. And thereupon they despise us because we are but a handful of men in comparison of them. "What," say they, "does not Christendom extend through all Europe, Greece, and Africa? And yet see how these rascals that have neither authority nor credit, nor anything else in them, will needs be counted the Church." You see then that the Papists shake us off with devilish pride and malapertness because they have on their side great pomp and all manner of riches, insomuch that if a man goes into their temples, he is ravished at them, as if he were in an earthly paradise. But all is not gold that glistens. And although their pomp is able to blear the eyes

of poor ignorant souls, whom we see to be carried away indeed with such things, yet are they all no better but abomination before God.

So St. Paul shows us that we must not spite the Papists, though they are very many in number, and greatly multiplied: for they are but a head without a body, or rather but a bumbasted and counterfeit body. In short, that which the Papists term their Church is a very monster. For it has no head because Jesus Christ has not preeminence over it, no nor any part or portion in it. To the end, therefore, that we might know how we should grow: it is said unto us that we must grow unto the Lord, and in Spirit, says St. Paul. Here he draws us back from all worldly superstitions, making us understand that they are but pelting trash, yea and very dung before God, who abhors them.

Therefore we must grow in spirit. And verily we see that the shadows of the Law passed immediately as soon as we had the accomplishment and substance of the body, that is to wit, our Lord Jesus Christ. And now that he has come, we must not gaze any longer upon those figures. Since it is so, we ought much rather to give over the things that men bring in. However high and excellent they may be, let us cast them from us as filthiness, and hold ourselves content with this, that our Lord Jesus Christ will have us to build in him after a spiritual manner. And so you see how his doctrine ought to be sweet and amiable to us, yea and to ravish us wholly in love with it, so that we may give up the world with a free heart, and give ourselves to our Lord Jesus Christ. But on the other side also, let us beware, that the judgment which he threatens unto such as cast aside this stone, light not upon our heads, according to this saying, "Behold, I lay a precious stone in Sion." Seeing then that Jesus Christ is given to us to be our foundation, we have there a precious stone, whereupon if we are built, we may be sure of our salvation. And we need not be

afraid that he is not strong enough to uphold us, so that he will never fail us. But if we fall to justling against that stone, it is certain that we shall not be able to stand against it, but we shall sink down underneath it, and in the end, it shall bruise us, and beat us all to pieces. Therefore let us take heed that our Lord Jesus Christ turns not into a stone to stumble at, after the manner of the world which nowadays malices him, insomuch that every man sets up his bristles proudly and rebelliously to come rushing against him: but let us think on our ways well, and be meekly disposed to yield our service to him, that he may maintain us unto the end.

And although we see Jesus Christ to be rejected by the world, and it may seem strange to us that men should fight so against him, and that he should be as a target to shoot at, yet let us not cease to take him still for a precious stone, as Saint Peter counsels us in the second chapter of his first Epistle. You see then that when we hear these promises which Saint Paul tells us of, we ought on the one side to be drawn to our Lord Jesus Christ, to give ourselves wholly unto him, and to forget all the things that seem most excellent in the world. On the other side, let us beware that our ingratitude be not punished for disdainning to receive him as a precious stone, since God tells us that all our welfare lies in this, that we are his temple, and that he is called upon at our hands.

Therefore, let us profit from such a great and inestimable benefit, and let us still grow and increase therein more and more, until we come to the heavenly heritage, where we shall have full fruition of all the good things which he makes us to feel as yet but by faith.

And now, let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our sins, praying him to vouchsafe to wipe out the remembrance of them, so they may not come to account before

him: and that he may correct us, so we may cleave fully unto him, and he may bear with our infirmities, so we may not cease to resort unto him freely at all times, though we are not worthy of it. And so let us all say, Almighty God heavenly Father, etc.

The Sixteenth Sermon, which is the First Upon the Third Chapter.

1. For this cause, I, Paul, being the prisoner of Jesus Christ, am an ambassador for you Gentiles.
2. Surely you have heard the dealing forth of God's grace, which was committed to me on your behalf.
3. How that by revelation He has given me knowledge of the mystery, (as I have written unto you briefly heretofore).
4. By the reading whereof you may understand the knowledge which I have in the mystery of Christ,)
5. Which was not known to the children of men in times past, as it is now discovered to His holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit.
6. That is to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, and of one selfsame body, and partakers together of His promise in Jesus

Christ by the Gospel.

Although every one of us confesses that the doctrine of the Gospel always brings trouble and persecution, because the world hates it, and yet for all that, we ought not to be dismayed nor shrink away: nevertheless, it is so hard to put into practice what we confess, that there is almost none of us who is not vexed, and almost shaken down, when God's enemies offer any unquietness, or when we see the humble faithful so cruelly used at their hands. Nevertheless, it ought to serve to strengthen our faith when we see men, who are frail by their own nature, not afraid to hazard their lives in bearing record of God's truth. Seeing then that the power of God's Spirit appears most manifestly, if we were not so blinded by unthankfulness, it ought to assure us so much the more. But since we take very little advantage of it, we need to be encouraged, as St. Paul also does in this text. When we see the devil stir up his followers to execute all tyranny against God's children, let it not shake our faith. And especially if the faithful endure patiently all that can be, for the maintenance of God's truth which they know, and that they also hold out to the end without swerving: that (as I said) ought not to be lost. And for the same cause does St. Paul in other places say,* 1.1 he suffers for the welfare of the Church. Not that he could purchase them forgiveness of sins, or any grace by his death:* 1.2 but because the Gospel is God's mighty power for the welfare of all who believe, and the further we go forward in it, the nearer it brings us to God, and to everlasting life. St. Paul then suffered for the example of those whom he had taught before with his own mouth. For (thereby) they knew that his speaking to them had been in good earnest, seeing he spared not his own blood and his life, to seal and confirm the doctrine that he had brought them. As much is done in this text.

For he says, he was an ambassador for the Gentiles, even though he was the prisoner of Jesus Christ. Surely these two things seem to be as contrary as fire and water. For could not Jesus Christ honor them better whom He sends in His name, and who represent Him, than to put them to all the shame and reproach of the world?*

1.3 But St. Paul, as well here as in other places, has not hesitated to glory in his imprisonment and bonds. Indeed, he was kept in ward as an evildoer: but in the meantime, he had record both before God and also before man, that he suffered wrongfully, for executing his office, and finally for serving God faithfully. Therefore let us not think it strange, that on the one side he calls himself a prisoner, and on the other side the ambassador or messenger of the Living God, even as representing His person and dignity. And it is not for nought that he adds the name of Jesus Christ. For imprisonment generally might have bred some evil opinion of him, because evildoers are punished with it by order of justice. But the case puts a difference between evildoers, and the witnesses of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the reason why St. Paul calls not himself a prisoner simply and without exception, but also shows the cause why: saying, that Jesus Christ avows him, as though he were a hostage (or pledge) for Him. So then, by this saying we are warned to receive St. Paul's doctrine with greater authority, seeing he has ratified it so well. If he had only executed his function in preaching, we ought to have made account of the obedience that he yielded unto God. But he also worked miracles, he endured a number of troubles and inconveniences, and finally he suffered imprisonment and death. Now, when we see that for all this he ceased not to go through steadfastly, and to overcome all the assaults that Satan and the wicked world were able to stir up against him: surely we have the greater confirmation of the doctrine, which serves at this day to our use.

And therefore when we are told of Saint Paul, and of the great number of encounters that he endured, let us not think it is more than needed. For it is always a more certain ratifying of the doctrine, to the end we might understand how it is not the doctrine of any mortal wight, but the doctrine of the living God, who also strengthened him with invincible constancy by His holy spirit. Now, as this is well spoken of the person of Saint Paul, so must it also be extended further. For God willed and ordained that the rest of the Apostles should suffer as well as he. And it is said of Saint Peter,* 1.4 that when he was grown old, he should be girded after another fashion than he had been wont to be, so as he should be tied in strait bonds, and be led whither he would not, at leastwise in respect of fleshly infirmity, though he had a spiritual disposition of mind to obey God. We see then, in effect, how God's servants suffered, not just two or three of them, but so as there might be, as it were, a great and thick cloud of them, as the Apostle says in the twelfth to the Hebrews. Since it is so, let us make our hand of such helps. For it is certain that God meant to sustain our feebleness by adding such helps to His word (which ought to be of sufficient authority by itself), to the intent that it should no more be doubted of, nor called into question. Thus you see how the thing that we have to bear in mind is that the blood of the Apostles and Martyrs that has been shed to confirm the doctrine of the Gospel is as good as a hundred seals, yea, as a whole million of seals, to warrant us all the things fully that are contained in the Gospel. True it is that our faith ought to be grounded upon the authority of the Holy Ghost, and that although God had never a Martyr to show that the truth of the Gospel is firm and certain, yet it ought to suffice us that it is He who speaks it. Again, we have seen heretofore that the truth shall ever be doubted of until the Holy Ghost has sealed it in our hearts. And for that cause, He is called our earnest penny,* 1.5 because He ensures us of the

heritage which we hope for, according to the promise which has been purchased so dearly for us with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now for the last step, we must come to the experience that we have in these days. For the blood of martyrs is shed still at this day, and God could well prevent the wicked from running so recklessly against the faithful: He could well change all their mischievousness and rebellion, and whereas they are ravening wolves, He could make them as sheep and lambs: surely He could do so. But on the one side, He ordains Satan to drive them and stir them up to such rage, and again, He gives them license and leave to trouble the faithful. And why? To the end that we should know what the power of His holy spirit is, when it pleases Him to guide and govern us. For (as I have declared already) the weakness of men is such that there needs but the falling of a leaf from a tree to make them quake, and again we know that death is horrible of itself. Therefore we must conclude that God shows a wonderful grace when He strengthens His servants in such wise that they are not dismayed by any threats, nor at the sight of fire, when the enemies and tyrants are not content with single death but add thereto the most tyrannical torments that can be devised. Now then, when the martyrs persevere in such constancy, therein men perceive that God has put His hand to it. Wherefore, when we hear that they are handled so cruelly for God's word, and that some, if they escape, are nevertheless ready to die, and others, knowing their death shall be precious in the eyes of the Lord, offer themselves in sacrifice with a cheerful courage: let us not suffer their blood to fall to the ground. (I say), when we hear of all these things, let us beware we do not allow that which God has ordained for our edification and for the better confirming of us in our faith to perish. For although we ought to be (sufficiently) instructed by the preaching (alone), yet it must needs be a great strengthening to us when God's word is not only preached but also sealed in that fashion.

Then it is not to be called into question, or to be disputed as an uncertain matter: but they to whom God has granted the grace, and are led so far by His holy spirit, as to suffer for His truth, are faithful witnesses that their blood serves to give a full sealing up to His word, to the intent that we should be the better resolved of it. Thus you see what we have to gather upon this strain. And although the enemies of the Gospel make a triumphing, and spit fire, and keep a great clamor to deface all that belongs to God: yet let not us cease to glorify God always, seeing that all the battles which are prepared by Satan's policy against the faithful, are turned by God into crowns and garlands, and He makes them to overcome all things that seem to make for their undoing and destruction. The thing then which we have yet further to mark, is this in effect, that we must not be thrust out of the way when we see the wicked sort, and the despisers of God, and all worldlings scorn our simplicity, at such time as our brethren suffer persecution: but must consider that the prisons where they are kept, and the reproachful fires are of much more worthiness and excellence than all the seats where those judges sit, that are as Satan's underlings or upholders, and as rank murderers: yea, and more excellent than all seats of kings and princes, though they make never so much ado of their greatness.

Now hereupon, Saint Paul adds, "You also have heard the dealing forth of God's grace which was committed to me, as I have written briefly unto you, according as He declared the mystery thereof unto me; and you may better understand the knowledge which I have of the mystery of Jesus Christ." Here, Saint Paul intends to prove that he was ordained an Apostle, not as one who had thrust himself in through rashness or folly, nor as one who had been advanced by the favor of men, nor as one who had fallen into it by haphazard; but as one put in by God's free goodness.

It is not here only that he strives for the maintenance of his calling, that is to say, to show that he was an Apostle sent and approved by God; but he stands upon that point in many other places.* 1.6 It is true that he did not care for his own person: but the certainty of the faithful depended thereupon. When we come to hear the Gospel, if we are not thoroughly persuaded that he is sent of God, surely we may well conceive some wandering opinion, but we shall never be sure, nor have any rest. This, then, must go first: namely, that those who teach us are approved, and that we know them to be employed by God for our salvation, and that they are instruments of His Holy Spirit. For otherwise, one might say, "What is he?" For there is nothing in us by nature but vanity and deceit. And on the other side, were a man never so well-learned and sound, so that there was nothing in him but substance and soundness, yet he would not be able to assure us of the forgiveness of our sins: it is too great and high a thing to warrant us reconciliation with God, and that He takes us into His favor, whereas there had been nothing but deadly enmity before. If the angels of heaven should say it with one mouth, they could not warrant it to us, except they were authorized by God.

So then, let us mark well that Saint Paul's laboring so much to show that he did not thrust himself to be an Apostle, but that he was sent by God, and had that office at God's hand, and that in all his doings he attempted nothing upon presumption or through rashness, but according to our Lord Jesus Christ's choosing of him, because it was His will to be served by him in that manner, is not without cause. That, therefore, is the ground that he goes upon in this text.

Now, he says also that the Ephesians ought to have known well the mystery or secret that had been revealed to him, namely, to the end they might have been sure that he was ordained and appointed to deal forth God's grace, and to preach the everlasting salvation of

their souls to those who had formerly been cut off and banished from the kingdom of heaven. And here we have to mark first of all, that to hear and to understand the things that are preached to us concerning the Gospel is not all that we have to do: but that we must mount up yet a little higher: that is to say, that God would have us to be certified of His good will by the record of men. For were it a thing devised here below, it would be too weak a matter.

Therefore, let us note that the preaching of the Gospel and our common gathering together to be taught is not a policy or order of man's devising, nor a fancy or invention of man, but an ordinance of God, and an abiding law, against which it is not lawful for us to attempt anything at all. Since it is so, we ought to come so much the more soberly and advisedly there, as to God's school, and not as to a man's school, to hear the preaching. True it is, that we ought to examine the doctrine, and that we must not receive all things indiscriminately that are preached, nor at least be as brute beasts in that regard, after the manner of the Papists, who term it simplicity to be without any understanding at all: but yet must we bear such honor to God's name, that when the doctrine of the Holy Scripture is set forth unto us, we withdraw ourselves from the world, and forsake our own reason, to submit ourselves with true obedience and humility to the things which we know to have proceeded from God. When we come there with such a mind so prepared, surely God will never suffer us to be deceived, but He will so guide us by His Holy Spirit, as we shall be certified that our faith comes from Him, is grounded upon His power, and that it does not come from men. Let that serve for one point.

Again, whereas Saint Paul says that the calling of the Gentiles to the knowledge of the Gospel, that they might be joined to those who were already near, was a mystery or secret: we have to note that God

purposed to humble the world, and to hold it (as you would say) bridled, to the end that we should learn to honor His providence, notwithstanding that the reasons thereof are unknown to us, and the means thereof hidden from us. God could have published the Gospel immediately upon the creation of the world, or straight after Adam's fall; but He delayed it for almost two thousand years. And afterward again, after the flood, although the world was renewed, He delayed it again. So then, there passed about sixteen hundred years before Abraham was called.

And when God chose him and all his lineage, it was not yet the Gospel. Nevertheless, God took one man in his old age, who was already passing and half-dead, yea, even as good as buried, and in the meantime, He let the whole world go to destruction. Now after that, four hundred more years were spent before the Law was published; however, that was only to Abraham's lineage. The Gentiles, being the far greater number, were nevertheless excluded. This matter seems strange at first sight, and those who would hold God bound to their desires will find enough here to argue about, and so they do indeed. For they would have God bound to call all the world alike without exception. But that He will not do.

Again, is the Law given? Then a long time passes before Jesus Christ comes into the world. To be brief, for the space of almost four thousand years, an infinite number of people passed, wandering here and there like blind wretches, walking in the shadow of death, and God let them alone, as it is said in the seventeenth of Acts.* 1.7 Suddenly the trumpet sounds, and the wall is broken down, and God gathers together those who had once strayed from Him and despised His name. He receives them to favor by means of our Lord Jesus Christ,* 1.8 in whose person the sovereign dominion of God is extended over all the world. These then are things that could not

enter into our understanding, as I said before. Therefore, it is not without cause that Saint Paul names that order of dealing a mystery that had been unknown to all ages and was revealed in his time.

But first and foremost, we must resolve a question that might be put here, because the patriarchs were not utterly ignorant of what should follow, and the prophets bore record of it. For when there is any mention that the Gentiles should be matched with the people whom God had chosen and adopted before, it is said that Moses foretold and uttered it,* 1.9 and that all the prophets said that the strangers should come to worship God and to honor His majesty. Then, it was not a thing utterly unknown at that time, as Saint Paul speaks of it. But yet, let us mark that all those prophecies did not cease to be obscure because the means were hidden.

It is true that the hope of the faithful was that God would one day gather together the world that was scattered after such a horrible manner as we have seen. But as to the knowledge of the time when Circumcision and the figures of the Law should be abolished, that God should be served in a different and better-known fashion, that Jesus Christ should be as the Dayspring of Righteousness, that men should content themselves with Him, and that there should be no more visible signs but Baptism and the Lord's Supper to confirm us in all the spiritual gifts which we obtain at this day,* 1.10 all this, I say, was unknown.

Yes, even the very Apostles themselves continued in that gross ignorance, despite the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ warned them of the things that were at hand.* 1.11 Indeed, when He sent them abroad into the country of Judea, He said unto them, "Do not yet speak to the Gentiles." But that was because the convenient time had not yet come.

When He drew towards His death, Jesus said, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold; they must be gathered together" (John 10:16). There He shows that many were chosen by God His Father, who nevertheless were not included in the nation of the Jews. And when He had risen again from the dead, He said, "Go preach the Gospel to all creatures" (Mark 16:15). Here then is the commandment first given to them to preach the hope of salvation to those who were utterly strangers to it before.

Now, when Saint Peter was informed that God would send him to a heathen man, he was so amazed that the hairs stood up on his head (Acts 10:9-16). And how is that possible? God had to send him a vision from heaven to make him go to a man whom he considered unclean.

So then, it is not without cause that Saint Paul, speaking here of such a high and great secret, says it was unknown to the patriarchs and prophets. They had indeed some inkling of it; however, that was only according to their measure and under shadows and figures. There was not then any certain knowledge until God had revealed the matter in effect, which He had kept in His own determination.

Indeed, Saint Paul thought it good to repeat the word "mystery" or "secret," to the intent that one of us should not provoke another to be willful in opinion, as we are wont to be. For if a thing is hard, one will say, "This passes my understanding," and another makes no account of it at all. By that means, people turn away from obeying God and cast, as it were, a stumbling block in others' way, so their path is blocked, and none come near God's truth, which would be clear enough if they would listen to it. But we are often convinced that it is too high and profound a matter, and therefore it seems to us that God does not speak it for us.

That is a cause that makes us scorn His word and leave it alone as something that does not belong to us at all. Yea, and the boldness and foolishness of people are such that they condemn all things that do not suit them. Here, Saint Paul, to correct that fault, says that the thing unknown to us is nevertheless full of majesty before God. Shall we take it upon ourselves to measure God's secrets by our imagination? What presumption that would be!

As it is said, "His judgments and ways are unsearchable, and His paths beyond tracing out" (Romans 11:33). Therefore, let us learn to magnify God's wisdom, even though His meaning may be obscure to us; yet, we should not dismiss it but honor it with all humility. Truly, even the things that seem most common ought to be received by us in such a way that we understand God gives us but a taste of them, and we do not have perfect knowledge of them. I mean the whole doctrine of the Gospel. There is not any point there that seems to be of such small importance that does not surpass all our understanding.

There are also some matters where God reserves the reason to Himself, intending thereby to restrain us, to make us confess that all His doings are righteous, even though we cannot agree to it by our own natural wit, nor conceive in our minds the reason why it should be so. Now, if ever this doctrine needed to be put into practice, it needs to be put into practice nowadays. For we see how the wretched unbelievers generally shut themselves out from coming unto God.

What is the cause that the wretched souls in the popedom wallow in their own ignorance, and despite anything they are told, still show that they are as if bewitched by Satan? They say that God's word is too high a thing. Yea, but does it follow, therefore, that we have just cause to reject it? We should rather consider how it is said, "God's

wisdom is comprehended only by humility" (James 4:6). Seeing that God grants His teaching to the lowly and little ones, all pride ought to be beaten down in us, and then we would find that our Lord did not give His word in vain.

Now then, seeing that in these days we see a number who find no taste in the Gospel because it is like a strange language to them, let Saint Paul's saying and declaration move us to receive modestly whatever God tells us, even though it may be too high for us. Let us pray to Him who has all light in Himself to give us as much as He knows is for our benefit. For just as God speaks to us and makes His doctrine ring in our ears, so also does He work inwardly in our hearts by His Holy Spirit.

Wherefore, let us submit ourselves to Him and be ready to receive whatever is truly taught us in His name. Thus, you see what we have to remember under the word "mystery" or "secret."

Now therefore, when we find anything in the Gospel that seems hard and difficult to accept, let us not do as a number of foolish people do, who reject whatever does not suit their own liking. But (as I said) let us revere what is still hidden from us, waiting until God furthers us and draws near to us, increasing the measure of our faith.

You see then how, in reading the Holy Scripture, we must have the humility to hold ourselves in awe and say: "I do not understand such a text; but it is not for me to dismiss it as though it served no purpose. Therefore, I will pray to God to bear with my ignorance, to open the gate to me when He sees fit, and to show me what He thinks proper and beneficial for me."

Again, likewise, when we come to a sermon, if we do not understand all that is spoken to us, let us remain patient and, in the meantime,

honor our God and revere Him in the things that are too high for our understanding.

Here we see that those who would stop the mouths of all God's true servants, so they should not speak of the things that seem too high for them, are truly devils incarnate. For what madness is it that, because we do not understand why God has chosen some and forsaken others, how God governs the world, that even the devil himself cannot do anything without permission, and that the wicked are instruments of God's justice — we, worms of the earth and stinking corpses, should presume to say that such things should be removed from Holy Scripture? Scripture, which was revealed to us by the Holy Ghost and sealed with the blood of God's Son! Must it not be that they are wholly possessed by the devil when they presume so far?

Therefore, let us abhor such monsters and pray to God to lay His hand upon them and show that they are no better than lice, fleas, gnats, and other vile and despised things of the world, when they rail against God with tyrannical and barbarous fury. But for our part, let us understand that the honor we owe to our God is this: whenever we hear any of the secrets of God's word, which cannot be known or understood by man except through the revelation of God's Spirit, we must wait patiently until God increases the knowledge He has given us.

Again, when one person has a greater measure of faith and more understanding than others, let him accommodate himself to those who have less, bear with them, and labor to further them more and more. And let those who are less knowledgeable show the humility to stay within their bounds and not overstep them, but put into practice this saying of Saint Paul in another place: "If in anything you think

otherwise, God will reveal this to you" (Philippians 3:15), and in the meantime live in harmony and let there be no trouble among you. And so you see what we ought to learn from this point.

Furthermore, let us note that God intended to set greater glory upon His mercy by this means. For when, in the end, He published the doctrine of His Gospel, He revealed the infinite riches of His goodness towards us. And although we do not know all the reasons that God had in His mind when He delayed and put off the publishing of His Gospel for so long, yet, nevertheless, it is easy for us to judge that He intended to open our eyes, to awaken us, and to stir up all our senses, so that each of us should better know how much we owe to Him.

For are we better than our fathers? Or when the Gospel was published throughout the world, were the Gentiles more teachable than before? No, but it seemed that wickedness had then come to its full measure, so there was nothing but contempt of God. Now, when the world was so thoroughly devilish, then Jesus Christ came, and then was the message of salvation brought to all people.

Yea, and when Saint Paul, speaking to the Corinthians, told them that murderers, fornicators, drunkards, thieves, perjurers, and such like would not inherit the kingdom of heaven, he said unto them, "And such were some of you" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). This was to show that the Gospel was not preached at Corinth because of any virtues found there, nor because its inhabitants had been more devoted to God or deserved anything at all, but all proceeded from God's only free goodness.

Thus, you see that the secret which Saint Paul speaks of is to be applied in this manner: namely, that it was God's will that there should be sin in all people without exception, the remedy for which

He has sent by His grace. Likewise, in our time, we cannot say that we are better than our forefathers, as I told you before. For if you look at the common state, there was more faithfulness among people fifty years ago than there is now. There was more modest conduct, there was less excess and superfluity of pomp, and, to be brief, people were not like dogs and cats, as they are nowadays.

It is true that they always had a hint of their own nature, which is worth nothing, but yet Satan seemed to be chained then. However, within these thirty years, things have gone from worse to worse and so far out of order as it is horrible to see. And thereupon, behold, God's grace is preached, forgiveness of sins is declared, and God calls those who were a hundred thousand times lost.

Now what can be said to this but that God's will was to give greater beauty to His grace and mercy by such an after-deal? Wherefore, let us consider that the way to benefit from God's wonderful secrets is to revere what we do not know, to receive what God vouchsafes to show us, and to accept without contradiction what we know comes from Him. Above all, let us ensure that our faith is built up and consider whether we ought not to be more inflamed with love for God, for He has chosen to send the Gospel abroad nowadays as if it were out of a deep dungeon.

And after we had wandered here and there like wretched wandering beasts, and were plunged in superstition and idolatry so that we scarcely had any understanding of religion, He has appeared to us again, not in person, but by His doctrine, which is preached to us today, and which had been utterly buried.

Let us then have regard for that. And although the world does not perceive at first why God works in such a strange fashion, let us not cease therefore to profit from it, nor let us concern ourselves with

our own state to be assured of the will of our God. Instead, let us resort to the head, that is to say, to our Lord Jesus Christ, and understand that since we are joined to Him again by the Gospel, God always acknowledges us as His children.

And although we have been the most wretched in the world, and are still today worthy to be banished from His house and cut off from His Church, yet let us not cease to hope that He will call us to the inheritance He has promised us from time to time. Therefore, it ought to suffice us that God will gather us into His body, even though we have been scattered before, and that He will fulfill His purpose toward us if we allow ourselves to be governed by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Since He is ordained to be our King, let us willingly do Him homage, submitting ourselves to Him with true obedience of faith, not doubting that He will reveal to us the things that were hidden before. We may perceive how it is not without reason that Saint Paul says in 2 Corinthians that although God has His secret purpose, which we cannot attain, yet nevertheless, He declares such things in His Gospel as are incomprehensible to all men, revealing His heart to us and fully revealing His will to us, until we may come to the full enjoyment of the things we now hope for (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

And now, let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our sins, praying Him to make us profit more and more from His holy word, and that it may serve not to puff us up with presumption and overweening, but to draw us still more and more to Him in true humility. May we forsake all that is of our own minds, and which we are able to bring forth from our own devising, and desire nothing but to learn the things that are shown to us by His word.

May we accept the same without contradiction, and stoop and submit ourselves obediently and simply to the Gospel, that Jesus Christ may be honored and thoroughly heard among us, so that we may never depart from Him. And may we be so humbled in ourselves that we never seek to be exalted except by His hand. May it please Him to grant this grace not only to us but also to all people. Amen.

**The Seventeenth Sermon,
which is the second upon the third
chapter.**

7. I am made a minister of the Gospel, according to God's grace, which is given me through the working of His power.

8. This grace is given to me, who am the least of all the saints, to preach among the Gentiles the incomprehensible riches of Christ.

9. To open unto all men what the communicating of the mystery is, which was hid from the beginning of all times in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.

I have told you heretofore how St. Paul had an eye to two things, showing that he was certainly appointed to publish the Gospel throughout the whole world, and especially among the Gentiles. For

no man ought to go about to usurp any office in the Church; God alone ought to have that authority. According to the everlasting order which He has set down, let us look to follow the same, so that those who go about to advance themselves may be put down, and no man take any degree upon him but he who is called. Therefore, mark it as a special point that St. Paul meant to excuse himself of rashness by showing that he did not thrust himself in to be an apostle, but had good and sure warrant that God had appointed him thereto.

And withal, he meant to assure the Gentiles, so that they should receive the message of their salvation as proceeding from God, and not from man. For we must always be at this point: that the forgiveness of sins is too precious a thing for us to be assured of by the authority of man. Then we must be fully resolved that it is God who speaks, so that we may conclude that whatever is unbound on earth is also unbound in heaven. And since St. Paul had previously been an enemy to the Gospel, had persecuted the Christians, and blasphemed God, it seemed that this should have impeded the reception of him as an apostle and the yielding of such reputation to him as was requisite. Therefore, he preempts the things that might be alleged to deprive him of all reverence and says that they must not have an eye to his own person or his deserving, but to God's advancing of him by His grace and by a power that is not ordinary among men.

It is true that St. Paul always humbles himself as much as possible so that men may better know God's free-bestowed goodness. And that is also the rule we must hold, because God will have all mouths stopped, and none of us to have anything whereof to boast. For it is certain that we shall evermore but rob God of His honor if we do not confess that we are beholden to Him for all things and that we have nothing at all of our own. But (as I have touched upon already) he

meant here to remove all impediments, so that no man might upbraid him, saying he was unworthy of so excellent and great a dignity as to be one of the apostles. His intent was to show that God's grace surpassed all the impediments that could be in him before. First, he sets down God's grace. It would have been enough for him to have granted that God had given him so great a prerogative as to hold all things from Him; but he sets down two words here, to exclude all that might be demanded of him. How now? (might some man have said:) such a condition and such qualities ought to be in an apostle: do you have such virtue? And so you see why he was not content simply to set down the gift but also felt the need to add "free-bestowed." And afterward, he magnifies the same gift even more, saying that God worked therein according to the working of His power. To be short, he gives men to understand that they ought to perceive a singular and wonderful goodness of God in him, and withal, a power not ordinary among men. Those are the two points which we have to mark. Now, forasmuch as in the first to Timothy he says also that he himself both is and ought to serve us all as a looking glass, let us learn to apply the same to ourselves.

And first of all, whatever we ask of God, let us understand that it must issue to us from the wellspring of His only mercy and free bounty, so that we should forget all self-deserving. For it is the surest way to shut ourselves out from the door when we come to God if we imagine to bring anything of ourselves. Mark that as one point. And secondly, to amend all distrust, let us hope that God will do more than all our wits can conceive. For it is not in us to measure His infinite power; and therefore, whatever He has given us already, let us think ourselves beholden to His goodness for it, let us do Him homage for it, and let us yield Him the praise of it, as is meet. And so you see that the thing which we have to gather upon Saint Paul's example is that we must with all humility beseech God to work so in

us by own His mere grace that His name may be glorified thereby, because there is no deserving to be found in us. Also, let us be in no doubt that His power surpasses all our capacity, so that we may give Him place and entrance in every way and not shut Him out from us through our unbelief.

Know we once that? Has God shown us His mercy and power and made us to feel them by experience? Let us put them to use to the utmost of our power, and let us not seek to deface His glory under the pretense that He has made us more excellent than others, as though we had deserved anything of ourselves. But let us yield Him His due and that which ought to be His peculiar own.

And withal, to continue his matter, he adds that this grace was given to him, even to him the least of all the saints. This serves to expound that which he had said concerning the gift of grace. Now, hereupon we have to mark that if we intend to yield God that which we owe Him, we must be utterly abased in ourselves. For as long as men fall to parting of stakes with God and will needs be somewhat of themselves, it is all one as if they would set themselves against God and be their own curers. To be short, God never has His full right except we be rid quite and clean of all. Therefore, a man cannot discern how Saint Paul held all things of God's mere grace and free gift, but by considering his former slenderness, that is to say, by considering what manner of man he had been, and what his estate had been before. And this is a point of great importance: for we see how men covet always to reserve somewhat to themselves. And although they grant that God deserves to be exalted without end, yet they cannot find in their hearts to forgo the whole praise of the things that He has given them, but would fain be esteemed and have some reputation for them. Seeing that we are so much given to vainglory, and that there is not a harder thing for us to do than to

humble ourselves with such lowliness as God requires, it is essential for us to mark this doctrine all the more, wherein we see that God shall never be honored as He deserves until we are thrust down under His feet, and have nothing for which to be esteemed, but become like wretched creatures that have nothing in us but misery, whereby God may have occasion to show forth His mercy upon us. Lo, how Saint Paul yielded the praise of all things to God's free gift without hypocrisy, by acknowledging himself to be the least of all others.

And let us also mark that Saint Paul's doing so was not a feigned modesty, after the manner of most men, who will commonly say and make as it were a proverb of it, "O sir, I am the meanest and least able of all men," and yet in so saying with their mouths, they cease not to have their hearts puffed up with pride. In so much that, in very deed, if a man should answer them, "I believe it well," they would be as hot as a toast and had liever be found liars than to give up their self-worship, with which they are so full. Saint Paul used no such ceremony full of untruth, but protested truly the thing as he thought it, accordingly as in another place to the Corinthians he says he is not worthy to be named an Apostle because he had persecuted God's Church and withstood His truth. And again, when he sets forth himself for an example in the first to Timothy, to the end that we should not doubt but that God shows Himself merciful towards us, he says he had blasphemed the Gospel and been full of cruelty, seeking to shed innocent blood. There, then, Saint Paul shows well enough that there was no counterfeit in his confession and that his lowliness proceeded from his heart. For he would have chosen to be out of estimation to the worldward and to have received all manner of reproach to himself, yea, and to have been taken for a cursed captive, rather than to have disgraced God's goodness. And like as his doctrine was to endure forever, so he meant to have his wants to

be known in all ages and all times until the world's end, referring all things to this point, namely, that men might know how God had set him, as it were, upon a scaffold to warrant us that He will show Himself as free-hearted towards us also at this day: and that on the other side, we should not be ashamed to be acknowledged of our own wretchedness, to the intent that God's grace may have the greater gloss in us. Wherefore, let us remember upon this text, that we do then offer God such a sacrifice of praise as He deserves, when we protest truly and unfeignedly that all the good which is in us comes of His grace, who has bestowed it upon us, and that we cannot challenge anything at all to ourselves: but that when we have examined all that is our own, we shall find no other things at all than such as may cause us to cast down our eyes and make us ashamed. After this manner, say I, must we follow the thing that Saint Paul shows us here. Yea, and let not spite nor vainglory hinder us to humble ourselves among our neighbors. For here Saint Paul has not only shown that he was indebted to God for all things, and that he was bound to Him for all the good things that he had, because they came from His only mere goodness and free gift: but also therewith abases himself in comparison with the rest of the Apostles. Now then, let us rid away this cursed affection which is overly deeply rooted in our nature, namely, of desiring to perk up in such wise as men should look at us above other men, and commend us more than others. For we see how Saint Paul, who was so excellent, did notwithstanding stoop to that lowliness; wherefore let us endeavor to fashion ourselves like him. And let us think well upon this saying of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he who will be exalted of God must be brought low in himself. So then, let us be little ones of our own accord, and then it is certain that God will reach us His hand. And although He send us neither stateliness nor dignity, yet will He give us so much thereof as shall be needful, at leastwise if we have the

true meekness of seeking nothing else but to be governed by His hand.

But here it might be demanded, how Saint Paul acknowledges himself a little one, seeing he has done more than all the rest, as he himself says in the afore-alleged place of the first to the Corinthians. Saint Paul was not ignorant of the gracious gifts that he had received at God's hand, nor did he mean to abase them with his mouth as hypocrites do, who say, "I am nothing at all"; for he knew well that God had endowed him with great gifts, and it is not a point of humility to say, "I have neither skill nor wit, nor anything worthy of praise," for if we speak thus, we are unthankful to God, as those who bury His benefits where His glory ought to shine forth. Saint Paul then meant not to show that he was a man without knowledge and without the gifts of the Holy Ghost, or that he had received a lesser portion of them than other men had: but his calling of himself the least was in respect to that which he had been before he was a member of the Church. For our Lord Jesus Christ had in His lifetime chosen and set apart the twelve, to whom He gave commission to publish the Gospel throughout the whole world. And now in the meantime, what was Saint Paul? He was not only a private person but also banished and cut off as a rotten member from the company of the faithful. And besides that, Satan drove him onward to all cruelty, so long as God's Spirit was not in him. He had indeed a kind of zeal, but that was stark madness, for he ceased not for all that to fight against God in his own misbelief: he did it ignorantly, but that could not excuse him.

So then we see that his terming of himself the least was not without cause, according as he says in another place, that he was as an untimely birth, and that it was not to be thought that ever he should have come to the spiritual life, whereof he was a minister. For he was

as a rotten carcass, and there was no likelihood that ever he should have come to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, seeing he had run so far astray and had been as a tempest thundering upon the Church, and as a ravening wolf that sought nothing else but to devour his prey. And so we see how his confessing of himself to be the least of the saints was unfeigned, namely in respect of his former state. But God, who not only exalts the thing that is small and low, but also makes what He wills out of nothing, vouchsafed to change him in such a manner, that the miracle might amaze us as often as we think upon it, and we might not only learn to magnify God's goodness in that deed but also apply the same to our own use. And with this, each of us should consider carefully and return to our former state (I do not mean to be such as we were in old times) but consider well and examine ourselves thoroughly, that God's infinite grace and goodness may appear the more in us. That then is in the point we have to remember concerning Saint Paul. And therefore, as often as and whenever the great treasures of God's mercy, which are imparted to us in our Lord Jesus Christ, are preached to us: let us be sure that every bit of this was warranted to us in Saint Paul's person. He spoke not of things unknown but had sure experience of them, and in his person, we can still see the things that he uttered with his mouth.

Now let us come to the gracious gift he speaks of, which is the publishing of the incomprehensible riches of our Lord Jesus Christ by the Gospel. It was a great matter that Saint Paul had been received to be a sheep, but God, thinking that not enough, appointed him to the office of a shepherd. The point here is, that whereas he had been a wolf full of cruelty, he was not only changed to become a lamb, to obey the voice of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be quiet in His flock, but also exalted by God to a much greater and higher dignity. He was ordained as a messenger of mankind's salvation and a dispenser of all the riches of our Lord Jesus Christ, which are

nonetheless incomprehensible—not that we should not seek them, but because their measure utterly exceeds our capacity.

Now we see the effect of what Saint Paul teaches here, continuing with the point he began with earlier: namely, that we must understand that he did not thrust himself forward through foolish boldness to take upon him the office of an apostle, but was called to it from on high and set in that position by God. Furthermore, let us assure ourselves that this doctrine was not put forth into the air at random, but directed at us by God's Holy Spirit and His wondrous forepurpose, as we shall see shortly. Therefore, let us not think that Saint Paul spoke only for those whom he presently taught, and that in the meantime the same doctrine does not belong to us. Rather, let us understand how it was God's will that Saint Paul's labor should be to our benefit today, and that we should receive profit from it. That is what we need to remember concerning the process of this text.

And therefore, let us understand that whenever the Gospel is preached to us, we have there inestimable riches. When we have thoroughly set all our wits to the understanding of the knowledge of the things that are offered us. We may have a taste of the things thereof, but we shall never fully perceive how free God's grace is toward us. However, it is enough for us that we can, to some extent, perceive His goodness and be allured thereof unto. It is true that we ought to be enraptured with it, but no matter how we fare, we shall never get past half our way. Even he who has as good as quite given over the world, forgotten all the enticements and pleasures here beneath, and is led by an angelic mind to aspire to the kingdom of heaven, shall nonetheless have comprehended but a small portion of the riches of our Lord Jesus Christ. This ought to make us esteem the Gospel more highly than we have done. On the other hand, it will be a horrible condemnation of our ingratitude if we think the things set

forth in the Gospel to be ordinary matters, seeing that our Lord Jesus Christ utters there the infinite treasures of His goodness. Moreover, we must understand that once we have our Lord Jesus Christ, we can well give over all other things as needless and superfluous.

If we are at the point that the Papists are, who can say "Jesus Christ our Redeemer" while thrusting Him among their other saints so that Christ is but a little fellow shuffled in among the rest, we are surely renouncing Jesus Christ by disguising Him so through our lewdness. Therefore, it stands us in good stead to weigh well this text, where it is said that His riches are incomprehensible, that we may set our whole minds upon them and strive even beyond our power to know the good things that are communicated to us by Jesus Christ. For it is certain that the measure of our faith shall never attain to the utmost. Since it is so, let us assure ourselves that our Lord Jesus Christ ought to suffice us thoroughly once for all, for we shall find in Him whatsoever we can wish. As soon as we stray from Him, we may well surmise we have won I know not what, but it shall be but wind, which shall avail us to no purpose. Let our Lord Jesus be known as He is, with the whole sum of His benefits. For it is certain that by Him we obtain whatsoever we can ask of God. Elsewhere, it is a straying out of the way, for it is said that He is the way, and that by Him we have access unto God His Father. By guiding us to God His Father, He shows us that we shall be satisfied with all that we ever need, and that we shall come to our salvation, so we rest wholly upon Him. Conversely, when we wander to one side or the other, it is a plain renouncing of all the benefits offered to us in His person. Therefore, we are well worthy to starve when we insist on adding anything at all to our Lord Jesus Christ, seeing that God has shown Himself so bountiful in Him that He has not forgotten any of the things that belong to the fullness of our felicity, joy, and glory.

We are warned by Saint Paul's example that the more any of us is exalted by God's hand, the more he should humble ourselves, acknowledging how much he is bound to Him. True, even those who are furthest behind have enough cause to magnify God's goodness for calling them into His Church. For what a thing it is for us to be reckoned as God's children, heirs of His kingdom, and members of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be partakers of the glory wherein He is entered! Now the Christian who is (as it were) an underling to all others, an outcast in a little nook, a rascal, and an idiot with nothing but scorn in this world, is nevertheless adopted of God into the number of His children, to be of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, even the least have enough cause to glorify God's grace. But those who are advanced to any degree of honor have so much the less excuse, if they do not honor God for the things He has bestowed upon them above other men. For example, if a man has received knowledge and grace to serve the Church, it is certain that he is doubly guilty if he does not acknowledge himself so much the more beholden to God for it. Those who by their strength or wealth can do more than other poor men, who have no more than wherewith to govern themselves, ought also to humble themselves before God, and to stoop in such a way that there may be no presumption or overweening in them to puff them up. To be short, as every man has received grace through God's goodness, so ought his aim always to be that God is honored, and to confess that we are the more beholden and bound to Him for His liberality. That is another thing we have to gather upon the example of Saint Paul.

But inasmuch as he had spoken of the riches of Jesus Christ, he tells us that those riches were revealed when God's mysteries were published to those who had previously been blind wretches. I have already explained to you the word "mystery," "secret," or "privitie," according to Saint Paul's application in this text. In essence, I said

that all God's works, when well considered, have within them the capacity to draw us to wonder. And why is that? Because they proceed from His righteousness, justice, goodness, and wisdom—which are all of them things infinite. When we speak of God's wisdom, power, or justice, they are not things we can define as if we had full knowledge of them, like the things we see here below. You see then how all God's works, when we come to consider from where they proceed, are wonderful to us.

Well then, are not all the things we see in the order of nature also God's works? Yes, they are, but we partly understand what they are, and partly our wits fall short of them. For example, if it is asked by what means the earth brings forth fruits, we know it does so because it is common knowledge among us. But if the cause thereof is questioned, surely our wits fail us. For is the earth able by itself to yield corn? Is it able to make things live again that were as good as dead? Whence come the leaves and blossoms of trees, and all such like things, after winter has put everything out of fashion? Again, how can fruits, corn, and wine nourish men, seeing they have no life of themselves? Then, if we seek out the grounds of God's works, it is (as I said) a bottomless pit, and we must confess that God has in Himself an infinite wisdom which we cannot attain.

However, God's works appear even more wonderful to us when we find that their cause is contrary to our natural wit and understanding. For example, when it is said that it was God's will for the Gospel to be preached suddenly throughout the whole world, it seems, by human judgment, to be a very mad kind of dealing. For some will ask why God decided to extend the hope of salvation to the world after having excluded it for so long. Behold, the world, which had continued so long before, was renewed again at the flood. And we see how God suffers the heathen folk to walk in destruction.

When all manner of wickedness had reached its full height and overflowed the world like a horrible flood, then suddenly God showed Himself. And is not that a secret to astonish men withal? Now, just as the wicked and all such as despise God, and all worldlings are dazed at these things, and so far out of conceit with the strangeness of them, that they could find it in their hearts to go to law with God, so the faithful are taught to know that God's wisdom is incomprehensible.

Again, St. Paul, speaking hereof in the fourth chapter of the second to the Corinthians, sends us back to the creation of the world, saying that if we think it strange that God should enlighten blind wretches and that such as were but wandering beasts before should be brought into the way of salvation by the doctrine of the Gospel, we should consider how the light was created at the beginning. What was there in the confused lump, whereof it is said that God created the Heaven and the earth? There was neither beauty, nor order, nor aught else; darkness covered all, as it is said in Moses. But God commanded that light should be made, and so he drew light out of darkness. Therefore (says St. Paul), although the world was in irksome darkness, and the Gentiles had their eyes as good as stopped up, so there was not any knowledge of salvation at all, yet God at the coming of His only son showed how His promising by His prophets that He would gather the world to Him was not for naught. And so, you see how He brings light out of darkness anew again. However, the case stands, we must always come back to this point, that the drawing of the Gentiles to the hope of salvation by the doctrine of the Gospel was a secret of God. And he speaks of the communicating thereof unto them because God had kept it secret to Himself, and therefore he adds that it had been unknown in all times and all ages. And how so? For God kept it secret to Himself.

We are warned anew in this text to revere God's incomprehensible ordinance when we hear of our salvation and to consider that it is a work which surpasses all our capacity. If we intend to have such knowledge of it as is good and profitable to glorify God withal, we must be, as it were, at our wit's end to say, "It is a thing that I cannot understand aright." True, it is that we ought to set our whole study thereupon, and it behooves us to exercise ourselves in it all the time of our life, as we see in the other text. But howsoever we deal, yet the final summation of it must always be that God has not encompassed the work of our salvation according to our slender capacity and weakness, but meant to humble us to the end we should be abashed in ourselves. And when we have revered His everlasting ordinance, which is hidden from us, let us employ all the power and ability we have to the praising of His holy name. This is the thing we have to bear in mind: and what is spoken to all men generally, every one of us must apply particularly to himself. For St. Paul treats here of the coming of the Gospel to us who come from the race of the Gentiles, and says that the same is a secret of God. Now, if each of us looks into himself and asks this question of himself, "How comes it to pass that I am made a partaker of the Gospel? How have I been brought into the Church?" If we consider well these things, we shall all of us, from the greatest to the least, confess that our Lord has worked after an unaccustomed fashion. For it is not of the order of nature that God has so reformed us and created us a second time, to the end we should be His children and bear His image. But it is a very miracle which ought to ravish us and amaze us, as I have said already. Let that serve for one point.

And besides that, forasmuch as I must be fain to reserve what follows till another time, let us note for a conclusion that when there is any speaking of God's secrets, it is good reason that we should be sober and allow ourselves to be ignorant of the things that God has not

revealed to us. That is the thing we have to consider upon the word "communicate." For even very experience shows what the end of those is who give head to their own curiosity and will need to know all things and search out all God's secrets by piecemeal. They that mount up into such overweening shall, in the end, be confounded. And the higher they climb, the more horrible their fall shall be, and God must needs cast them down utterly. Therefore, let us learn to know no more than God discloses to us. For it is fitting for Him to show us as much of His power and purpose as He thinks good. When it pleases Him to open to us the things that were strange before, then let us learn them of Him, and not say, "This is too dark," but let us pray Him to give us such understanding by His Holy Ghost that we may perceive whatever He shows us by His word. You see then how we ought to be diligent and heedful in receiving the things that God has vouchsafed to teach us in His Holy Scripture and the things that are preached to us in His name. But with that, let us also wait till He imparts to us what He thinks good, and let us not thrust ourselves in at all adventure to know more than is lawful for us. Instead, let us be contented with that which God shows us, assuring ourselves that it is not from any envy that He suffers us to know no more, but because He regards what is expedient and needful for us, and therefore gives us such light as He thinks meet, in measure and proportion. Thus, you see in effect how St. Paul meant that the Gospel was communicated to him, and also that the Gentiles received their part of it by his means, insomuch that all men knew the things that were as good as buried from them before, till God brought them forth to light. Likewise, let us at this day understand that whenever it pleases God to raise up men of skill who have the gift to teach us, it is a sure token that He has pitied us beforehand and is minded to call us to the inheritance of salvation. And therefore, let us be teachable, let us allow ourselves to be taught by the word that is preached to us, and let us covet no further, but let us rest upon that which God shows us.

For the only means to satisfy us is to be contented with the free goodness which He has revealed towards us, which (as I said before) is infinite, because the treasures of His mercy which He has poured out upon us surpass all man's capacity, insomuch that our unthankfulness shall be too inexcusable if our own desires and likings lead us to know more than is revealed to us.

Now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to forgive them, to blot out the remembrance of them, and to give us the grace to frame our lives to His holy will and commandments so we may show by our deeds that, forasmuch as He has adopted us to be His children, we also honor Him as our Father. And therefore let us all say, Almighty God, heavenly Father, etc.

The Eighteenth Sermon,

which is the third upon the third Chapter.

9 The grace was given to me, to manifest to all men what the communicating of the mystery is, which was hid from the beginning of all times in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.

10 To the end that God's wisdom which is diverse in all sorts, might be manifested to principalities and powers in heavenly places by the Church,

11 According to the determination of all times, which he made in Jesus Christ our Lord.

12 By whom we have assurance and access in trust, through the faith which we have in him.

Like as I said this morning, that all God's works in general deserve well to be revered at our hands because God has printed in them some marks of His infinite goodness, justice, power, and wisdom. So also there are some works more wonderful than the rest, and worthy to be advanced above the common rate, forasmuch as God oftentimes works after such a sort, that men (even whether they will or no) are enforced to be abashed and astonished at them. Of this sort is the doctrine (of the Bible). For all that ever is contained in the Law and the Gospel is a wisdom which it behooveth us to worship, because without that, we should never understand anything, insomuch that it is said, that God will be the teacher of the little and humble ones. Yet notwithstanding, some part of the things that are showed us in the scripture may well be understood even by the rudest and most ignorant. Again, there are higher or deeper matters. And those are what St. Paul means now, by calling the preaching of the Gospel a Mystery or secret, in comparison to all the rest. For albeit that God had evermore determined in Himself to call the whole world to salvation, yet He kept the execution of His purpose secret to Himself, till the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: and when it was done, the newness of it seemed strange. That therefore is the thing that we have to consider, when St. Paul says, that he was appointed an Apostle, to communicate the secret that had been hidden before in God. And by those words, he makes us understand, that although to man's sight the publishing of the Gospel was a new and unwonted thing, yet God did nothing upon the sudden nor in haste, but only showed then by effect, the thing that He had already determined and purposed upon before, even from the creation of the world.

Wherefore, when we look upon God's works, let us learn not to think He did the things in haste (as men say) which were first hidden from us: but let us reserve His secret purpose to Himself, and when we see things come to pass, let us understand that it must have been so because God had purposed it. And this serves to humble us by all means: First, to make us know the smallness of our capacity, that we may revere the things which pass the reach of our wit. And secondly, we also have wherewith to hold us in suspense as concerning the execution of God's ordinance: for we cannot give a sentence of things to come, without fond rashness, and God will laugh us to scorn, according as we see how all such as take upon them to prophesy (at leastwise of their own head, and without God's calling of them to that office) betray their own shamelessness, and are worthy to be mocked by little children.

You see then that it becomes us to restrain our judgments in the things which our Lord has not disclosed by effect, and that when we see things come to pass, we must understand that therein He does not do anything by chance, but had ordained it so before. And in the same manner, we must judge the change that was seen at the time that our Lord Jesus was sent into the world. If it be demanded why God delayed it for so long a time: men advance themselves too much in such curiosity. If it be demanded why the heathen were then matched with the Jews, and set in equal degree with them, seeing that God had cut them off from His Church before: we must also honor this secret ordinance, whereof Saint Paul speaks here. And moreover, let us understand that God had so determined it before. Could we have that sobriety with us, we should learn to profit ourselves much better by God's works than do these heathenish folk, which bark at them, though they cannot bite them. And nowadays we see that many are stirred up with devilish rage, to murmur against all God's doings, because they do not conceive the reason of his purpose,

insomuch that thereupon they spew out their horrible blasphemies, as if to say it were not free for God to reserve anything to himself but must call men to counsel and make himself their underling. Seeing then that a number do so far overshoot themselves through that villainous pride, to thrust God as it were under their feet: it stands us the more on hand to put this doctrine in use, that we may reverence God's secret ordinance, and therewithal receive the things that are uttered unto us, without gainsaying, as good and rightful, and done with such wisdom, as is not to be found fault with.

And now Saint Paul thinks it not enough to say that God had his secret purpose hidden in himself, but also says that his will was that this wisdom, which is diverse in many sorts, should be known. This title deserves to be well marked, where he says that God's wisdom is (as you would say) of diverse sorts. Not that God is variable and changeable in himself, nor that there is any snarling or entangling in his devices: there is no such thing at all in God, neither can there be. But Saint Paul's speaking in that manner is in respect of our understanding. Therefore, if we would comprehend God's wisdom, we should be confounded and dazzled by it, because it is infinite. Besides that, it has things in it which are able to amaze all our senses, yea, and to swallow them quite up, so as we should never discern anything certainly, to say, "Lo, this is it." But this needs to be laid out more at length, that we may understand it and fare the better by it.

Now and then we see some looking glasses, wherein we think we behold a hundred, yea, or rather an infinite number of images before us. When we see them, we are at our wits' end. In the same manner has Saint Paul spoken here of God's wisdom, namely, as giving us warning of the weakness and rudeness that is in our understanding, to the intent we should not be too inquisitive in searching the things that pass our capacity and the matters that God has purposed in

himself. Then if we will needlessly try to ascend higher than is lawful for us and thrust ourselves forward with foolish presumption, to be privy to God's counsel and to inquire particularly what he has determined, our wits must needs fail us ere we come halfway there, and we shall find so many things that we must of necessity quail of ourselves, and be driven to confess that it is not for us to reach the bottom of so great and deep a gulf.

Therefore, if a man demand here, how then can we confess God to be righteous, wise, and almighty, since we are so daunted at his works? For it is said that it is the wisdom of men to search out God's works and to set their minds wholly upon them: and he has also ordained the world to be as a stage, whereon to behold his goodness, righteousness, power, and wisdom. Therefore, there seems to be some contrariety between these two: that we should be diligent and heedful in considering God's works, and yet notwithstanding that our wits are dazzled at the thinking upon them. The answer thereto is very easy, which is, that if we desire soberly to know but the things which God vouchsafes to reveal unto us, and which are for our profit, we shall have understanding enough. We shall well perceive that he does not envy us the teaching by his works, that we might come unto him, put our whole trust in him, know how to call upon him, discern between good and bad, and walk according to his will.

If we do not give heed to our foolish and inordinate lusts but hearken like good scholars to the things which our Master vouchsafes to declare unto us, we shall in God's works understand all things that are for the furtherance of our welfare. That is the cause why it is said in the book of Job, that we shall have done very much if we can espy but the utmost borders of God's works. Then may we taste of God's wisdom, righteousness, power, and goodness by considering only the fringes or uttermost bounds of God's works. But if we will need to

gauge them to the bottom, there we shall find the foresaid gulf which is able to swallow up all our understanding.

To be short, first it is to be understood here that both God's word and his works are unto us wonderful secrets and such as pass all our wit and capacity. Insomuch that if we have an eye to his works, there are yet further miracles in them to daunt us withal, than the things that we see every day and which are in common use among us. Likewise in the Holy Scripture, there are somewhat more secret points, and which are not very easy to be understood. Know we that once we have first of all to humble ourselves and to pray God to enlighten us by his Holy Spirit, that we may profit ourselves by all his works and words. Moreover, let us learn the things that he shows us, and be contented with the measure that he appoints us, without coveting to know any more than what we may learn in his school. Thus, you see what we have to bear in mind.

Furthermore, when we once have such mildness, surely our Lord will give us a sure resting point. And although his secrets be incomprehensible, and the doctrine of the Law and the Gospel be secrets above the reach of the world, yet we shall be taught by them to our welfare and salvation. And so there is no mingling, no confusion, no entangling for us, because God will guide us by his Holy Spirit, and give us wisdom and discretion to know whatever he sees to be for our benefit. Mark that for one point. But if we be unteachable or unruly, and will needs play the loose colts to search further than we have leave, surely God's wisdom will be always variable unto us: that is to say, there will be such diversity of things and so many stops in it as will make us at our wits' end, and we shall remain utterly confounded. Yea, and even the faithful shall well perceive the thing that Saint Paul says here, that they may always be put in mind to walk in awe and fear, and not give themselves the

bridle too much, nor take too much leave to know more than our Lord will have them to know. Now then, the doubt which might have been cast, namely how God will have us to be abashed at his works, is removed. And yet he will not have us to be abashed at them, so long as we suffer ourselves to be taught by him.

Thereupon we may gather also that it is a devilish arrogance when these ruffians take so highly upon themselves, as to reject whatever they cannot conceive the reason of. If a man tells them that God disposes all things by his secret ordinance, and that the things which we term fortune, chance, hazard, casualty, happenstance, and the like, are all determined before the making of the world, insomuch that even the hairs of our heads are numbered, and one little bird shall not light upon the ground, without God's providence, they step forth and object, how can that be? And whereas God tells us in his Law that he will have this and that done, shall we say that he has more wills than one? Then should he be inconstant, and that would be to make God changeable, and so he would seem subject to all manner of lightness like a mortal creature. But (as I said before) such men do ill know their own ability. For they imagine that if God does not bind himself in all points to the things which he has revealed to us by his word, he is contrary to himself and has a double will, which moves them to babble in that fashion. But to be short, God's will is always one and single, and agreeable in itself: even though to our seeming it may be diverse and have many kinds, as if we saw a hundred sundry shapes that dazzled or utterly dimmed our sight. Whereas Saint Paul says that God's wisdom is diverse in many sorts, it is as if a picture had a thousand colors in it, so that a man could not distinctly discern one from another. Nevertheless, Saint Paul, in saying so, did not mean that God's wisdom is so writhed in itself that there is any contrariety or strife within it. No; but he shows that although God always has one even meaning and maintains a single

trace and rate, even though there is no change nor variableness in him, and although there is but one light wherein there is no dimness at all, yet, notwithstanding, when men will needs press unto him, their wits are always as it were astray and dazzled, and if they go forward and step forth still with too great boldness, they must needs be confounded in the end, and God must utterly overwhelm them. Therefore, we must take the things that are spoken in the Holy Scripture concerning God's providence in this manner.

It is true that we have our lesson where God tells us that he will not have any man trouble his neighbor, nor commit robbery, extortion, covetousness, deceit, or any manner of wickedness: he tells us these things and commands us to live chastely and to abstain from all violence. Now, when wars are stirred up in the world, when blood is shed, when infinite outrages and robberies are committed, shall we say that such things are done without God's foreseeing what was good? Do we think that he allows fortune to rule the roost here below, as though he himself were asleep in heaven or reposing himself in his pleasures? What blasphemy would that be? We would make God into an idol. Again, what would become of us if it were so? For Satan is like a roaring lion, seeking to devour us as his prey, and we should be continually as it were in his paws and between his teeth. Then if God did not order all things in this world, while Satan and all the wicked are bridled, surely we should be a hundred times forlorn and perish every minute of an hour. Again, if we knew not that wars and such other like events are God's judgments by which he chastises our sins: it is certain that we would never be drawn to repentance. Now then, let us learn the thing that is told us here, according to our small ability: namely, that God has but one will, and that this will is certain and thoroughly agreeable with itself, and has no lightness or inconstancy in it. And yet, nevertheless, we must also reverence his secret determinations, which are so high and profound

that we cannot reach unto them. And if we cannot resolve all the doubts which the devil will cast in our ways (making us think), "How is it possible that God should be free from sin and not be the author of evil, seeing he uses both Satan and all the wicked, employing them to advance themselves against each other?" How is it possible that he should be blameless? When such thoughts come into our heads, or if any of those dogs that bark out their blasphemies against God assault us, let us be armed with sobriety, knowing that God's wisdom is diverse in many sorts, and that although his will also appears diverse in many respects, it is always one and the same. That is, in effect, the thing we need to bear in mind concerning this strain.

Now thereupon Saint Paul applieth the ground which he handleth unto the matter which he hath spoken here in general: that is to wit, that God created all things by our Lord Jesus Christ, to the end that this wisdom should be known to the powers and principalities in the heavenly places, by the Church. In saying that God created all things by Jesus Christ, he bringeth us back again to the beginning of the world, where he speaketh of the renewal that was made when God repaired the things that were decayed and scattered by Adam's sin, according as we have seen heretofore, how it was Christ's office to gather together all things that were scattered afore. For Adam had perverted and marred all order by his fall, so as there was nothing but confusion both in heaven and earth, till all was mended again by Jesus Christ. Now then, the restitution that was made by our Lord Jesus Christ, may well be referred to this second creation, as though at his coming God had set the world in its former state again, which had been as it were crazed afore. Howsoever the case stands, both twain of them were done by Jesus Christ, that is to wit, as well the first creation as the second. And the conveyance is not amiss, in that Saint Paul leadeth us from the one to the other, by the similitude which he setteth down here. Let us mark well therefore that all things

were created in Jesus Christ when he was ordained to be head of Angels and men: yea, and that although we had had no need of a redeemer, yet had our Lord Jesus Christ nevertheless been established for our head. There remained no more to do, but to clothe himself with our nature, and to offer himself in sacrifice for the redemption of sinners: but yet for all that, he failed not to bear the office already of reconciling men unto God, and of joining them with the Angels of heaven. After that manner then were all things created in our Lord Jesus Christ. But here Saint Paul meant purposely to lead us to the restoration, which was made at such time as Jesus Christ was given us to be our redeemer. For although the world ceased not to have some shape still, so as the sun and moon shone bright, and the earth brought forth her fruits: yet notwithstanding, we know, that (as Saint Paul sayeth in the eighth to the Romans) all creatures groan, and are as a woman travailing of child, because they see themselves subject to corruption through Adam's offense, for the which he was accursed.

To be short, whereas God had shown Himself our enemy, He became our Father; and whereas the things that were created for our use had been turned away by Adam's sin, all was restored again at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, by that means He gathered all things together again, that had been scattered asunder before, and then the world was in a sort changed, as the prophets had spoken of it before. For although they did not intend to enclose the said renewal within any certain time, yet notwithstanding when they preached of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the grace that should be given to the Church at that time, they used such speech as this: "Behold, I make the heavens new, and the earth new." In this manner, God speaks through the prophet Isaiah: and it is not only once, but is, as you would say, a common speech among all the prophets. Now then, Saint Paul, following the common phrase of the

Scripture, says that all things were created new again in Jesus Christ: howbeit that is in respect of the Church. The world itself was not renewed; but as for us, we are already partakers of the restoration that is promised us. For by our Lord Jesus Christ, we enjoy God's creatures, whereof we were deprived before. Whereas the sun and moon shine upon us, and we are nourished by the sustenance of the earth, we know that those things belong unto us because we are God's children. And how is that? Even because He has adopted us in Jesus Christ. For the matter which we have sung in the Psalms concerning man must be applied to the person of God's Son, as says Saint Paul himself, who is a faithful expounder. Not that he restrains it to him alone, but forasmuch as the things which he speaks concerning the incorruptness of mankind are not to be found in it now, but all is marred and corrupted: therefore, we must be fain to repair to our Head, by whom we are set in good plight again. So then, we would not be blessed of God, neither in our meat nor in our drink, nor in the enjoying of any of all His creatures, were it not for the restoration that is made by our Lord Jesus Christ, and that He has caused the world to be given us henceforth in heritage, to the end we might with a good and clear conscience enjoy all the gifts which He has bestowed upon us. And so you see, that the creating of all things in Jesus Christ is God's reforming of His Church and our partaking of the purchased heritage, for His sake and by His means.

Now, having said that we are so created again in the person of God's Son, and that He is our Head, inasmuch as we are knit unto Him by faith, he adds that it is a wisdom which the very angels have not known, insomuch that they fare the better by our salvation and have cause to honor God for preferring them so to the thing that was, after a sort, buried from them before. Some, thinking this to be strange stuff, have been of the opinion that Saint Paul spoke of the devils. But he speaks expressly of the heavenly places and means to put a

difference between the chosen angels and the castaways. And again, to what purpose would it be for the devils to know God's wisdom in our salvation? It would be to no purpose at all. There are others, who, being not able to rid themselves of this text of Saint Paul, have thought that the angels are here among us to be as scholars and to hear the preaching of God's word. But that is too fond and childish an imagination: for we know that as well the doctrine, as the use of the sacraments, are allotted peculiarly unto us of God because of our rawness. The angels of heaven have nothing to do, neither with baptism nor with the Lord's Supper. And why?

For the angels are altogether spiritual. But as we crawl here beneath, therefore we have need of such means as are convenient for our infirmity, to make us come by little and little unto God. Therefore, the doctrine that is preached among us serves not for the instruction of the angels. How then should it be understood that the angels were taught by the things which they see presently in the Church? Let us mark first of all that, although the angels behold the face of God, it is not meant that they have come to the perfection which is promised us; for that is reserved to the latter day, when all things shall be fulfilled.

The angels then know not things yet but in part. True it is that they must not be mustered in our state and taking; for, like as they are nearer God than we, so are they taught more familiarly. But howsoever they fare, yet must they be fain to hide their eyes, as is shown us in the sixth chapter of Isaiah, in the vision that is given him there. Although then the angels are heavenly spirits and are familiarly conversant with God, as household servants of His kingdom, yet they have their eyes covered to show that they understand not all things yet, and that their knowing is but in part. For God must show them that they are but creatures, that they might

thereby be held in continual awe, to humble themselves before Him, and to keep themselves in their degree. According hereunto, it is said that the angels of heaven know not when the last day shall be; that is hid from them. And why? To the intent that men should humble themselves the more and not be ashamed to be ignorant of the things which God has not revealed unto us.

To the end, therefore, that it may not grieve us that God conceals many things from us, the very angels are set before us as not knowing all things yet. Then it is not without cause said that they knew not what should befall and come to pass at the coming of the Son of God, that is to say, that all people without exception should be called to the truth of the Gospel and be all adopted of God to be made the spiritual children of Abraham. True it is that the angels knew well that Jesus Christ was the head of all mankind; but how that should be done, or at what time, or by what means, that was hidden from them. That is the manner wherein Saint Paul says that they profited, namely by beholding our Lord Jesus Christ to shed forth His grace in that way. For it was not enough to say that men should wonder at such a miracle as that God should take those into His house who were strayed away before, and ally Himself with those who were once His mortal enemies, and allure them to Him whom He previously abhorred. If it had been said that men ought to be astonished at it, that would not have been enough. But when Saint Paul says that even the angels find it strange and are fain to marvel at it, seeing how God utters such great treasures, it serves well to show us that whenever there is any mention of our calling, that is to say, of the mercy that God has shown us in forgetting what we were and in fashioning us anew after His own image—insomuch that, whereas we were lost and forlorn, yea, and utterly drowned in the bottom of hell by Adam, He has set us up again and taken us up to the kingdom of heaven, and is not contented to show us His bountifulness in this world only, but

also intends to make us partakers of His endless glory and to give us the crown of life in His kingdom—it is a thing for us to learn to wonder at, to the end we may receive so great, so high, so excellent, and so worthy benefits with such reverence as they deserve.

And Saint Paul not only here but also in other places calls the angels principalities, to show us that we cannot devise anything so high and noble that is not inferior to Jesus Christ, as is declared more fully in the first chapter to the Colossians. For inasmuch as many men did even at that time magnify the angels to deface the majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ, Saint Paul shows that although the angels are as it were God's powers or virtues and His arms wherewith, He executes His works, and although they are dominions and powers, yet notwithstanding Jesus Christ ceases not to have all preeminence and authority over them. But like as the sun darkens the light of the stars, so must all the dignity of the angels be laid down, that it hinder not Jesus Christ from being looked at by all men, and to be the only Lodestar, and to be known that it is only He in whom lies the fullness of all good things; and so He is indeed, as is said in the same text. And it is a point well worthy to be marked still. For we see how it is enough nowadays among the Papists to allege the virtues of the apostles, or of the Virgin Mary, or of the saints, to make idols of them. And it seems to them on the contrary part also, that if men do not worship them, and pray unto them, and yield them the service which belongs only to God, they are utterly undone.

For thus do they allege: How now? Why should not the Virgin Mary be our advocate, seeing she lived so holy a life that she was as a mirror of all perfection and so highly in God's favor? Verily, as who should say that the excellency which God has put into His creatures should serve to bereave Jesus Christ in such a way that He should be put back therefore. So then, let us understand that whatsoever can be

said or preached of the virtues and worthiness of the Virgin Mary, of the apostles, and of all other men, yea, and of the angels of heaven, serves not to diminish the majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ, nor to turn us away from Him, nor to cause His offices to be dealt away to this man and to that man. Wherefore? To show us that virtues are so distributed to all God's children, as there is none other fountain of all goodness but Jesus Christ, who is the (only) party to whom we must resort, and that the creatures are never the more impaired, though Jesus Christ oversee them as their head. That then is in effect the thing which we have to mark upon Saint Paul's words, where he taunts such as would needs exalt the angels without end or ceasing. For he says: Very well, I grant they be powers, virtues, and principalities: but yet is our Lord Jesus Christ still their head, and they are so grounded upon Him that they fare the better by our salvation. Now then, what an ungraciousness would it be if we should leave Jesus Christ and go seek to the angels, seeing that even they do wonder at the riches which God has uttered in knitting us into the body of His Son, and consequently in calling us to Him to be His own children by that means? Thus you see how the wondering of the angels at our salvation ought to frame us the better to our Lord Jesus Christ, and make us to stick fast unto Him, without swerving from Him in any manner of way. And for that cause, it is added in the end, that by Him we have boldness and entrance in hope, through the belief which is in Him.

Here Saint Paul meant shortly to blame the unthankfulness of such as are not contented with having Jesus Christ but think that He should have some helps added to Him. Therefore he says, what desire we more than to be knit unto God? Is not our full happiness there? Now it is so, that by believing in Jesus Christ, we have confidence that we may approach unto God: the access is given. And whereas trust or confidence is not enough, we have also boldness to

come unto Him with our heads upright, not as presuming any whit of ourselves, nor yet to come thither recklessly, but we must always practice this saying of the Psalm, that although we rest upon God's goodness, yet must we evermore worship Him with fear. Notwithstanding, we may always come boldly unto God's throne, assuring ourselves that His Majesty shall no more be terrible to us, seeing He shows Himself a Father towards us in the person of His only Son. We see then how Saint Paul's meaning is to hold us fast to Jesus Christ. And therein we also see what our frowardness is. For it is certain that the care and zeal which Saint Paul had to make us cleave fast to the Son of God came from the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, who knew our frailty and unsteadfastness. Had we (as you would say) but one drop of settled wit, it would be enough to make us understand that by the Gospel we may possess God's Son, who gives Himself unto us, and that having Him, we have all that ever we can wish. It would be enough to have spoken this in one word, as Saint Paul has shown already, but we see how he doubles and confirms his saying, as though it were a hard thing to be believed. And of a truth, it is very hard, because we are too much given to distrust and unbelief. Again, to believe for one day is not all that we have to do; it is required that we should hold on still, which is a very rare thing to be found in this world, because we are always risking. By means whereof, men do as it were willfully bereave themselves of the thing that was given them. Furthermore, forasmuch as all the world is at the point, and we cannot be won or persuaded but with great pain, to come to our Lord Jesus Christ and to rest upon Him, let us use the remedy that Saint Paul sets down here.

And first of all we must mark well, that Jesus Christ is the door to open heaven unto us. For we know that at His death the veil of the Temple was rent asunder, and that in such wise, that we may now enter familiarly into the Sanctuary of God, not of such a material

Temple, as was then, but even of heaven, so as we may press into the presence of our God and resort unto Him for refuge, as if a child should cast himself into the lap of his father or mother. For it is certain that God surmounteth all the fathers and mothers of the world in all kindness and favor. Seeing then that we know that: what could we more? Would we have some better or more excellent thing than God? Then must we go seek it in the bottom of hell. For when we have made our vagaries as much as we list, we shall always find, that there is nothing in any of all the creatures either above or beneath, that is worth a straw, in comparison of God, as saith the Prophet Isaiah. So then, seeing that God hath given himself unto us in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that the whole fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in that great Sanctuary, which was figured by the visible Sanctuary of the Law: ought we not to be fully satisfied when we have that, and to rest ourselves wholly thereupon? And although our wits and our affections be fickle, yet ought they to be held in awe as prisoners, so as we may say, Let us cleave, let us cleave, let us cleave to our God, according to this saying of David, behold, all my felicity, and all my joy is to be joined to my God. Likewise he saith in another place, he is the wellspring of life and light. Again, we have sung this morning, he is my portion, I cannot have a better lot, I must needs take all my delight in him. Thus ye see what we have to remember in the first place.

Secondly, let us mark well the degrees that Saint Paul setteth down here: whereof the first is, that we must have faith. For although Jesus Christ hath opened the way and passage by his blood, to make us entrance unto God his father: yet is not the gap opened for all men: for the unbelievers cannot enjoy that benefit, whereof he is the key. True it is, that the door is near hand, and the opening thereof is easy, when we have the key: that is to say, if we receive the Gospel in true obedience of faith. And so ye see why Saint Paul telleth us, that it is

not enough for us that Jesus Christ hath laid forth the treasures of the infinite goodness and mercy of God his father: but that it standeth us on hand on our side, to receive the same by faith. Not that we can do it of our own power, nor yet that we can come unto Jesus Christ, or be partakers of the benefits which he offereth us by the Gospel, except we have faith in him. And from belief we must proceed to trust, that is to say, we must be fully persuaded, that God will always receive us, and that we shall find favour at his hand, and that although we be wretched sinners, and unworthy to live upon the earth: yet nevertheless we shall find him still favorable to us when we come to heaven. Lo how faith is linked with trust. And thereof springeth this stoutness of mind or boldness, which is as it were the highest step, so that although we must needs be as it were dismayed, when we consider what we be of ourselves: yet we cease not to offer ourselves unto God with our heads upright. And why so? Because he looketh upon us in the person of his only son. And therefore it is said, that he is his well-beloved, howbeit, not for himself (only), but (also) for our sakes that are members of his body. Ye see then how we have to gather upon this text, that by receiving the doctrine of the Gospel with true obedience of faith, we possess our Lord Jesus Christ, and by his means shall be led unto God his father, to come to the perfection of life, light, and all goodness. And by the way we be warned to go forward in faith, till we be thoroughly persuaded, that in fighting against all the temptations that can assail us, we shall get the upper hand by the means of faith, and finally that we may brag (specially as Saint Paul doth in the eighth to the Romans) both against life, and against death, and against all powers both above and beneath, and despise all distresses, knowing full well that nothing is able to disappoint us of the love that Jesus Christ hath showed us, and which God his father also hath uttered towards us in his person. And thereupon also doth it come, that our prayers must be grounded upon full certainty. For (as sayeth Saint James) he that thinketh to

obtain anything by doubting, deceiveth himself. Therefore, we must assure ourselves by the promises of the Gospel, that God is ready to receive us to mercy, whensoever we come unto him. And thereby we perceive, that Saint Paul said not for naught, that if we have faith, we must not seek anything more than Jesus Christ, but he must be all our treasure, because that in him we have all things that are requisite to our joy and contentation.

Now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our sins, praying him to make us so to feel them, as we may mislike them more and more, and yet notwithstanding not cease to be glad, in that he hath showed himself so pitiful towards us in the person of his only Son, that he hath vouchsafed to draw us out of the gulf of hell, to give us entrance into his kingdom: and also to grant us the grace to come thereunto with true faith, and to withdraw ourselves from all worldly enticements, which serve to turn us away from him, so as we may forsake all vainglory, and for as much as we be void of all goodness in ourselves, seek all our wants in him, which is the true fountain of all goodness, that can never be drawn dry. That it may please him to grant this grace, not only to us, but also to all people. etc..

The Nineteenth Sermon,
which is the fourth upon the third
Chapter.

13. Wherefore I beseech ye faint not for my troubles, which I endure for your sake, which is your glory.

14. For the which thing I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:

15. (Of whom all kindred is named in heaven and in earth.)

16. That according to the riches of his glory, he grant you to be strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inward man.

It is a wonderful thing that men, having so many means to come unto God, labor to go from Him as much as is possible, and every straw makes them turn head: and yet, notwithstanding, they think themselves to have a very reasonable excuse if they can say, "I was hindered by this and that" (which shall be nothing at all). But the least occasion that can be will serve, because their seeking already is to shrink away from God. And this is too common nowadays. For those that are desirous to justify themselves, because they reject the doctrine of the Gospel, will always find fault with the causes of offenses. O say they, this troubles me, this makes me dislike the doctrine of the Gospel, this makes me forsake it utterly. All that ever they can allege shall be but trifles, but yet we need to labor so much the more, to overcome all the lets and stops which the devil endeavors to cast in our way, so we may still keep on our trade and course. And that is the thing whereat St. Paul aims here, exhorting the Ephesians not to be thrust out of the way, but to hold on still truly and constantly in the faith of the Gospel, notwithstanding that they might be offended to see him a prisoner, and as good as condemned already.

Now it is certain that St. Paul's suffering in maintenance of the things that he had preached was not to make them swerve from God's pure truth: but contrariwise he protests that it was to their glory, so they might triumph beforehand, considering the invincible constancy that was given him. But (as I have said already) besides the thing that I

have touched already, there is such a naughtiness rooted in our nature, that we are well pleased if we can have any outward color to shrink away from God, and we bear ourselves in hand, that we are quite and clean discharged. Howbeit St. Paul spoke not this for that one people, but he gives here an instruction that ought to serve us at this day: which is, that although the most part of the world is mad at the Gospel, and fight as much as they can, to quench the remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ, and although the faithful are persecuted, defamed, and tormented: Yet must we not swerve aside, nor be out of heart, considering that it ought to confirm our faith the more in our Lord Jesus Christ, and that we have whereof to glory, seeing God holds up his Church by strong hand, so it is not utterly oppressed and overcome. If the Gospel were received without gainsaying, and with one common accord, surely we should have cause to bless God for it, and there should be a melody between heaven and earth, so both men and Angels might with full mouth magnify God's goodness so shining forth upon all men. But yet the fighting of men against the Gospel is a sure record unto us, that God is the author of it, inasmuch as they that are imprisoned for it, and drawn even unto death, cease not for all that to stand steadfastly in it. God then utters there a wonderful power, and it appears that for all that ever Satan can do, we nevertheless have proof that God is on our side, and fights for us, and upholds us by His power. Not that He exempts us from affliction, but He will always give us victory, and that ought to suffice us.

Thus, the thing which we have to remember upon this text of St. Paul is, that we must be ready to receive all the alarms that Satan shall make upon us, and that although we see the doctrine of the Gospel ill received by the world, so it is not only despised and disdained, but also hated, and the unbelievers are inflamed with a devilish rage to destroy it: Yet, notwithstanding, we must not bear it the less

reverence, for we must not measure God's majesty by the opinions of men. Suppose that God were everywhere despised, according as most men are indeed so churlish and unthankful, that they are as monsters shaped against kind, yet must not God lose the right that we owe Him. For notwithstanding the rebelliousness of such as would wrap God with them in their iniquities, we ought to honor Him with all humility. Even so is it also with the pure doctrine of the Gospel. Although then that the world sets themselves against it, and many men trample it underfoot, so some mock at it, some gnash their teeth at it, and fires are kindled for it: Yet let us still quietly and obediently receive the things which we know to come from our God. Thus then ye see how our faith ought always to keep on its way, and that although many practices and enterprises be attempted against the faithful, and a man shall everywhere hear of nothing but confederacies, threatenings, outrages, and such other things: yet we must not cease to fight stoutly under Christ's banner, and to possess our souls in patience. And hereunto ought this saying of St. Paul's to serve, that it is our glory: for our faith should be as good as dead if God tried it not. Nevertheless, when we see the faithful so examined, we have always so much the better warrant of the doctrine that is given us of God.

True it is that it ought to be grounded in heaven, that is to say, upon the authority of God alone, without having respect to any creatures. For the very Angels of heaven were not able to authorize the Gospel: God's majesty must be fain to come forth for us to lean unto, and then shall we never be shaken down. Notwithstanding, when the martyrs stick not to give their lives in the witnessing of God's truth: then (as I said afore) we be, or ought to be, the more stirred up to receive the doctrine, and it is as it were sealed up in our hearts. Forasmuch then as persecutions serve to confirm the doctrine the better: therefore St. Paul says it is our glory, and that we ought to

triumph at it, seeing that God does so maintain and strengthen those whom He sends into that battle.

For it is certain, that in respect of the frailty of the flesh, they should quail by and by. But that they get the upper hand, let us mark, that it is God's doing, who works after so manifest a fashion, as we have cause to glorify Him for it. Now if when we are troubled, we are tempted to shrink and to give over at every brunt that is put to us: it is a token that we have not the skill to profit ourselves by the means that God gives us, to draw us to Him, and to make us stick to Him with true steadfastness. Therefore let us fight against our own weakness, and against the naughtiness of our nature, that when we see how the devil practices to overthrow the Gospel in manner everywhere, we may consider that God forgets not those that are His, but strengthens them in such wise with His power, that their faith gets the upper hand, to the end that we should hope for the like.

And when we are at ease and rest, we should not cease to prepare ourselves after their example, that when it shall please God to reach out His hand upon us, and to make us take our turn and course, we may be fenced a long while beforehand, and not be possessed with such imagination as some be, which bear themselves on hand, that they shall never feel any grief or trouble: but that we may always be ready armed to fight.

Herewithal St. Paul shows that it is not enough for us to be only taught: for we should not cease for all that, to be always fretting, and to be as men more than half out of their wits, until God made His doctrine to take such place, as we were touched to the quick with it.

Now then, having exhorted the Ephesians, he says, "I bow my knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." If exhorting to the end that every man might be of courage had been enough, St. Paul would

not have added what he speaks of here in prayer. But to show what the Ephesians had to do, he falls into the way before them to give them an example. Therefore, let us note that when we have had our ears filled with God's word, to show us our duty, and not only been instructed but also exhorted and spurred forward, there will always be some sloth, coldness, and recklessness in us, so that the doctrine will stand us in little stead until God touches us with His Holy Spirit. This serves to beat down all pride in us. For many think themselves able to work wonders, but they feel deceived when they come to the test.

We see what happened to Peter. He promised, yea even sincerely, that he would not shrink from his Master, though he should die for it. You see how Peter made a stout claim. Surely he made it not without a zeal that one would say is good and holy, and he meant to have had the same intent so settled as to have shown it when needed. Yet, despite this, the bold words of a mere servant girl made him deny Christ, and he was ready to deny Him a hundred times, so much so that he fell to cursing and swearing. Seeing we have such a mirror, let us acknowledge our own weakness in Peter's person, and (as St. Paul shows us here) let us resort to Him who has all power in Him. For it is not enough for us to know our disease unless we seek the remedy for it.

First of all then, let us rid ourselves of all foolish opinions with which the world is imbued, such as the belief that a man may be able to overcome all temptations by his own free will. Instead, let us learn to abase ourselves utterly, knowing that when God is so gracious to us as to teach us by His word, it is not to enable us to do it, but only to hold us more guilty and convicted thereof, to the end that we should not use ignorance as a shield. Let that be one point.

Nevertheless, let us not stay there. Since we are weak in ourselves and God has all strength in Him, let us repair unto Him. For it is certain that He calls and allures us unto Him. Therefore, let us not think that we shall be disappointed when we cast ourselves down as half dead, or rather as stark dead at His feet, not doubting that He will lift us up again. And so, Paul speaking of his praying to God here, was not only to protest that he discharged his duty but also to set an example for all the faithful. Upon recognizing their needs, they might resort only to God, knowing that He holds us up continually by His strong hand, and that after He has once given us faith, He adds also such invincible constancy that we stand firm to the end. This is, in effect, what we have to bear in mind.

Therefore, let us take warning not to trust in our own wit, nor to presume any amount upon our own power and strength when we come to hear God's word. Rather, let us desire our God, that as He has vouchsafed to have His word preached to us by the mouth of a man, so He will also speak unto us inwardly and in secret by His Holy Ghost, that by that means the doctrine which we have heard may take root and bring forth profit and fruit. Moreover, since we see by experience that God requires more of us than our power and ability can afford, let us desire Him to supply our wants. According to the example that I have already set down, it is entirely contrary to our fleshly reason that we should go to death if necessary, and forsake the world and our own life. This is not to be found in man if he follows his own reason and will. God, therefore, must work in this case and remedy our infirmity.

But although to suffer for the Gospel, and to go to death as it were with blindfolded eyes, and not to be turned away nor stricken down for anything, be very hard things, and such as pass all ability of man: yet will God stand by us in such sort as we shall overcome all

distresses if we arm ourselves with the weapons that He gives us; that is to say, if upon the knowing of His will, we, being unable to walk as He commands us, do pray Him to give us legs and to strengthen us in such wise as we may overcome all. This done, a man cannot say that this doctrine is unprofitable. For why is it that our Lord gives us those things by His Holy Spirit which we have not by nature? Even to make the doctrine available so that it may not disappoint us.

Those then who slanderously say that if we cannot follow God of our own free will, it were better to forbear preaching, because it is but lost labor, they (I say) know not what order God keeps to assure us to Himself. And experience shows well enough that the preaching of the word is but an instrument whereby God works in secret. If we are fully resolved on that, then shall we very well perceive that God agrees very well with Himself in that He will have the Gospel preached to us, and yet tells us that it should stand us in no stead except it please Him to work in our hearts by His Holy Spirit.

Now, in saying that the Gospel is an instrument, it is all one as if a man should say that a plowman with his plow and all other things were instruments, and yet not therefore the cause why the earth brings forth fruit. And why? For God keeps that to Himself, and in that respect do we ask Him for our daily bread. For we must understand that as a father has care of his children, and as you would say, puts the meat into their mouths, so will God have us receive our sustenance at His hands. And for that cause, He says that when the people should come into the land of Canaan, although they should till and manure the ground, yet should they not say, "This have I gotten with my own hand," but all should acknowledge that they were maintained by the word that proceeds out of God's mouth, that is to say, by the inward grace which God gives to His creatures, so as

we are fed thereby. For all the labor of man can avail nothing unless God bless it. And what then shall we say of the thing that is much more excellent? For is not the food of our souls much more precious than that which serves but for our bodies? Therefore let us not think that it is enough for us to come to a sermon or to read God's word every man by himself, but we must also resort unto God that He may give us increase.

And for the same cause does Saint Paul set down this similitude, that he who plants is nothing, nor yet he who waters, but that it is God who gives the increase from above. And he speaks not there of the laborers of the ground, but of the sowers of God's word, and of such as manure His Church with continual exhortations. Albeit then that we take never so great pain, yet shall we do no good at all with our labor except God work with it by His Holy Spirit. But when He works with us, then is our labor available, and then it is said that the Gospel is the power of God to the salvation of all that believe. For God does so manifest the power of His Holy Spirit that the preaching of the Gospel and the secret and inward working of the Holy Ghost are things so joined together as they cannot be separated. And so, you see in effect what we have to remember upon that saying of St. Paul.

Now, having spoken of praying, he sayeth, that ye may be strengthened in the inward man, by the power of his Holy Spirit. Here he showeth us the weakness that I spoke of afore: for if we perceive not our own need, we will never vouchsafe to resort unto God like poor beggars. We know that man, being left to himself, will never acknowledge his own poverty, except it be proved to his face. To the end, therefore, that we should come unto him unfailingly and with true lowliness: it is for our behoof to feel by experience, that we can do nothing at all, and that we be unprofitable in respect of all goodness, until our Lord hath renewed us. That is the thing which

Saint Paul intended to make us understand. For though all the world generally do seek help at God's hand, yet is there scarce one to be found among a hundred, that doth it truly and without hypocrisy. For if a man could search what is in some, he should find them ready to burst like toads, with pride and filthiness, and that they presume wondrously upon themselves. They will go seek succor at God's hand, and yet think they have their seeking in themselves. Surely it is too excessive a lewdness, but yet is it a vice that reigneth too much. Howsoever we fare, if we desire God to reach out his hand to succor us: let us learn first of all to abase ourselves, and let us know, that we have not sufficient strength of our own nature, but that the same must be fain to come from above, and from his Holy Spirit, as Saint Paul hath expressed here. That ye may be strengthened (sayeth he) by the power of his Holy Spirit. No doubt but he maketh comparison here of things clean contrary. For so long as a man can do aught of himself, God's Spirit needeth not to supply the room. But forasmuch as all power proceedeth of God's free goodness: therein it is showed us, that we can do nothing of ourselves, and that all the strength which we surmise ourselves to have, is but smoke that vanisheth away, and a stark illusion of Satan, who seeketh to hold us fast in some fond self-weening, to the intent we should not repair to our God, and so be left utterly destitute. And besides this, Saint Paul showeth further, that it is a freely bestowed benefit, that is to say, a benefit that proceedeth of God's only free gift, to the intent we should not imagine, that when God succoreth us, he hath an eye to anything else than our wretchedness, or that he doth it for any good disposition that he saw should be in us. And that is the cause why he succoreth us in all our needs. And therefore, Saint Paul sayeth here, that it standeth us on hand to be strengthened by the power of his Holy Spirit, and that the same is a free gift.

Now, he sayeth, according to the richness of his glory. Wherefore is it, that he magnifieth the riches of God's goodness so much, but to beat down all the fond opinions wherewith men besot themselves, in weening to bring, I wot not what, of their own, and by that mean to make themselves half-fellow with God? Therefore, it behoveth us to bear this thing well in mind. For Saint Paul speaks to such as had showed great strength already: but yet was it meet that God should always have the praise of it. They were in great forwardness and had fought already for the Gospel: and yet Saint Paul wisheth, that they might be strengthened. Herein we see that we be so far unable to begin to do good, that even when God hath set us in the way, when he hath reached us his hand, yea, and when he hath continued his grace in us from day to day: yet if he do but turn away his hand one minute, we be quite quailed. And so we be warned (as we have seen afore) that as God is the beginner of our salvation, so is he the worker of it throughout, and there is no stedfastness in us, further forth than we be upheld by him, and by his Holy Spirit. And therefore we ought to be provoked to pray daily all the time of our life. For they that forget themselves and fall asleep shall soon feel themselves bereft of God's grace. And why? They be not worthy of it, because they seek it not with continual care. Therefore, to waken us thoroughly both from our slothfulness and from our recklessness, we must bear in mind, that seeing God hath called us into his Church, and touched us to the quick, to receive his Gospel with true obedience: the same ought to strengthen us so much the more to the end. Let that serve for one point. Again, let us understand, that God must needs show the riches of his glory, when he increaseth so his Holy Spirit in us by degrees. For must there not needs be an infinite treasure of his goodness, when he draweth us so to him at the first sight? In what plight we are when God chooseth us and taketh us to him? He draweth us not only out of a stinking puddle, but out of the bottom of hell. For behold, the thing that we bring with us by

inheritance from our mother's womb, is cursedness, and to be as enemies to God, and to have nothing but stark malice and rebelliousness in us, and to be blind wretches, and (at a word) to be given to all evil, so as Satan reigneth over us, and we be his bond slaves, and are held down under the tyranny of sin. Now then, seeing that God hath pitied us, in respect that we were so miserable creatures: needs must it be, that he uttered the great riches of his goodness in that behalf, and meet it is that he should be glorified for the same. And (as I have said already) we ought to be the better touched therewith, that like as he hath adopted us for his children, so we may show ourselves willing to take him for our father. But howsoever we fare, although he have reformed his image in us, yet must he be fain to utter the riches of his goodness, and to increase his gifts in us, and to make us to go on still with our course. And it standeth us so much the more on hand to bear this doctrine in mind, because we see the world hath been beguiled with these toys and opinions, that every man might well put forth himself through his own free will, or at leastwise prepare himself to come unto God. And again, that God's adding of grace upon grace, is, because men have used well the grace that he had given and bestowed upon them before. Now as touching the first point, how is it possible that we should bring aught of ourselves to win God's favor withal? Seeing we be like poor dead men, and as rotten carcasses, what preparation can we make to purchase favor at God's hand? Must not men needs be worse than bewitched, when they conceive such toys? Wherefore let us learn to father the beginning, continuance, and end of our salvation upon God, and to shun all those devilish illusions, (which seem to maintain) that God in adding of grace unto grace, hath a regard how every one of us hath deserved it. For contrariwise Saint Paul telleth us, that in this care we must have nothing before our eyes, but God's goodness in showing himself so liberal toward us, that he never ceaseth to do us good. He is not like mortal men, which

will say, I have done thee good enough already, content thyself: but like as he hath shed out the gifts of his Holy Spirit into us, so he is moved to increase the measure of them, till we be come to the full height of them, that is to wit, to full perfection.

Now, hereunto Saint Paul addeth expressly, the inward man: for we would fain that God should always strengthen and increase us in this world, but in the meanwhile, the heavenly life is as nothing with us. For some would show themselves valiant, and they be so ravished in their own conceit, that they ween themselves to be as Angels, so as men may speak of their deeds of prowess, and that they may be taken for proper men, and purchase themselves reputation. That is one kind of strength that men desire. Others desire to increase their substance by merchandise, or to get riches and possessions by any means, howsoever it be. Othersome covet to be in credit and authority. To be short, the means whereby we would have God to show himself bountiful towards us is in pleasing our sensuality and earthly lusts. But on the contrary part, Saint Paul bringeth us to the inward man, that is to say, to the spiritual life, which is unseen of us, saving that we have record of it. For after the same manner doth he speak of the inward man likewise to the Corinthians, saying, that the outward man corrupteth, but yet the inward man is renewed. What is it then that Saint Paul meaneth by the outward man? Riches, bodily health, honour, credit, authority, and (at a word) all that we covet of our own nature. Those are the things that are meant by the outward man. Now (as I said afore) we would fain be strengthened in those things, but in the meanwhile, we despise the inward man, that is to say, the things that belong to the heavenly life. And why? For we see them not, because we be gross-witted, and entangled in this world. Therefore, Saint Paul showeth us here, that if God list to diminish us to the worldward, we must bear it patiently, and he sayeth the like in the text which I am about to allege. For when the faithless and

heathenish sort which have their treasure in this world, do see themselves go to decay: they sigh and say, "Alas, where are the arms that I had in time past? Where be the legs?" And thereupon they fall to repining against God. Again, if a man that was rich be diminished, and God cut off the things that he possessed: he is in horrible unquietness, and he had rather to be already buried than to see his wings clipped after that fashion. Again, they that are led with ambition, and seek nothing but honour and estimation in the world, if they be once out of their accustomed credit, they think all is lost. But on the contrary part, God's children, which shut their eyes willingly at all the things which have a fair gloss here beneath, and behold the heritage of heaven by faith, are not so vexed when they see themselves diminished even in eyesight, and that God maketh them to drop away by little and little: they take all in good worth. And why? For they have an eye to the change: which is, that by that means God reneweth them, to give them the thing that is unseen, and to make them take courage again, as though the kingdom of heaven were hard at hand. So then, the thing that Saint Paul showeth us now is, that look as every one of us is carried away with his own foolish lusts, so would he have God to yield to his fondness. And contrariwise, by his praying unto God to strengthen us, he showeth us, that it must not grieve us, though we decay as in respect of our bodies, so we have the spiritual cheerfulness that may make us to draw nearer and nearer unto our God, and to look still to the kingdom of heaven, which cannot fail us, assuring ourselves that the bringing of us low is to the end we should be exalted on high, and that although we must go down into the grave, yet it is not to perish there altogether, but to be renewed again. Wherefore let us suffer ourselves to be so abased, that we may be set up again by the power of our God. And although we be poor despised creatures in this world, let us suffer it patiently, and therewithal let us not cease to warrant ourselves that God will work in us as he promiseth.

And furthermore, let us mark well what Saint Paul setteth down here: for he useth not the single name of God but saith, "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom all kindred is named in heaven and in earth." Now hereby he showeth us first of all how familiarly we may go unto God, as hath been touched already. And last Sunday, this text was declared sufficiently, where he showed us how we may come unto God. But there he did set faith in the first place. Seeing then that we have assurance that the gate is opened for us, we may be bold to go in unto God. And this faith engendereth trust in our hearts, and trust giveth boldness. These are the three steps that Saint Paul did set down there. And here he showeth us how we obtain that privilege: that is to wit, because God hath not only his heavenly Majesty to be worshipped by us (for although we ought to honour him in that respect, yet would it so astonish us as to make us shun his presence as much as we possibly could), but also addeth the title of Father, and saith that he taketh us for his children, by means whereof we are no more afraid of him, but may come familiarly to him whenever occasion serveth, forasmuch as he hath his arms open to receive us. This is an article well worthy to be minded. For if we cannot call upon God, what will become of us? In what plight shall we be? It is said that all our welfare lieth in having our recourse unto God. Now, if we think that God will hear us, when we pray doubtingly and debatingly, we beguile ourselves, as saith Saint James. Therefore, we must not be as reeds that are shaken with every wind, or like the waves of the sea. But we must be well and thoroughly assured that God, who calleth us to him, will not disappoint us. Wherefore, when we pray unto God, it must be with trust that we shall not lose our labour. But how may we come by that? For behold, God hath an incomprehensible majesty, and what a distance is there between him and us? Though we could mount above the clouds, yet could we not come nigh God, by reason of the infinite highness that is in him, for the heavens comprehend it not.

Then should we be as folk forlorn and vanished away, if Jesus Christ were not there as a means to make us way. And that is what Saint Paul meaneth here when he saith that he prayeth to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the end we might know that he is not far from us, if we hold the way that he showeth us, that is to wit, if we make Jesus Christ our advocate, to bear word for us, and speak as it were by his mouth. For he is entered into the Sanctuary of the heavens, to present himself there on our behalf, that it might be all one, as if he bare us upon his shoulders, and both we and our prayers be accepted and allowed of God, and we be sure that they vanish not away into the air, but that God receiveth them as well as if he were hard by us, according to his promise made in the Psalm, which is, that he will be near at hand to all such as call upon him in truth. Had this been well considered, the wretched world had not troubled itself so much, in seeking to He-Saints and She-Saints to be their patrons and advocates. As, for example, when the wretched Papists say that they must have the Virgin Mary and Saint Michael for their intercessors, and other Saints, whom they have devised of their own brain: ho (say they) we be not worthy to come into God's presence. It is very true: but this unworthiness of ours ought also to make us seek the remedy which God hath appointed for us, that is to wit, to repair to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the way that leadeth us to his Father, according to this saying of his, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: and whatsoever ye ask of God my Father in my name shall be granted you." There, our Lord Jesus promiseth that whatsoever we ask of God his Father in his name shall be done unto us: and thereby he warranteth this doctrine. Therefore, let us mark at a word, that inasmuch as our Lord Jesus offereth and putteth forth himself to be the way to lead us unto God his Father, we must not go ranging up and down, but if we will needs seek any other way, we shall but stray, and never be at any certainty to come unto God. Furthermore, to the intent we may be contented with Jesus Christ alone: let us bear well

in mind how he saith that all our requests shall be heard if they be grounded upon his name. Ye see then, that the thing which Saint Paul meant to show us first, is that as oft as we pray unto God, we must assure ourselves that although we be unworthy to come unto him, yet notwithstanding he ceaseth not to accept us, and our prayers are a sacrifice of good and acceptable scent unto him, when we acknowledge him to be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But yet must we also add that which the Gospel showeth us, that is to wit, that we be members of his only Son's body. For had we no alliance with Jesus Christ, we should gain nothing by knowing him to be the Son of God. But forasmuch as we be made one with him, and he vouchsafeth to communicate all his goods unto us: therefore we may well call God our Father. And for that cause also did he say unto his disciples, "I go my way to my God and your God, to my Father and your Father." Thus much concerning the first point.

And herewithal we must mark well also, how Saint Paul addeth for a larger declaration, that all kindred both in heaven and earth is named of him. In saying so, first he showeth that the Jews ought to be joined unto the Gentiles, and that forasmuch as the trumpet of the Gospel is blown, God's grace must be preached abroad everywhere, that men of all countries and nations may call upon God: And thereby also it is showed us, that although we come of the heathen which were erst cut off from the kingdom of God: yet we be now made his household folk, and registered among the citizens of heaven, and God avoweth us to be so. And so ye see that by the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and also because Jesus Christ is made our head, and hath received us for his body: ye see (I say) that all kindred is named of him, because God vouchsafeth to take us to him, yea even us poor wretched creatures, which are not worthy to be of the number of the worms of the earth, yet notwithstanding he not only vouchsafeth to admit us into the company of the Jews, which

were a holy lineage, the chosen people of God, and his own inheritance: but also hath taken us into the fellowship of the Angels of heaven. For Saint Paul is not contented here with setting down a kindred among men, to show that he meaneth of the faithful who are matched with Abraham, David, Peter, and Paul: but he showeth that he is matched even with the Angels of heaven too. And soothly we may well have that dignity, seeing that Jesus Christ himself vouchsafeth to be our brother, and hath knit himself to us in the bond of brotherhood. Thus ye see how we should be guided in praying unto God, that we may come unto him in fear and reverence, considering his majesty which is infinite, and moreover not to be abashed at it, nor to turn away, but understand that inasmuch as God hath vouchsafed to take us for his children, and our Lord Jesus Christ is ordained our mediator, to the intent we may come unto him, we may come with full trust before the throne of grace, and not stick to call God our Father with open mouth, because he hath showed, that he taketh us for his children, and we have Jesus Christ for our brother by adoption, and we have need not to doubt but that all the Angels of heaven acknowledge and avow us for their brethren, when we come to God so joined to our Lord Jesus Christ: Like as on the contrary part also if we swerve from that mark, we must needs be cast off, and the angels must become our enemies and adversaries, and set themselves against all the prayers that we can make.

Now, let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying him to vouchsafe to reform our life in such wise, as we may show by our deeds, that we have not lost our time in going to his school, and endeavor and enforce ourselves to please him in all things. And that, forasmuch as we be not able to serve him always in perfection, he will vouchsafe to bear with our infirmities, and to bear them up in the meanwhile, so as we may not cease to resort still unto him, seeing the need and necessity

wherewith we be pinched. And so let us all say, Almighty God,
heavenly Father, etc.

The Twentieth Sermon,

which is the fifth upon the third Chapter.

14. For the which thing I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:

15. (Of whom all kindred is named in heaven and in earth.)

16. That according to the riches of His glory, He grant you to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inward man.

17. And that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.

18. And that ye may be rooted and grounded in love, to the intent ye may comprehend with all the Saints, what the width, and the length, and the depth, and the height,

19. And know the lovingness of Christ, which passeth all knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fullness of God.

We have seen this morning by what entrance we must offer our prayers unto God, if we intend to be heard at His hand and to have full assurance that our prayers shall be well liked: namely, that Jesus Christ be our guide and advocate, and make intercession for us, so that we speak not but as it were by His mouth. Now He has set it down for a rule in praying unto God, that we must call Him: "Father." And how dare men be so bold or presumptuous as to call God their Father? Surely we can allege no right whereby to claim any such dignity. For not even the Angels have it, but by means of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then it is impossible for us to pray to God, as He

commands us, and after the manner which He teaches us in His word, except Jesus Christ be our advocate. For on which side are the Angels akin to us? Shall the Virgin Mary be found to be our great Aunt or Grandmother? What are the Apostles? To be short, we must resort to our Lord Jesus Christ, to have His spiritual kindred, whereby God avows us for His adopted children. And when we once have that, we must no more doubt whether God will hear our prayers or no, seeing we come not to Him upon a foolish rashness, by presuming upon our own natural reason or self-liking, but with obedience to His commandment. Again, we have His promise, which can never deceive us. On the contrary, all they that think to obtain favor at God's hand by any other means, do but run astray, and have shut themselves out of the door already. And therefore, there is now no excuse but that we must simply hold the way which the Gospel shows us to come unto God by, that is to wit, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, without adding any other creature, as we see done by the whole world. Indeed, they that pester up a throng of patrons and advocates (as they term them) hope to be well welcomed unto God. But by what warrant? Who has promised them that God will accept their devotion and all that they offer unto Him? For it is not in us to appoint officers in heaven. In a court of justice of the world, it might well be a matter of course (as they term it), and it might lie in the power of a judge to give leave to whom he listeth to plead men's cases, to the intent there might be no confusion. But if we will make advocates at our own pleasure, and upon our own head (in heaven), it is all one as if we would rob God of His authority and sovereignty. Yea, and we must bethink us how St. Paul saith that all our prayers and supplications shall never be aught worth, but utterly unprofitable and vain if they be not conformable to God's word, so as we take our rule from thence. For how shall we call upon a God (saith he) whom we know not, at all adventure? And how shall we know after what manner we should pray, and what style and speech we

should use? We must come to hearing, not of the things that men shall bring us of their own brain, but of the things that God commandeth us. So then, we must use this modesty and sobriety, and not speak at random when we pray unto God, but simply obey His word. Yea, and we know that prayer is the chief sacrifice that God requireth. For whereas it is said that we must worship the only one God, it is not alone with ceremonies, as with kneeling down before Him. Indeed, that is requisite, for it is meet that we should honor our God both with our body and with our mind, because they be both His. Howbeit, in worshipping Him, we must acknowledge truly that we hold all good things of Him, and that do we in praying to Him. For we come thither as poor souls utterly destitute of all things that are meet for us, knowing that without Him we be worse than miserable. It is said in the law that in offering sacrifice to God, men must not do anything at all of their own head, but follow His ordinance, insomuch that it was forbidden them to take strange fire to use upon the altar, whereby it was meant in a figure that men should utterly forbear all their own devotions when they intend to offer anything unto God. Likewise, they were forbidden to offer sacrifice without salt, thereby to show that we ought to have a sure instruction, so as all the offerings which we offer up to God be sauced or powdered with His word, for without that, there will be neither taste nor savor in them. But seeing that we nowadays have the substance and truth of the figures of the law, whensoever we offer our prayers and supplications unto God or yield Him praise and thanks, let us do all by our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Apostle to the Hebrews exhorteth us. This serveth to finish up the matter that was begun this morning.

And we must call to mind what St. Paul told us this morning: namely, that in praying unto God, we must not be given to our worldly affections, but seek that God may be glorified, and that the

residue may be but as an appurtenance to it. That is the cause why he spoke purposely of the inward man. For if God should give us the bridle to ask whatsoever came in our head, or if we on our side should take such liberty, what a thing were it? If He should give us all our own asking, it would turn to our ruin and confusion. For we have our lusts further out of square than little children or sick folks. And all of us generally do by experience find in ourselves that we be fast settled here below, and would fain be held continually in this world; we hang our heads groveling downward, and cannot lift them up. So much the more, therefore, doth it stand us on hand to mark well the thing that St. Paul showeth us in this sentence: namely, that we ought to pray God to renew us and to strengthen us by His Holy Spirit and to increase His gifts in us more and more, that in passing through this world, we may always aim at that mark and be here but as wayfarers, to the end that our Lord may avow us for His children, and the heritage be kept for us, which He hath promised us and bought so dearly for us by the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now hereupon St. Paul inferreth that Jesus Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith. Whereby he showeth that without Christ we shall never be made partakers of any one drop of God's grace. It is true that God hath the whole fullness of life, light, righteousness, and all goodness in Himself. But where is the head wellspring? It is utterly hidden, and we shall never be able to come at it of ourselves. And if we think to do any good by our own inventions, it is but a deceiving of ourselves: we shall but dig pits continually, yea, even such pits as are full of holes and have no springs of water in them. Behold, the thing that men gain by following their own inventions is that they make much trotting up and down and are never the nearer. But our Lord Jesus Christ is a fountain wherout we may well draw our fill, yea, and we need to make no long windlasses to come unto Him,

because He offereth Himself, saying: "All you that are athirst, come unto Me and drink, for whosoever drinketh of the living water that I give him shall have enough, both for himself, and also to make it flow unto his neighbors." Now then, for as much as our Lord Jesus Christ doth so liberally and bountifully offer us the benefits which we receive of God His Father, therefore St. Paul saith that He must be fain to dwell in our hearts, that we may be reformed by God's Spirit. And let us mark that Jesus Christ hath the full perfection of all goodness in Him, not only in respect that He is the everlasting Son of God, but also even in His human nature which He took of us, and wherein He became our brother, hath He also received all fullness, according to this saying of the Prophet Isaiah, that upon Him shall rest the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of understanding, the spirit of the fear of God, the spirit of righteousness, and the spirit of strength. And to what end? Is it for His own use? He had no need of it: but (as it is said in another text) it was to the end that He should distribute it unto all His members, and we all of us, from the most to the least, draw of His fullness, not fearing that fountain can dry up. Seeing then that our Lord Jesus Christ doth by the Gospel daily communicate and offer unto us the things that we want and are needful for our salvation, it is not for nought that St. Paul, having showed that we can do nothing further forth than we be upheld by God's grace, addeth that God must be fain to dwell in our hearts.

Now upon these words, we have to gather, first of all, that God, thinking it not enough to remedy all our defaults and misdoings, and all our wants, hath vouchsafed to give Himself to us in the person of His only Son. If it were told us that we be restored to the former state from whence our father Adam fell, that were very much, and therein we should have an excellent record of the goodness of our God: but He hath not only given us both heaven and earth, that is to say, all things that are fit for us both in respect of this flightful life and of the

everlasting salvation of our souls, but also He hath given Himself unto us. And how is that? Even by giving us our Lord Jesus Christ, as is said of Him in the ninth of the Prophet Isaiah. And all the Scripture also leadeth us thither when it showeth us how God giveth Himself unto us, and how we possess Him, and have full fruition of Him. And thereupon we must conclude with that which St. Paul saith in the eighth to the Romans, namely, that inasmuch as God's Son, who hath all excellence and dignity in Him, is given unto us, shall anything else be withheld from us? Seeing that God hath granted Himself so far forth unto us as to have His Son to dwell in us, should we now doubt of obtaining the things which He knoweth to be for our profit and behoof? Think we that they shall be denied us? Ye see then that the thing which we have to remember in the first place is that God hath showed Himself so bountiful towards us, that He hath not thought it enough to put us in possession of all His goods, but hath vouchsafed to become our portion and cup Himself, as the Scripture saith, which useth such similitudes to show that as a man seeketh his ordinary repast and is well pleased when he hath meat and drink, because he is refreshed by it: so must we resort unto God to have the true food, and we must hold ourselves contented with Him when He giveth Himself so unto us. And herewithal let us ever bear in mind what I have said, namely, that we need not soar in the air, nor make any far fetches for the possessing of God, because He hath knit Himself to us in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in Him we are made partakers both of Him and all His benefits. And St. Paul setteth down the word "faith" to show us how dear the doctrine of the Gospel ought to be unto us. For it is not enough to have said that Jesus Christ dwelleth in us, because we will always have our replies and say, "How may that be?" For we cannot rise up so high. He is in the glory of heaven, and we be crawling here in the world, subject to miseries without number. Seeing then that there is so long a distance between Him and us, how may He dwell in us? Now St.

Paul addeth purposely, that the Gospel is of such power as to unite us to God's Son, at leastwise so we receive it by faith: for it behoveth us to consider the contents and substance of the things that are preached unto us concerning the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not only said that it was God's will to have Him offered in sacrifice, to the intent we might be reconciled, and all our sins be wiped out, so as they might never come to account, and (to be short) that full amends might be made for all our sins by His death and passion, and that He was raised again for our justification, as St. Paul saith in the fifth to the Romans: not only those things are said of Jesus Christ, but it is also said that He is our head, as we have seen already, and that we live of His own substance, as a tree draweth his sap from his root, and that as the head of a man sheddeth forth his power through all the body, so have we a secret union, and such a one as is wonderful and far above the order of nature, because that although Jesus Christ be in heaven, yet He faileth not to dwell in us. And soothly if the sun can so cheer us up by his beams without fleeting out of his place, insomuch as we see that every morning we be as it were refreshed and comforted by his rising, yea, and even sick folks feel some cheerfulness by him though they lie along in their beds: seeing that a creature which is not only transitory and corruptible, but also senseless and unmovable of itself, hath notwithstanding such force and property given it of God to rejoice and refresh us after that fashion: what shall our Lord Jesus Christ do, who is ordained to have the fullness of the Godhead dwelling in Him, and to shed forth all the gracious gifts of God His Father upon us, to deal them unto every one of us according to his measure, as is said of Him in the fourteenth chapter of St. John? Then if we come to Christ with belief in Him, that is to say, if we receive the promises of the Gospel: let us assure ourselves that He will dwell in us, even by the means of faith. But hereof we shall treat more fully in the fifth chapter. Notwithstanding, this text could not have been understood unless I had noted the thing

that I have briefly touched even now: that is to wit, that Jesus Christ dwelleth in us by faith, and that our receiving of Him as He offereth Himself with all His grace by the Gospel, is not only to look upon Him aloof, or to have it told us that He hath offered Himself in sacrifice for us once for all: but to the end He should dwell in us by the power of His Holy Spirit, and we be knit unto Him, and feel that He doth truly execute the office of a head towards us, so as we be members of His body, and live of His proper substance. That then is the cause why St. Paul added the word "faith," when he said that Jesus Christ ought to dwell in us.

Nevertheless, we must not go about to pluck Jesus Christ out of His heavenly glory, to the intent to be the nearer unto Him, as the unbelievers do, who will needs dwell ever still beneath, and transfigure God after their own liking. And we see what is done in the popedom. For there is no God among them, but a sort of puppets which they call images and remembrances. And moreover, because they see well that those are but dead stocks and stones, they have made another God, whom they have shut up in a box, and to him they resort as to a living God. Indeed, if they had the supper of our Lord Jesus Christ according to His institution, instead of the abominable mass which they have brought in on their own head, Jesus Christ would be present among them, howbeit not as they imagine. For in the Supper, we do truly receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be fed of Him, and of His own substance, so as He performeth the thing which He speaketh by His word, namely, that He is our spiritual bread and drink, and hath wherewith to satisfy us to the full. Yea, but yet are the bread and the wine of the Supper, as pledges that our Lord Jesus giveth Himself to us, to the end we should seek Him above after a spiritual fashion. So then, Saint Paul showeth us, that if we will have Jesus Christ joined unto us, we must not be given to our own beastliness, but our hearts and

minds must be lifted up aloft to seek Him above, as hath been declared already. It is true, that He cometh down to us by His word, and by the power of His Holy Spirit, but that is to the end that we should mount up thither to Him.

Howbeit, there is one thing more which we ought to mark well in Saint Paul's saying, that Christ must dwell in our hearts. For many men have Him in their mouth, yea and also in their brain, as they understand Him, and they think themselves well discharged when they can babble of Him, but in the meanwhile, there is no lively root in them. Then, it is not enough for us to have some roving knowledge of Christ, or to gaze at Him in the air, as they say, and to be able to talk of Him with a full mouth, but He must have His seat in our hearts within, so as we be knit to Him unfailingly, and with a true affection. That is the means for us to be made partakers of God's Spirit.

And to be short, we may see here, that all such as ween to obtain aught at God's hand but by the means of our Lord Jesus Christ, do but range and wander in vain, and shall always find themselves empty, insomuch that when they think themselves to be full fed, it shall be but with wind, that is to say, with vain and trifling imaginations, as I told you this morning. They, therefore, which devise patrons of their own head, and surmise that God will favor them for it, and in the meanwhile let Jesus Christ alone, must understand that they be so far off from obtaining their requests, that God doth rather abhor them, insomuch that when they once swerve from the anchorhold which is set forth for us in the Scripture, (that is to wit, from having our Lord Jesus Christ for their lodesman), the angels of heaven must needs forsake them, and the saints also, to whom they behighted themselves, must needs deny them, yea, and all of them must set themselves against them as adversary parties.

For there is no means for us to be matched with the angels, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, till we have true concord with them. And how shall we have that? By faith, that is to say, according to the pure doctrine of the Gospel. Not that it is enough for us to have our ears beaten with it, but that we must receive the things that God promiseth us there, so as we abhor all that ever Satan can set before us, and have none other guide than only our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath told us that He is the light of the world, and that whosoever walketh in Him cannot stray. But by the way, we must search and examine ourselves narrowly, that we take not a vain cloak under the name of Jesus Christ, as we see many do nowadays, which protest themselves to be Gospellers. And even among ourselves, what a number are there which will show signs great enough that they be willing to follow God's word? But they think to discharge themselves with petty trifles, and when they have once given ear to the doctrine and spoken a few good words, then, to their seeming, God is highly bound unto them. But here it is showed us, that we have no acquaintance at all with Him, until Jesus Christ dwell in our hearts. And that is the very means whereby to be filled with His benefits, and to have His Holy Spirit dwelling and reigning in us. For unless we fear God, and walk in His obedience, so as we behave ourselves according to His will, and all our wits and desires aim thitherward, it is a token that we live after the flesh, as Saint Paul saith to the Galatians. Therefore, we must show by our outward fruits that we be truly joined to Jesus Christ, and that He hath made us partakers of His Holy Spirit.

Now, hereupon Saint Paul addeth further, that we must be rooted and grounded in charity. This word charity or love may be taken as well for the love that God beareth us as for the mutual love which we ought to bear one towards another. But the very true and native sense of Saint Paul here is that he meant to have us knit together. For

as he spake heretofore of God's free love towards us, so now he showeth how faith importeth that we should have brotherly love one towards another. And the holy Scripture bringeth us always to that point, insomuch that when there is any speaking of the full perfection of good life, faith goeth before, and then comes charity next unto it. For the end that we must begin at is the utter abasing of ourselves, to the end we may seek all our welfare at God's hand, and that our seeking of it there may be, first to acknowledge that He giveth us all things in the person of His only Son, and secondly, to call upon Him to settle our faith in Him, to flee wholly for refuge to His mercy, and after, as every man feeleth himself bound unto Him (as all of us are exceedingly), so to acknowledge by our thanksgiving, that He is our righteousness, our holiness, our victory, our joy, our glory, and our happiness, that we may perform the thing which is said in Jeremiah, "Whosoever glorieth, let him glory in the Lord," because it is He that worketh righteousness, justice, and mercy. Ye see then that we must rest wholly upon our God, or else all the virtuousness which we seem to have before men shall be but filth and dung. Now then, have we faith? Charity must be matched with it, and we must live evenly and uprightly one with another, and every one of us acknowledge thus: I was not created for myself, nor to seek mine own private benefit and commodity, but for the benefit of my neighbors also. And therefore let us abstain from all guile, wrong, outrage, and malice, and endeavor to serve each other's turn, according to our ability. That is the perfection of good life.

Saint Paul, having spoken already of faith, adds now that we must also be grounded in charity. As if he should say, we must not have only some fit (or pang of love) as many men have, but there must be a steadfastness and even holding on in it all our life long. For a thing may give a great blaze, and yet quail anon after. Behold, a huge building may be overthrown with one blast of wind if it be not set

upon a sure foundation. Also, a man may set up a great tree, but if the root be cut asunder, what will come of it? It must needs fall down out of hand, or else, if it have some hold at the one end for a time, it must needs wither at the heat of the sun. Even so is it with us when we have a great zeal which is not well rooted in our hearts, for it will be but as a mask or a gay show before men. That is the cause why Saint Paul exhorteth us purposely to be grounded in charity, to the intent to correct the vice of loving by starts or fits (as they say), which is too common a thing. Nevertheless, it were a fondness to conclude, therefore, that our salvation were grounded upon our good works. For here he treateth not of the cause of our salvation, but only how we ought to rule our life. Again, we know there is but one only foundation of the Church, as Saint Paul saith in the third chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians, and as we have seen already in this selfsame Epistle, and especially as Jesus Christ himself declareth in the sixteenth chapter of Saint Matthew. And which is that foundation? It is Jesus Christ, and no man can lay any other than that which the Prophets and Apostles have laid, and we must hold ourselves to it at this day and even unto the world's end. And yet may we not cease to be rooted in love by means of our Lord Jesus Christ. When men demand what is the cause of our salvation, by what means we are brought into his favor, and how we may come unto him and call upon him with full trust, we must answer: It is because our Lord Jesus Christ is given us, and it is he in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwelleth. Now, we be yet far off from such perfection; however, forasmuch as we be grounded upon our Lord Jesus Christ, we have a steadiness that continueth all our life. So then, let us mark that Saint Paul exhorteth us here to true steadfastness, to the intent we should never be weary of well-doing, though we have never so many occasions to thrust us aside. For even such as are best minded (to see to) do nevertheless take a prick at it when men show themselves unkind towards them, and when they consider that for

their well-doing men will requite them with all evil, they be sore grieved at it and become quite out of heart. And that is a cause why so few continue in the fear of God and walk as they ought to do, for it seemeth to them that they have lost their labor in doing well. Again, there followeth this inconvenience also, that the wicked take occasion to rush out so much more into all manner of harmfulness, so that if a man live in simplicity and bear the wrongs patiently that are done unto him, all men will be doing with him, and every man would eat him up as if he were a sheep among a hundred wolves. Such as are easily entreated to give of their goods to their neighbors seem to be set out to the spoil, and every man will be catching all that ever he can from them. When men see so lewd dealings in the world, it maketh every man to take out his own share, as men say. But contrariwise, it is told us here that if we be rooted and grounded in charity, although men thrust us aside and discourage us by their unthankfulness, yet will we not cease to hold out in well-doing because we have a good and deep root.

And S. Paul, having spoken of the goodwill that we ought to bear towards our neighbors, returns to his matter of faith. And surely the chief point for us is to know that God avows us as His children, and that our sins are forgiven us so that He takes us as righteous. If we do not have that, how can we find any sweetness in serving and honoring Him? And how, or with what courage, can we pray to Him? What praise can we offer to Him? To be short, it stands us in need to be certified of the infinite good that is done to us by our Lord Jesus Christ, to the end that we may be ravished in love with our God, and inflamed with a right zeal to obey Him, and hold ourselves short under His awe, to honor Him with all our thoughts, with all our affections, and with all our hearts.

The reason, then, why S. Paul continues this matter is to print in the minds of the faithful where their salvation lies, and how they may be sure of it. And so much the more do we see what the wretchedness of the world is. For there is no other assurance than calling upon God on this foundation, so that a man be lifted up by faith to offer himself into His presence. But on the contrary part, we see how men have gone to work. And indeed, they have not been ashamed in the Papacy to say that we ought always to be doubtful of our salvation, and that we cannot have a sure belief in it. And it is not the ignorant sort which say so, but all the doctors of their synagogues hold it for an article of their faith that we ought to be always in a murmuring and doubtful state. And that is even as much as to cast men up at adventure unto Satan.

So much the more, therefore, it behooves us to bear well in mind the doctrine that is contained here, which is to say that when we once know the love that God bears us in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in such a way as He has witnessed it to us by His death and passion, and doth still daily warrant it by His Gospel, we have the perfect knowledge that shall give us full happiness. And that is the reason why he says, "to the end that ye may learn with all the Saints what the height, and depth, and width, and thickness is." That ye may know all this, saith he.

How now? Did St. Paul mean to make us carpenters or masons, that he speaks here as of the height of a building? Does he intend to teach us the science of masonry, that he speaks thus of width? No, but he opens his own meaning by and by, saying: It is the love that has been shown to us in Jesus Christ. Therefore, when we once know how well God loves us, and how inestimable the mercy is, of which He hath given us so good a pledge in the person of His only Son, we have all that can be, saith he. Let us enforce all our wits both upward and

downward, let us rise above the clouds, let us pierce to the center of the earth, let us go down to the bottoms of the deeps, and let us rake over sea and land, yet shall there be nothing but vanity and lies. When we have ended all our windlasses, surely we may peradventure discourse like folk that are very subtle and have learned the understanding of many things, but yet shall there be no substance in us.

But when we once know that God is our Father in Jesus Christ, and how that cometh to pass, and by what means we obtain so great a benefit, that is the thing, saith he, to which we must hold ourselves. For it is the true measure of our faith, these are the bonds of it, and whosoever desires to know more doth but go astray, as though he would willfully enter into a maze from which he could never wind himself again. Wherefore let us hold ourselves contented with Jesus Christ as He is, and as He uttereth Himself by His Gospel, and then shall we be filled full, says St. Paul. With what filling? Even with the fullness of God, says he.

As if he should say, wretched folk as we are, there is none of us but covets knowledge, and it is a natural desire which burns in all men. Insomuch that we shall see many who consume all their goods and spare neither their bodies nor their lives. And what to do? To gain knowledge. We shall see others trot from place to place. And what to do? To gain knowledge. All men then have that desire, some more, some less, and there is not so ignorant a person who would not fain come to knowledge. Now then, seeing we are all inclined thereto by nature, let us learn which is the true knowledge. Indeed, there are sciences which are needful to pass this world withal, and it is requisite that men should have arts and trades, and also the liberal sciences, as they are termed. All these are good if they are referred to

their due ends. But yet notwithstanding, we must come to the science of sciences, for that is the one which will never fail.

For when a man shall have trotted all over the earth (about other sciences), what profit will come of it? It will be but vanity, as I said before. Wherefore let us not seek anything out of Jesus Christ, but let us rest wholly there, and not swerve any whit at all from Him.

And here we see, first of all, the thing that I have touched already heretofore: namely, that if we knew well what our Lord Jesus Christ is, we would easily give over all other things, according as it is said in the third to the Philippians, that Saint Paul counted all his former high esteemed things as loss and dung, to the end he might hold himself to Jesus Christ, and that he went forward therein all the time of his life, yea, and did as it were hold his arms stretched out to catch it, as he himself protesteth. You see then, that the thing which we have to mark here is that, when we once know Jesus Christ and the benefits that he bringeth us, namely that we may resort to God in his name with full trust, we shall no more have our minds so vexed with unquietness, but we shall stand fast and steady in pure simplicity of the Gospel.

However, for a better understanding hereof, let us see how men speak of our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, they will call him the Son of God, and they will take him for their Redeemer, but in the meantime, they will make a deal of his offices, and part them here and there as a prey. The holy Scripture calls him the only Priest, because it belongeth only to him to reconcile us to God. And how many do nowadays take that upon them? Even as many monks, friars, mass priests, and hypocrites as be in the world: for they sell their prayers, as though Jesus Christ had resigned his place unto them. And under

pretence thereof, they devour all the wealth of the world, and in the meanwhile, Jesus Christ is thrust a great way off.

Again, it is said that by the one sacrifice which he offered once for all, he has obtained for us grace and salvation, yea, even forever, so that his death and passion appease God's wrath, because thereby we have full righteousness. But yet for all this, the Mass is brought in, as though the sacrifice that Jesus Christ offered in his own person were but a bare figure, and that the thing which the Papists have invented were the only means (as they say) to purchase favor at God's hand. For the whoremaster goes thither to pay his ransom: so does the drunkard, the wicked swearer, the loose liver, the piller and poller, the quarreler, the glutton, the eater up of his neighbor: all these resort to the Mass for their ransom, and bear themselves on hand that God is well pleased.

And in the meantime, what becomes of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ? Tush, that must be thrust underfoot. Again, it is said that Jesus Christ is our only Advocate, who makes intercession for us unto God his Father. Yet notwithstanding, in the Papacy there are whole swarms of patrons, which every man has forged of his own brain. And they are not contented only with the Apostles and Martyrs, but they must also have their Saint Christopher and their Saint Catherine, who are night ghosts that were never born in the world: but look, whatsoever the devil did put in their heads, it was received. Again, it is said that Jesus Christ is our righteousness. But what for that? Yet nevertheless, every man takes upon him to make atonement with God by his own works. And thereupon sprang the groundwork of merits and of all the rest. Again, it is said that Jesus Christ is our lodestar and the way whereby we must come to God his Father, and finally to everlasting salvation: and yet will they needs have whatever comes in their own imagination. Oh (say they), it

seems this is good, and seeing I do it with a good intent, why should not God take it in good worth? Thus they make God a pretty fellow to stoop at their appointment, and as a jack to creep under their sleeve (at their pleasure). See how proud men are, when they once turn away from God's pure truth unto their own foolish inventions, so as there is not so pure and sound a thing which they corrupt not.

What is then the cause that all things have been turned upside down in Popery? It is that they knew not Jesus Christ for such a one as he is set forth in the Gospel, but only have made, I know not what, a dead and unavailing thing of him, and kept no more but the bare name and titles of him.

Then it is not enough for us to say we believe in Jesus Christ and that we take him for our redeemer: but we must also know to what purpose he is sent us of God his Father, and what benefits he has brought us. When we once know all this, then shall we be filled with him. We shall not need to go bibbling here and there, nor to lap or lick up mud and stinking water here or there, for want of meat and drink that is fit for us. Our Lord Jesus Christ has told us that we shall find both meat and drink in him, so as we may thoroughly satisfy ourselves both with meat and drink that is good and wholesome for the nourishment of our souls. So much the more, therefore, it behoves us to go thither: and when we read the holy Scripture, let the mark that we look at always be to know what the grace of God is which he has shown us in the person of his only Son: and when we once know it, we shall have profited very well in God's sight and may well cast away all other things as filth and poison. Indeed, some doctrines will have some savor at the first sight, for we see that they do always follow that which Saint Paul speaks of in the second to the Colossians, that is to wit, that because their dreams and dotages have some show of wisdom, therefore they give themselves unto them. But

we must understand that there is no true food but that which God gives us, and that it is his will to provide us with all things which he knows to be needful for us. Will we then be filled without him? Think we that if we seek to the Virgin Mary and call her the mother of grace (after the manner of the papists, who commonly give her that title), we shall there find the things that we want? Surely it is all one as if we would go seek food and snatch here a bit and there a bit by morsels and gobbets. But Jesus Christ says, Come unto me, and ye shall find all that you have need of: according whereunto it is said that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are enclosed in him. Then if we once know the love that God his Father has shown us in his person, we shall have the fullness of all wisdom, we shall no more need to trot here and there, we shall no more need to go up nor down, nor far nor wide: for we shall have wholly whatever is good and requisite for our welfare. When we hear this, must it not needs be that we are as good as bewitched, if we believe not God, to rest wholly upon his sayings, without flinging abroad after that fashion, and without making of so many windlasses to trouble and tire ourselves to no purpose? And that is what is meant in the Prophet Isaiah, where he says, Go tread in your own ways: and when ye have compassed and gone about both heaven and earth, what shall it profit you? Then if we be so blind as to stray out here and there, and cannot keep the way that is shown us, but will needs go dig pits at our own pleasure, and forsake the spring of living water which God has set before our eyes: it is good reason that we should be both hungered and athirst, and lie broiling in our own foolish lusts, to trot to and fro like women with child, which long to eat charcoals and had rather drink the water of some puddle than the water of a fair clear spring. If we fall to gadding in that manner after Satan, and be eager of his illusions and trumpery, and cannot content ourselves with the good that our Lord sets before us: must it not needs be that we are worse than bewitched, and that the devil has made us stark beasts?

So then, let us understand first of all, that all things which men can bring us of their own behalf, are but trifles or rather illusions of Satan. And secondly, that when the Scripture sets Jesus Christ before us, it is not for naught told us that we must rest wholly upon him and hold to him when we come thither, because he has the fullness of all goodness in him, and therefore we need not to be hauled to and fro, or to take too great pain in seeking the things that are needful for us, nor finally to wander any more abroad, but to stick wholly unto him, as to our perfect and sovereign blissful.

Thirdly, we must consider in Jesus Christ the infinite grace that is brought to us and imparted to us by his means. And Saint Paul, in saying here "the love," sends us to the wellspring. For though we knew all God's secrets and were privy to the rest of his will, what were it till we were persuaded of the love that he bears us? For we see that when any man speaks of God to the unbelievers, it does so grieve them that they know not where to become, and it is but a matter of heaviness to them because they conceive nothing but rigor in him. But when his grace and fatherly goodness is uttered to us, as he has shown it in our Lord Jesus Christ, then come we boldly to him, and we are no more afraid of his seat but have familiar access to it; and therein he does us an inestimable good turn, such a one as surmounts all that ever we can wish in this world, according as Saint Paul sets it down here. And so you see what this saying, "the love of God," imports. And he says purposely, "in Jesus Christ," because without him we could not be beloved of God. For let Jesus Christ be (as you would say) let alone, and let us put the case that we thought upon God, and that we did apply all our wits thereabouts, and therewithal that we bethought us of ourselves also: what were all this? We shall find such an incomprehensible majesty in God, as shall swallow us up like a deep gulf. Again, his justice is so perfect, as it will be much less possible for us to stand before it than for snow to

abide against the sun. Now when we come to ourselves, we must needs see a sea of all misery before us, that is to wit, that our senses are blind, that we are utterly unfurnished of all virtue, that we are given to all evil, that we are held down under the thralldom of sin, and that nothing in us (no, not even the excellentest things that we think ourselves to have) is not loathsome before God. Therefore, when we once know these two things, that is to wit, when we have once conceived a terror of God's majesty, and are drowned in despair at the sight of ourselves, then let us afterward go seek all the means that can be, and let us call the angels to help, and they will come never the nearer us for all that. Let us take the he-saints and she-saints, and by what title can they belong to us? Nay, rather we are separated from them. And again, will God, who is the fountain of all pureness, receive us, us (I say) who are so wretched creatures? Think we that he will intermeddle himself with our filth and uncleanness? No, but contrariwise, he must needs abhor us. So then, it is not without cause that Saint Paul, having spoken here expressly of God's love, to the intent we might know that he does justly hate us so long as he beholds us in our own natural state, adds immediately that the same love is grounded upon the bloodshed of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the end that all our spots should be scoured away thereby, and we be so cleansed, as we might not bring anything henceforth before God which might displease him.

And by that means are we discharged and quit of all our debts, because He has yielded perfect obedience. Lo, how our stubbornness is done away, and shall never come to account, because He offered Himself in sacrifice for us. Lo, how we are set free from all thralldom, because He has overcome both the devil and death, and sin, to our benefit. Lo, how we, at this day, enjoy His victory and make our triumph of it. And so we see briefly how God has loved us in Jesus Christ. Again, when we know this, we must understand also that we

must not make long fetches anymore, nor trouble ourselves in vain, in striving upward by our fond speculations, or in going downward by our fantastical imaginations, and in the meantime let Jesus Christ alone, as though He were too far off from us. For He comes near us, yea, He dwells in us, He will have us knit unto Him, so as we should be His body and lively members of His own substance. Since it is so, let us learn to hold ourselves in such wise unto Him that nothing may turn us from Him. And although we may be tempted by our own fancies to shrink away from Him, yet let us cut off all such occasions and get the upper hand by faith. And when we have so done, let us understand that God will still show Himself a loving and kind-hearted Father towards us, and that Jesus Christ also will do the duty of a shepherd towards us if we hearken to His voice and rest wholly upon Him, not doubting that He will preserve us, so that we shall be safe under His protection, as He Himself protests, saying that He will receive all that are given Him of God His Father, and so keep them when He has received them, that none of them shall perish, but He will raise him up again at the last day.

Now let us cast ourselves down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us perceive them more and more, that our miseries may drive us to seek the good things that He offers us, even with true singleness of faith, and that we may not wander here and there in our own fond speculations and gazes, but abide so settled upon His word as it may be our only leaning stock, and take such root in our hearts as it may not only make us to walk in all pureness before Him and to seek His mercy in the person of His only Son, but also make us to live uprightly and indifferently one with another, and that we may so profit therein as we may abhor all the abuses of the world, assuring ourselves that seeing we have Jesus Christ for our guide, we cannot fail to come thither, as He has ascended already in our behalf, that is to wit, to the

everlasting heritage which He has purchased for us, according as it is His will that we, being made His fellow-heirs, should in the end come to the same perfection whereinto He has gone before us. That it may please Him to grant this grace, not only to us but also to all people. etc.

The Twenty First Sermon,
which is the sixth upon the third Chapter,
and the first upon the fourth.

20. Now unto him that is able to do most abundantly above all things that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

21. Be praise in the Church through Jesus Christ throughout all generations forevermore. Amen.

The Fourth Chapter.

1. I therefore, who am a prisoner in our Lord, warn you to walk as becometh you in the calling wherewith ye be called.
2. With all lowliness and meekness, with patience, etc.

When God has done us never so much good, although we feel ourselves beholden unto him, and bound to yield him his due praise, yet can we not discharge ourselves of our duty with a free heart, except we hope that he will hold on still hereafter, and show himself the same to the end, which we have known him to be heretofore.

Now, without faith, we cannot hope, and so it is impossible that God should have his due praise at men's hands. Put the case we had found God's help at our need, and whatsoever we could wish, and in the meanwhile, we think it was but a sudden bray which has vanished away out of hand, and that henceforth we may look for no more at his hand, and that it shall be in vain for us to require it: it is certain that we would come no more at him because we should be pinched and pressed with heaviness and grief. Therefore, that we may hold out in praising God's name, we must couple these two things together: that is to wit, that on the one side we bethink us of the good that we have received from him, and that on the other side we hope still that he will always be steadfast and constant in his purpose unto the end, and never cease to do us good. And that is the order which St. Paul keeps here, saying, Praise and glory be yielded unto God. And how? Unto him, (saith he), which is able to do all things, beyond our asking, yea and beyond our thinking too. Now it is certain that here Saint Paul had an eye back to that which we have seen before, which is, that God did then utter the infinite riches of his goodness when he vouchsafed to have the Gospel (which is the message of salvation) published throughout the world. Nevertheless, he quickens up the faithful to discharge themselves cheerfully by telling them that they must not mistrust that God will withdraw his hand, as though his showing of himself liberal towards them had been but for once and away. His meaning then is that God will go through with his work, and therefore that we may give ourselves to the praising of his name without any stop, as well as in respect of the good that we have received already, as upon the belief that he will hold on without ever failing us. That is the effect of the matter which we have to gather upon this strain.

Now his saying is, Let glory be yielded to God in the Church: whereby he shows that it is not enough that every one of us do privately

acknowledge the benefits that God has bestowed upon him, but that we must also join together in that mind. For if the body be well at ease, surely no member will be so addicted to itself, but that it will have regard for all the rest. Now then, when God has made his Church to prosper, so as the number thereof is multiplied, and it is also increased in spiritual gifts, not only they that have received those benefits, must enforce themselves to praise God, but also all the rest of the body, for as much as it becomes us to be knit together with the holy bond, whereof St. Paul will speak hereafter. That then is the cause why he speaks purposely of the Church: as if he should say, that seeing God does so utter his goodness, every man ought to be inflamed to glorify him because that look whatsoever he does to our neighbors, we ought to take it as done to ourselves. And verily he had an eye here to that which might hinder the praising of God with one true consent. For the Jews had always a certain disdain against the Gentiles because they thought it was meet that they themselves should keep still the birthright, and that they had wrong, if any of those were made equal with them, which had been utterly shaken off afore. And likewise the Gentiles perceiving the Jews to be given to foolish bragging of the law, which had taken an end, might have despised them on the other side. Saint Paul therefore tells them here, that inasmuch as God had called them as brethren to the inheritance of salvation, it became them to agree in such wise in the praising of him, as his praise might sound everywhere.

And he says, Let praise be yielded to God, yea even forevermore, from world to world, and by Jesus Christ. For as much as Saint Paul has treated heretofore of the grace that served to guide the faithful to the kingdom of heaven, therefore does he of good right say, that men must not only praise God for once and away, but also that there is cause to continue the same, not the life of one man but throughout all ages. Yea, and moreover St. Paul meant to do us to understand,

that the Church should be preserved forever, and that there should always remain some seed of it in the world, so as the record of salvation should never be fruitless, but there should be some people still to be gathered together, which should be a looking glass, wherein to behold the inestimable mercy which our God shows us in our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, we see Saint Paul's meaning, whereby we ought to be assured, that although Satan practices all that is possible, to wipe away the remembering of God, and to make havoc in the Church, as the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be as good as defaced, yet will God overcome all by his power, so as the Church shall continue still, and the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be available, notwithstanding the cruelty of Tyrants, and the practices of household enemies, and of such as would overthrow the whole building. And that also is the cause why Saint Paul sets us down the name of Jesus Christ. It is true, that we cannot yield God thanks but by that means: for it is certain that we should not be meet to receive one drop of good, but by the means of our Lord Jesus Christ, because we be enemies to God by nature. Insomuch that although he be free-hearted even to the unbelievers, yet shall the same turn to their greater condemnation, so that they be double accursed, in being partakers of God's blessings: for to him that is unclean, all things are unclean, as saith Saint Paul in another place. And therefore we can never give God thanks but in the name of Jesus Christ, by whom we receive all good things. Howbeit, Saint Paul's meaning was to do us to understand in this text, that God's once showing of himself to be a father to all men in the person of his only Son, by ordaining him to make the atonement, which was to last forever, and to continue world without end, insomuch that we must assure ourselves (as I said afore) that God will maintain his truth in this world, and by that means have always some flock gathered unto him, among whom his name shall be called upon.

But let us come now to the second part. He showeth that it is not enough for us to have known God's goodness by experience in the time past, unless we be strengthened in such hope by it, as we doubt not but that God will show himself merciful towards us ever after. And that is the cause why he saith, "To him that is able to do all things exceedingly abundantly, above our asking or thinking." Now we see here how St. Paul warneth us that if God hath used great mercifulness towards us heretofore, we must not doubt of his continuing the same because he is not like mortal men, who are fickle-minded; neither must we be afraid that his fountain will dry up when he shall have bestowed great benefits upon us already. Why so? For he hath such a store of them, that the more we take to our contentation, the greater abundance hath he still. We see then the means to dispose ourselves to acknowledge the good that God hath done us, or at least to honor him for them, is to be always fully resolved and persuaded that we shall ever find him a Father, because he hath promised so to be.

And whereas he speaketh of God's power or might, we must not imagine it to be an idle power, as the worldlings do. They will grant well enough that God is almighty, but yet in the meantime, they trust never the more in him. To their seeming, he takes his rest in heaven, or else he disposes not of things in this world, but (at times) when he bethinks himself of them. But contrariwise, when God speaks unto us of his power, it is to the end that we should make it our shield against all the distresses, hindrances, and obstacles, which the devil casteth before our eyes, to make us distrust God's promises. Like as when it is said that Abraham believed that God is almighty: it was not generally and confusedly, but with an applying of God's infinite power to the thing that had been promised him: which was, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Abraham, looking upon himself, saw he was a man as fast decaying as might be.

He drooped, and (as ye would say) dragged his wings after him; to be short, he was hard at death's door. His wife had been barren all her life long; she was past the age of bearing children anymore, insomuch that the thing which was told him by God's own mouth seemed utterly impossible. And why is it that Abraham does nevertheless believe assuredly that God will keep his promise with him? It is because he had an eye to his infinite power, which is able to overcome all obstacles and hindrances. We see then how Abraham applied God's power to his own behoof, assuring himself that God's truth and his power are inseparable. After that manner also does St. Paul say, that he whom he hath put in trust with his pledge is mighty. For he saw himself to be a poor and frail creature, he saw how he was hunted on all sides, he saw that he was shaken off and despised, he saw how the doctrine that he bore abroad was hated and abhorred, he saw how his life hung as by a thread, and he had such a number of troubles as were able to overwhelm him, yea, and finally to confound him and dispatch him quite. And how did he overcome all this, and remain invincible, yea, and even triumph over them, being in prison, and seeing himself at death's door? How could he have such victory against so many temptations and encounters? It was by knowing that God was the keeper of his soul, whereupon he conceived his infinite power, which is able to perform all that he appointeth. You see then that St. Paul imagined not a power in the air, but knew that God worked so in him that he should never fall but upon his feet (as men say). And why? For he had promise of it. Wherefore let us learn to put this lesson to use, as it is common in the scripture. The repeating thereof so often is not for nothing. For we see the frowardness that is in ourselves, insomuch that although God hath promised to keep us, yet if never so little a blast of wind comes upon us, we are dismayed by and by. And how so? Surely if we yielded God the honor that he deserveth, and acknowledge him to be almighty indeed, we should boldly defy all that seemeth to be against us. And why? For if God be

on our side, who shall be against us, saith St. Paul? And we see also how David defies both all his enemies and also death, saying: though I should walk in the shadow of death, and within the grave, yet should I be safe, because God is my shepherd, and hath his shepherd's hook to guide me withal. And in another place he saith again, Though I were beset round about with a million of enemies, yet should I not shrink. And why? For God is with me. Were we then as well persuaded of God's almightiness as we confess it with our mouth, surely we should not be so soon dismayed, neither should our faith be shaken at every brunt. So then let us conclude, that inasmuch as we be so weak, and everything, even the slightest, will scare us out of our wits, there is nothing but hypocrisy in us, and our confessing that God is almighty cometh not from our heart. So much the more, therefore, it behooveth us to put this lesson to use, and to exercise it night and day, that we may taste it thoroughly. And that is the cause why it is so often mentioned unto us, for we take it not to be a matter of so great importance. But when our Lord doth so often tell us that he hath all things in his hand, that he disposeth of his creatures as he listeth himself, and that nothing is able to prevent his determination, nor the performance of the things that he hath promised: it is to the end that we should yield unto his promises, that which they assure us: that is to say, whenever we shall seem to be at the point of undoing, and the devil shall give us such whole skirmishes as we shall see no way to escape, nor any end of our distresses, let us think thus with ourselves: Who is he that hath spoken it? Who is he that hath promised to be our defender? Is it not he that is almighty? Could not he with one blast blow away all that the devil practiseth? Though all the world were against us, what could it do, so long as our Lord vouchsafed to maintain our part? After that manner must we advance God's power above the whole world, that we may rest upon his promises. For (as I have said already) God's word and the power of bringing to pass the things

contained therein are inseparable. And we blaspheme God as often as we are in doubt and perplexity whether he be able to perform his defending of us or not. For since he hath promised it, out of all doubt he will perform it, or else should his power be shortened, which is impossible. And so you see why St. Paul hath spoken here of God's power. And that also is the cause why the prophets, in speaking of the succor which God hath always in readiness to rescue the faithful withal from death when they are plunged in it, have commonly said, Is it not the God which hath made both heaven and earth? This should seem to be far-fetched. For the case is that I am in some trouble, and have no other refuge but only God's pitying of me, whereof I seek to be assured: and he telleth me, I have created heaven and earth. He seemeth to send me very far, and to make me leap out of God's blessing into the warm sun. But God's telling us that he created heaven and earth is to make us understand that it belongs to him also to rule his creatures, that he hath a care of us as of his children, that there is not anything above or beneath which is not subject to him, and that he turneth all things round about, and to and fro as he listeth. Saith he so? Then we must out of hand apply it to our benefit, so as we doubt not but that his power hath such preeminence, as he is well able to root out whatsoever seemeth to be against us. And so you see how you must always have the said chain to tie God's promises, and the truth of bringing them to pass together.

And S. Paul sayeth that he can do all things above our asking and our thinking. Not without cause hath he enclosed here all that belongeth to our salvation. For he that trusteth in God for one thing will not miss to enter into debating whether he will add a second benefit or a third. That therefore is the cause why S. Paul will have us to look for all things at the hand of our God. And he sayeth, Above our asking. True it is that we must not fall asleep when we would be succored

and governed at God's hand, or be filled with his benefits: but if we believe in his word, we must also be moved to pray: for it is a true proof of our faith when we resort so unto our God. And for that cause it is said that the faithful must discharge all their cares into his lap. For it is the true record of it when at all times of our need, we resort to him, who will have us to seek all our welfare in him alone. The faithful therefore must be diligent in praying, according as S. Paul sayeth in another text, where he exhorteth us to prayer and supplication and setteth down this diligence also, to the intent we should have no slothfulness to pluck us back. But albeit we give over all our wits to praying unto God, yet notwithstanding, considering the necessities that compel us to resort unto him, God must be faine to outdo our requests and to do much more for us than we require. And for proof thereof, when any (of the faithful) feels his own infirmities, he will straightways humble himself and thereupon repair unto God, and that not for once only, but every minute of an hour. And afterward he will resort to him both for his body and his soul, and think thus: Alas, yet want I such a thing, I must to him again. Lo how the faithful do thoroughly sift out the miseries and wants whereunto they be subject, thereby to provoke themselves to pray unto God. But do not we think that the devil hath a hundred thousand wiles which we perceive not? And God must be faine to provide for them, or else what would become of us? For although we feel that diverse things do pinch us, yet there are many other things that are unknown and hidden from us. So then it will always be found true that God outgoeth all our prayers and all our wishes. Mark that for one point. Therefore let us do what we can and endeavor to resort continually unto God: and yet therewithal let us be fully persuaded that he must be faine to watch over us and to be much more sharp-sighted than we, in spying what we have need of and the means also that are fit to compass it to our behoof: all these

things must God be faine to look to. And so must we cast all our cares upon him, as I alleged afore out of the Psalm.

And truly his adding of above our ability to think is to show that although men be enlightened by the Gospel, to distrust themselves, to walk in fear, yea, and to be abashed at the sight of their own wretchedness: yet perceive they not the hundredth part of it, but must be faine to refer the residue unto God and to look for more at his hand than they can wish. And herewithal S. Paul sheweth us that we cannot pass measure in trusting unto God and in asking him the things that we have need of. Indeed we must not use a foolish liberty to pray to God to give us this or that, as our fleshly desire provoketh us. For we must refer ourselves wholly unto him: and specially we must in praying fight against all our own lusts, that we be not too importunate in them. And in good sooth, we see what hath befallen to such as would needs have God to grant all their demands to pleasure them withal. The children of Israel were fed with flesh and were gluttoned with it, till they were ready to burst: but while the meat was yet in their throats, God's wrath and vengeance fell upon them. It had been much better for them that their request had been denied than granted. Therefore when we pray, we must not take such liberty as to say that God should be subject to our affections and desires, but we must ask him the things that he hath promised us, assuring ourselves that he will like well of our requests. And (as I said afore) let us not fear that we shall be too excessive, for we see that he will do yet more, and so had he need to do. And let us not be afraid to be blamed of any presumption or malapertness in assuring ourselves of his promises. Indeed if men warrant themselves more than God's word will bear them out in or bear themselves on hand that they shall obtain whatsoever they imagine in their own brain, all such hope shall doubtless be a sloop. But if we ground ourselves upon God's truth, which is sure and undeceitful, let us hardily reach out

the trust far and wide which we have in him, and let us not doubt but he will perform it to the full, yea, and much more too, as S. Paul sheweth us here. You see then that the sum of the things which we have to remember in this strain is that we must behold God's benefits, not only those which we have had experience of but also which are seen through the whole world, that they may move us to praise God's name, and that there may be such an agreeable melody among all the faithful as they may honor God for all the benefits which he bestoweth generally upon the whole body of his Church. And again, that we must hope that he will go through with all that ever he hath once begun: and that inasmuch as we have already felt how merciful he is unto us, so that he hath sought us out when we were strayed away from him and pulled us out of the bottom of hell: we must not doubt but that he will hold on still and increase the benefits more and more which we have felt already in part: And furthermore that in praying unto him, we must have an eye to the great number of necessities which move and constrain us to come unto him and thereupon consider that he will do much more for us than we can wish, and that we be so weak-witted and so unskillful that we wot not what is meet for us: howbeit that he remedyeth the same two ways, namely, by stirring up unutterable groanings in us, as is said more fully in the eighth to the Romans, and on the other side by supplying such unskillfulness so as he tarrieth not till we crave his succor, but preventeth us through his mercy, notwithstanding that we welter in our wretchedness and perceive not the tenth part of the things that we want.

Now hereupon Saint Paul exhorteth the faithful to walk as becometh their calling, wherein they be called. This is not only to the intent they should thank God with their mouths, as he warned them to do: but also to profit themselves by the spiritual gifts which they receive, and to put them to such use as God may be glorified by them. For if

we should set forth all God's praises, and in the meantime men could perceive no zeal of honoring and serving him in all our life, it would be but a feigning, and such a confession would be but an unhallowing of God's name, when our life were not answerable thereto. Not without cause therefore doth Saint Paul add here, that men should walk according to the calling whereunto they be called. And thereupon we have to mark, first that forasmuch as we be slow, and there is ever too much sloth and coldness in us, we cannot devise a better way, nor one which may touch us more to the quick, to make us go on forward in the obedience of God, than to think upon his infinite mercy which he hath showed towards us. According whereunto, Saint Paul in the twelfth to the Romans, intending to win the faithful to teachableness, and to put their trust in God, setteth before them the mercy that they had received at his hand. As if he should say, that whensoever we hear of the stone that ought to be removed, or think upon the inestimable goodness which God hath used towards us, in that he spared not his only Son, but gave him for our salvation, vouchsafing to have him offered up in sacrifice to put away the remembrance of our offences and misdeeds, it ought to cleave our hearts asunder. Therefore in this text he setteth God's calling of us before our eyes. Truth it is that we be sufficiently bound beforehand by nature to serve and honor God: for we have our life from him, and we live here at his cost, and we see how all his creatures serve us. That therefore is bond great enough when the ruling of our life according to God's will comes into question. But seeing he thinks it not enough to have set us in the world, and to give us sustenance for our bodies, but also takes us to be his own children, to bring us up in his Church, which is his house, and upon his adopting of us bequeaths us the inheritance of heaven, and to assure us of it, hath given us the pledge that I spoke of, that is to wit, our Lord Jesus Christ: seeing we know that God hath so many ways uttered the infinite love that he bare us, ought it not to inflame us to

run unto him, to the end that by renouncing ourselves more and more, we may endeavor to give ourselves so unto him, as he may quietly have the use of our whole life, and we mind none other thing than the exalting of his name? Ye see then whereat Saint Paul looked, when he saith, that he warneth the Ephesians to walk agreeable to the vocation wherein God had set them. So then, we have to gather upon this text, that to correct the slothfulness that is in us, and especially to subdue the stubbornness that hindereth our pleasing of God in all points (for it is certain that all our thoughts, and all the disposition of our nature are inclined unto evil, and do both draw us back and drive us far off from the obedience which we ought to yield unto our Maker), to correct all this thoroughly, and to come unto God, we must learn to lift up our senses to the infinite grace that God hath showed us, in making us partakers of the spiritual goods of our Lord Jesus Christ, by vouchsafing to have us to be members of his body, and to adopt us to be his children and heirs.

Furthermore, let us consider the end whereat he aimed, to the intent that God complain not of us, as he doth of the Israelites by his Prophet Isaiah, because of the unthankfulness which they had showed towards him. He saith that he had taken them as his vineyard, or as a costly heritage. And he telleth them that, for all his manuring of them, they had brought him forth nothing but wild grapes and bitter fruit. Let us beware (say I) that God have not just cause to blame us nowadays, as well as he did them. For if the people of Israel received excellent gifts, much more are we bound unto God nowadays since the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. For look what he gave to the Fathers of old time in figures and shadows: that have we at these days in truth and substance. We are in the full time wherein it was God's will to pour out all his benefits upon us to the full. Since it is so, we shall be the less excusable if we be unthankful

and acknowledge not the good that God hath done us. That is the thing which we have to bear in mind.

And moreover, let us consider that (as saith Saint Peter) our Lord hath drawn us out, and rescued us from the tyranny of death, and called us to his kingdom of light, to the intent that we should blaze abroad his virtues and bestow our whole life in magnifying him to the uttermost: according to this present text, where it is said that we must walk according to the vocation that God hath called us unto. Now this importeth a gathering and drawing of us out by ourselves, as though God meant to make a new world of us. And in very deed the thing whereunto the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ tendeth is that we should be shoed out from the uncleanness of the world. Seeing then that we be as it were sorted out by ourselves, and God hath dedicated us to himself, intending to have us for his inheritance, let us learn not to disappoint him of his purpose. And if we be the children of light (as he saith in another place), let us walk no more in darkness, as the unbelievers do, but let us make the grace effectual which we have received. That is it in effect which we have to remember concerning the word "vocation" or "calling." To be short, we shall be much more blameworthy than the silliest ignorant and blind souls if we endeavor not to hold ourselves as it were locked up under God's hand and under his guiding. Truth it is that at this day there is no corner of the world but it is so corrupted, as is horrible to see: insomuch that even they who have had no taste at all of the Gospel, but have been nuzzled and imbued continually with superstition, shall not fail to be justly condemned at God's hand. And as for us, it is certain that we shall have a much harder account to make, for that God enlighteneth us with his word, and whereas other folks stray and wander in destruction, he showeth us the way of salvation, calling and alluring us daily unto him. Seeing then that we have such a privilege, we ought to bethink ourselves well that we

quench not the light by thrusting it underfoot, and so put away the special grace that was granted us, and which God vouchsafed to direct unto us, to the end we should be the more provoked to serve him.

But by the way, we must mark well how Saint Paul saith that this must be done with all submission and lowliness, with patience and meekness. Hereby he meant to express that it is not enough for every man to employ himself to the doing of his duty: but that we must also reach out our hands each one to his neighbor and brother, so as God may be served with one common consent among us. Let us mark well therefore (forasmuch as the residue cannot be dispatched at this time) that Saint Paul speaks not here to every man severally, but that he comprehends all the whole body and company of the Church. As if he should say, my friends, it is not enough for every one of us to withdraw himself and to abstain from all evil, and to show himself well-minded and zealous to live in the fear of God and in all uprightness: but we must also have a mutual care one of another, and be fully resolved that it is no serving of God if we endeavor not by all the means we can, that others may do the like. And so we see here how it is the rule of all the faithful (first) that every man look to himself, and though all the world be mad in doing evil, yet notwithstanding that he who is taught in God's school do hold himself in awe and under subjection, and consider whereunto he is called: and therewithal that if there be many of us, and God hath shed out his grace so as he hath gotten himself a Church, we must to the uttermost of our power seek to join with them whom God calleth, as well as us, so that he who goes foremost, reach his hand to him that is next him, and say, let us go altogether, and one of us encourage another, that he who goes faintly and hath infirmities in him, be tarried for by those that go swifter, and be borne up also if need be, so as we may all be drawn unto God. And this must not only

be done in every town and village, but also we must look yet further off, and consider that they whom we know not are nevertheless of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore we must serve them for looking glasses and examples, and confirm them so much the more to lead a godly conversation, by showing them the way that they may follow us. And let us also profit ourselves, so as if we see any other men more virtuous, zealous, and constant than we be, every one of us may be ashamed of it, and say thus to ourselves: How now? Is it meet that thou shouldest lag behind when other folks march on so fast before, and run so cheerfully towards God? Ye see then that the thing in effect which we have to bear away here is that, inasmuch as God hath not called us each one alone, and each another, as though he meant to set us asunder, but directeth his voice to all, and will have it serve for a holy bond unto all: we also must answer him, not only with our mouth but also with our whole life, and there must be true unity among us, and we must endeavor to bring to pass that God may be purely worshipped everywhere, and consider that since we are called all to one inheritance, there ought to be a right brotherhood among us, and that since we call upon God as our Father, it becometh us as his children to be joined to our head, that is to wit, to our Lord Jesus Christ. And when we be so joined unto him, it is certain that we shall not be cut off from those whom he will have to be of his body, neither shall the hand despise the foot, nor the foot hold scorn of the hand: but forasmuch as we know that our life resteth only in Jesus Christ, we shall endeavor as much as we can to uphold one another, and pray to God to strengthen us against all Satan's assaults, and against all that he can practice to set us at odds, that we may maintain the battle, and with invincible constancy follow still the way which God hath showed us, until we attain to the heritage which he hath promised us, and purchased so dearly by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let us cast ourselves down before the Majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our sins, praying Him to draw us to true repentance, so that we may be utterly cast down in ourselves, to be set up again to serve Him, and that not for one day, but so that we may hold out to the end. As His grace never fades, so we on our side may never cease to serve Him. But according as He increases His gifts in us, so we also may be more and more inflamed to come nearer to Him, and to be thoroughly knit unto Him. And so let us all say, Almighty God, heavenly Father. &c.

**The Twenty Second Sermon,
which is the second upon the fourth
Chapter.**

1. I, therefore, which am a prisoner in our Lord, warn you to walk as becometh you, in the calling whereunto you be called,
2. With all lowliness and meekness, with patience, bearing one with another in charity,
3. Being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.
4. Be ye one body and one spirit, even as ye be called in hope of your calling.

There is but one Lord, one faith, one baptism. We have seen this morning how God's children ought to be linked together, so that every man may help his fellow, encourage and strengthen him, and all of us endeavor with one accord to serve God. Now, for the performance hereof, we have need to correct the vices that are in us. For, on the one side, we see how men are nearly all inclined to loftiness, self-soothing, and self-weening, whereof, by and by, breedeth scornfulness. For he that covets to advance himself must needs abase his fellows to make himself their superior. Then it is impossible that there should be agreement among us until we have rid ourselves of this pride and overweening to which we are too much given. But if we are once knit together, we will also be meek. For what is the cause that we are so stern towards our neighbors, and that there is nothing but rigor and roughness with us, but that every one of us covets to overmaster the other? That, then, is the cause why there is no gentleness among us. And therefore St. Paul has matched meekness with lowliness, for lowliness is the mother of meekness.

Last of all, he sets down patience or forbearance in bearing with men's infirmities and vices. For if we will search out, bit by bit, whatsoever we shall see to be amiss in every man, surely we shall have occasion to reject both great and small, for there is not a man who is not blemished with some evil. But if we have once abated the pride that I spoke of and thereupon conformed ourselves to meekness and gentleness so that we can find it in our hearts to be warned and to bear with others, and none of us is so hindered by his infirmities that he cannot abide to make account of other men as of his brethren, then shall the Church, by that means, abide always in good plight.

Now hereupon St. Paul adds that if we intend to keep the unity of spirit, we must live together in peace. For we know that when any

fire of strife is kindled, every man would have his enemies drowned in the bottom of hell. As soon, then, as we give the bridle to our affections, so as we fall to spitefulness towards this man or that man, and there grows any heartburning or grudge against us, then follows part-taking in the Church, to the breach of all concord. Therefore, if we desire to be at one (as we need must, if we will be God's children), let us take good heed that Satan sets no odds or variance among us, and let us be quiet and endeavor to prevent troubles where we see any likelihood of them. And so, you see what we ought to observe if we intend to help our neighbors and to bring to pass that God may be honored among us with one accord.

And here we have to mark first of all how St. Paul, in speaking of lowliness, meekness, and patience, warns us that if we are not careful and every man does not bridle himself, the devil shall always have easy access and entrance into us, to trouble us. And why? For as I said, every one of us shall find the disease of ambition rooted in him, so that there is none of us but would fain bear some countenance of superiority, at leastwise until God has laid his hand upon him and by His Holy Spirit beaten down all pride in him and made him clean. But take all those who follow their own natural sway, and surely they are ever so high-minded that they will not be contented unless they are exalted and much made of. St. Paul, therefore, thought it good to warn us hereof, to the end that we should learn to dislike that vice and endeavor to rid ourselves of it, which thing will not be done very easily, for it is a hard battle. But however the world goes, we must not give over until we have gotten so much advantage of ourselves as to know that there is nothing in us for which we should be esteemed, but rather that he who thinks himself to be the most excellent of all ought (by the time he has sifted and examined himself thoroughly) to be ashamed and abashed at his own wretchedness.

For proof thereof, when we have thoroughly viewed all that we think ourselves to have, wherewith to win us any favor, dignity, or reputation among men, certainly we shall find that every bit of it is the free gift of God. Now then, so much the more need have we to humble ourselves, seeing that God binds us so unto Him. "What hast thou," says St. Paul, "to boast of above other men, and to challenge as thine own?" It is certain that God has given it to thee, therefore honor Him for it, which thing thou canst not do as long as thou art puffed up with pride. So then, considering that all the virtues for which we might be praised are all records of God's goodness, and that He has shown Himself a loving Father towards us, in that it has pleased Him to have us come near Him after that fashion, it ought to make us cast down our eyes and to walk in all meekness.

And if we compare our virtues with our vices, surely we shall find much more wherewith to beat down our horns than for which to set them up. For when a man has cast his cards thoroughly, he shall perceive that although he has some good zeal to serve God, yet does he but limp and halt still in that behalf, and that he has no virtue in him which is not blemished with some spot, so that there is always one thing or another in him to put him in mind that he ought not to be proud. Again, his vices are always more in number, by far, than his virtues. What shall we then do but be ashamed of ourselves? For we do after a sort defile the holy things when we mingle our own deformities in that way with the gifts of God's Spirit. And therefore, he that excels the most has cause to be the more lowly, for he is so much the more bound unto God. You see then, that they who are esteemed as peerless pearls and exalted as little worse than angels ought always to bridle themselves short, knowing that there is not so little a blemish in them, which ought not to be taken as more grievous in them than in such as have not received so great gifts nor are so excellent.

Besides this, there are also vices in us, even of ourselves (as I said before), and if there is any good in us, God has given it to us of His own mere and freely bestowed mercy. And therefore, it is not for us to presume, but we must impute all evil to ourselves. He then that makes such comparison will soon beat down the overweening with which he was puffed up or deceived.

Now if the most excellent sort of all have not whereof to vaunt themselves: what shall the meaner sort do, and such as are despised toward the world, and have nothing to set themselves out withal? They fight against nature if they will needs vaunt themselves. To be short, a man shall always find this ancient proverb true, that he who knows himself best will esteem himself least. But we must pass yet further, which is, that we must understand how we be not anything of ourselves, nor can do aught that is worth anything, and that the good which God has put into us ought to serve to teach us meekness. When we once know that well, then shall we be thoroughly humbled, say I. And true lowliness or humility is not to make a fair face or to pretend a mild countenance, as many do, who will speak gently and lovingly and look sorrowful, and yet for all that, cease not to be as full of pride as toads within. To be short, humility implies such meekness as pulls us down in ourselves and suffers us not to advance ourselves for any degree of honor nor to seek estimation above our neighbors. Now I have told you, that we shall never be meek nor have any gentleness and mildness in us until we are brought low. For pride does ever hold scorn of all the world. And we see also that such as are overweening and stand in their own conceit, believing themselves to be well worthy and to deserve to be exalted above the common array, do therewithal become very strange, insomuch that men dare scarcely look upon them: they thrust away one and drive away another a great way off. Therefore, we must have learned to humble ourselves, to the end we embrace such as are our true brothers,

especially since we know that we have need to be borne with at their hands. For behold, it is said of our Lord Jesus Christ that he does easily let us come unto him, because he himself was tempted and made like unto us, and that he bears with our weakness and infirmities because he has had experience of them in himself. Now it is certain that our Lord had no vice in him, for he is the wellspring of all goodness. Yet, notwithstanding, to the intent that we on our side should not stick to resort to him familiarly and to the end we should be heard of God his Father for his sake, it is said that he had compassion on us, because he had felt what man and man's infirmities are, albeit without any spot of sin, as I said before. Now then, how shall we do, if we have this foolish belief that we are thoroughly perfect? Seeing that pride is so rooted in our nature, how shall we pity such as we see in misery if we consider not first that we are no better worth than they? So then, let us mark well, that to be kindhearted, gentle, and friendly, all pride must first be beaten down in us.

Furthermore, let us mark also, that kindheartedness is the mother of patience and the continual bringer forth of that fruit, and that if we are too stern, it is a sign that there is cruelty in us and that we are as wild beasts. And thereby also we are convicted of pride and overweening, and that we have not well learned the lesson that St. Paul copies for us here. Indeed, we ought to be grieved at the faults of our neighbors, and we must not feed them by our flattery, as is the common fashion of the world. But yet must our zeal be so measured, as we must bear with a great many (for we ourselves also have need to be borne with) and not be hastier with other folks than we would that they should be with us, but always keep this natural uprightness of not doing that thing to our neighbor which we would not have done to ourselves, which is the sum of the Law and the Prophets as our Lord Jesus Christ says. You see then how our zeal ought to be

mingled with kindheartedness: for if it is sauced altogether with vinegar, what will come of it? There will be no taste or savor in it. Therefore, it must have some oil put unto it. And so there must be some temperance in all corrections to sweeten them withal, that they be not over rigorous. To be short, St. Paul meant to show us here, that although we ought not to bolster out any evil, but rather to be moved with godly zeal to condemn such as deserve it: yet, notwithstanding, we must not reject the weaklings as though they were utter reprobates or castaways, but labor to win them to our God, according as we have seen already, that that way ought to be observed. For there are two evil extremes: but look whatsoever God has ordained by his holy spirit, that will always be found to be for every man's welfare. The one of these evil customs is, that a man cannot be well taken with the world, except he flatter. Whoever intends to maintain himself must play the blinkard and shut his eyes when he sees a number of things in his friends worthy of blame. And yet in the meantime, is not such silence a secret betraying? For we see that they whom we pretend to love are in the highway to destruction and wholly hardened in their naughtiness: and yet notwithstanding, whereas we ought to waken them, or else to set a looking glass before them, that they might behold their lewdness and be ashamed of it, we wink at it. Instead of so doing, every one of us does coax the other and cloaks the things that ought to be sharply rebuked, insomuch that those flatteries are no better than plasters to ease the sore, and in the meanwhile to feed the root of it within.

The other evil extremity is when we are so rigorous that every little fault is enough to make us storm. Since it is so, we shall never have the spirit of meekness aforesaid if we are not guided and governed by God's spirit (as I said before). And hereby a man may see and judge that there is a certain pride lurking within us, through which we take too much upon ourselves. To be short, there is never any over-great

rigor without cruelty, nor cruelty without pride. Whoever despises his neighbors sets too much by himself; and he that can bear with nothing but is so terribly stern that all sins are (in his opinion) unpardonable, shows also that there is no manhood or humanity in him. So much the more, therefore, does it stand us in hand to bear in mind what Saint Paul shows us here, which is to forgive and forbear. Not that we should allow men's vices (as I said before), nor that they should have leave to do evil without rebuking, but that we should patiently rebuke men's faults and be sorry for them, and in so doing our duty, not forget also to bear with the frailty and weakness of our neighbors, so as we shame them not, nor strike them into such heaviness that they fall into despair when they see there is no forbearing nor any forgiving at our hands.

That, then, is the thing we ought to bear in mind. And it is the very cause why Saint Paul adds that men should bear with one another in charity or love. As if he should say that forasmuch as we are brothers together, there should need none other rule than that to make us as well kind-hearted, as also patient and lowly. And for proof thereof, he says in the thirteenth of the first epistle to the Corinthians that charity has these three things: First, that it is gentle and kind-hearted; secondly, that it moves us to be lowly and meek; and thirdly, that it is patient and suffers all things. These are the three qualities which Paul attributes to loving-kindness. For if we demand what is the rule of holy life, the scripture tells us that love is the full performance thereof, because it is the bond of perfection and the end and fulfilling of the law. Lo, how these texts teach us charity. Again, our Lord, also intending to conclude the doctrine of the law, sets down these two points: namely, that we should love him with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our power and strength, and our neighbours as ourselves. Then, if we think to be allowed by God and charity reigns not in us, we deceive ourselves. The world may

like well of us, but all our whole life shall be utterly loathsome before God until charity is settled in our hearts, so as she governs us and we tend always unto her, yea, and work all our works by her.

Now then, seeing that love is the true perfection of the faithful and of all God's children, let us see what it imports. For if a man brags that he has it, and in the meanwhile has neither lowliness, nor gentleness, nor patience, he makes the Holy Ghost a liar, who not without cause shows what is betokened by charity or love. For he has not set down the bare word and only said, "Be ye charitable," but he has also shown us what is meant by it. Namely, first of all, that we must beat down this pride which beguiles us and makes us toss with our horns against God, insomuch that it is very hard for us to be lowly-minded toward men when we cannot hold ourselves meekly in obedience under God. Now then, let us fight in such wise that all pride may be corrected in us, and therewithal enforce ourselves always to humility, that we may be kind-hearted and brotherly with the faithful, which cannot be done but by bearing with one another. The very heathen men had the skill to say that if we had the wit and discretion to see the vices that are in ourselves, we should be patient toward others. For why? I have need to be borne with myself, and if I do not the like to other folks, how partially do I deal? This consideration alone ought to tame us sufficiently, though there were neither law nor gospel. Wherefore, inasmuch as we know that charity imports these three things, let us learn to be patient, not only when any wrong is done to us, but also when we see our neighbors to be weak and feeble, and not yet come to such perfection as were requisite. And though they be not so well forward and settled in God's word (as we would wish), yet let us pity them, and with all meekness endeavor to use such correction towards them, as neither their vices may be nourished, nor the parties themselves be cast into despair.

Thus, you see what we have to mark upon that strain. Now hereupon, Saint Paul infers further that (as I have touched before) we must keep the unity of the Spirit, or the bond of peace. For he sets here the unity of spirit as a mark that is requisite in the church and flock of God, insomuch that if we be at odds among ourselves, we be at odds with God. And therewithal he shows us the thing that we have seen briefly before: which is, that if we be not at one among ourselves, God disclaims us and tells us we belong not to him. This unity, therefore, is a thing that ought to be much set by nowadays, seeing it is the means in respect whereof we are acknowledged as God's children. True it is that the wicked and the unbelievers have their confederacies and are so linked one to another that there is not a straiter alliance to be found in the world. For even their evil doings bind them one to another as though they were fast sewn together, because they perceive themselves to be hampered, insomuch that he who has conspired in some mischief with another naughtypack will be afraid of him, and that fear is as a bond that cannot be broken.

However, Saint Paul presupposes here that the faithful are at one in God, as he will declare anon. For this cause, he shows them how the same unity may be kept. It is (says he) the bond of peace. For when a fire is once kindled, it is not so soon quenched again. We imagine that when we cast ourselves into a chafe, we can come to ourselves again by and by, and all shall be whist and still out of hand again. No, for the devil sets in his foot so that the strife and contention turns to a deadly sting, so as men are envenomed with it more and more, and although they show it not outwardly, nor cast up their rage and froth, yet nonetheless some heartbiting and heartburning will lurk still within when there has been any debate.

And therefore (as I said) let us not think that when any trouble is stirred up, it will be pacified as soon as we would have it. In

consideration whereof, Saint Paul tells us that the church shall perish every turning of a hand through that fire if we continue not in quiet and shun all strife and debate.

And now he showeth what manner of atonement or union it is that he hath spoken of, saying that there is but one God, and one faith, and one baptism: that there is but one hope whereunto we are called: and that there is but one God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is above us all, and in us all. It was very requisite that this should be added, to show that peace shall never be good nor allowed by God, but rather accursed, unless it has a good groundwork. For what a peace would it be if we would nowadays link in with the Papists? We should be fain to forsake the pure doctrine of the Gospel, to bend ourselves against God, and to defile ourselves with all manner of filthiness and abomination. But it would be better that the whole world were sunk, and we with it, than to seek such peace. As much would we be fain to do in respect of the Turks, for there is none of them both but seeks to wrap us in destruction, and to pluck us away from God.

Now, if there be such atonement among us, as we will needs enjoy all that our fleshly lust craves, what confusion will there be? Verily, oftentimes God's servants are accused of conspiracy, and of spiteful malice and stubbornness, because they cannot find in their hearts to consent to any wickedness, insomuch that they which are in any authority and credit would usurp any manner of tyranny to hinder the preaching of God's Word, as it ought to be, and devise what they list of their own brain, so that albeit there be preaching still, yet shall it not be free according to God's Word. If God's servants be driven to this, needs must we be troubled by Satan and his champions, and we shall be both blamed and defamed everywhere. For such folk will always do their office in turning good into evil by their false reports

and slanders. However the world goes, no peace is commendable but such as doth so join us together as God reigneth over us, and we become all one in Him: for without that, it shall be but cursedness. And so you see why Saint Paul calls us back here to God, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, and unto the faith of the Gospel and to baptism, to show how we ought to agree among ourselves.

Now then, we have here two points to bear in mind. The one is that in seeking atonement with men, we must always have our eye upon God, and when we have come to it, we must be settled in it more and more. That is a thing which we must ever have a care of. Now in general it is true that peace is to be desired, and that the very name of it is had in estimation among men. But yet for all that, we must not so shroud ourselves under the shadow of peace as to separate ourselves from God, that in the end we make war against Him, and He proclaim us to be His enemies. And for that cause it is said that we must be at continual battle with the wicked. For inasmuch as they serve Satan, they will not cease to fight against God and our salvation. And therefore we must not be cold and negligent in that behalf, but zealous in setting ourselves against them, insomuch that although they be in honour and credit, yet let us abhor them, as it is said in the Psalms: let them be unto us as stinking and loathsome things, and full of filth and uncleanness. Though they boast never so much of their greatness, yet let us assure ourselves, it were much better that they were drowned with all their bravery in the bottom of hell, than that they should so exalt themselves against God. You see then that we must esteem the greatest men of the world no better than worms, when they dare so bend their horns against God: and consequently, we can have no peace with them, seeing we should be fain to forsake God for their pleasure. But (as I said before) it were better that the world were turned upside down, than it should be so. Now then, if we knit together in God, let us follow the rule that is

given us here: that is to wit, to be so abased in ourselves, as the world may perceive by our mildness, that there is no more loftiness in us to set us at odds. And like as kind-heartedness brings patience, so also let us condemn men's vices, and yet labour always to draw the parties unto God, and to win them unto Him, rather than to set them off through sharpness.

But now let us come to the words that are couched here by Saint Paul. He says that we are one body and one spirit, as we are called to one hope of our calling. First and foremost, he shows us upon what condition we are called of God: that is to say, that there should be such a bond among us, as might show that we are indeed the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. For it is not enough for us to be cast together like a heap of stones: but we must be knit together with a hearty goodwill. And as it is said that there was but one heart and one mind among the faithful (in the primitive Church), so must the same appear among us today. Saint Paul, then, in telling us that we are one spirit and one body, means that we are made as if we were all one man in Jesus Christ. For Jesus Christ can well find in His heart to communicate His name to all the company of the faithful, and that is to the end of drawing us more to the said affection of living together in concord and brotherly love, even with such atonement as we may be brethren, that is to say, so knit together as the fingers of a hand: for without that, we can never show that we are desirous to attain to the kingdom of heaven. That, therefore, is what he meant by the two words Body and Spirit.

True it is that when God's spirit governs us, He reforms our affections in such a way that our minds are knit together. But however the case stands, Saint Paul meant to declare that the whole body of the faithful is but as one man. For it is not for any man to put forth himself there, but we must be linked all together, every man in

his office or calling. To be short, we must be all as one, as shall be declared anon more at length. Forasmuch then as there is none other to govern us but Jesus Christ, we must needs be made all as one man in Him. And truly, we know that the thing which was said of Adam and Eve, and of all married folks and their wives, must also be accomplished in the Church: which is, that the Church is bone of our Lord Jesus Christ's bone and flesh of His flesh, and so there is a marriage between them. Now, if we are so knit all together to the Son of God, it is reasonable also that we should agree among ourselves, and that one union should extend through the whole body: for it is impossible that our Lord Jesus Christ should reign over us, and yet that we should be divided among ourselves, seeing that He is but one. Let that, therefore, serve for the first point.

Now, Saint Paul, to stir us up the better hereunto, tells us that we are called to an inheritance. In saying so, he shows that there is a much holier atonement between us than there is between the (natural) brothers of this world. For although they are born of one father and one mother, so as they are but one blood, yet notwithstanding, every man shifts for himself anon after, and the inheritance is parted among them, so as the brethren seem to be separated asunder, and the natural bond that was among them before to be half broken. But we have an inheritance that cannot be broken. A man cannot say, "I have that which belongs to me, I will get away, and I will dwell alone by myself." For what is our inheritance? It is God Himself. And moreover, the heavenly life, which is purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ, and wherein He Himself is gone before us, to gather us thither to Him. Seeing then that we are all called to one selfsame inheritance, if any of us shrink aside from his brethren, it is all one as if he gave over his part in the Kingdom of Heaven. But we would abhor such a blasphemy. If a man should demand of any of us whether he would renounce his part of paradise, it would make the

hairs stand up upon his head, I mean even of those who have no fear of God at all. No doubt but there are some so wicked and monstrous beasts that they will flush out this blasphemy out of their mouth, that they renounce their salvation. But if you ask it of a man that is well advised, he will always abhor and detest it. Yet notwithstanding, in very deed, we go about to shut ourselves out of the gate, and to bar ourselves from coming into the Kingdom of God, and we wipe away the hope of it that is given us by the Gospel, when we are not knit together among ourselves. Were this thoroughly printed in our hearts, surely there would be another manner of friendship and brotherliness among us than there is, and men would see another manner of meekness, mildness, and patience. Now though we have hitherto been misadvised, it is much better to take warning late than never. Wherefore let us learn by this doctrine of Saint Paul's, that whenever we are provoked to displeasure, so as we seem to have some cause to reject one, to leave another, and to separate ourselves from him or her, we must understand that we have all one hope of the Kingdom of Heaven, and that Jesus Christ, who is our head, calls us all to Him, with this condition set before us, without which we cannot come to Him, which is that we must show truly, and by our deeds, that we account all such as are partakers of the Gospel with us as our brethren, and as though they were our own flesh and blood, and also that we are so joined together as the fingers of one hand, as I said before.

And hereupon, St. Paul, going forward with the same doctrine, saith there is but one Lord. It is certain that hereby he means one God, who hath sovereign dominion over us, and is our master to keep us in unity, because he cannot abide that we should be at odds. In the Twelfth Chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul saith that there is but one God, to show the service which we owe unto God, especially for granting us of his gifts wherewith to edify his

Church. But his attributing of sovereignty unto God in this text is to do us to wit that we cannot serve God unless we be in unity among ourselves. And why? For although a mortal man be variable and change his mind from morning to night, yet will he not have any discord in his house. If there be any broil, or if there arise any strife, he cannot away with it. And what shall God do, who is the God of peace (as he names himself in the Scripture), seeing he will have us to gather together under him and tells us that he sits among us and that we be his house? Think we that we can wind him into our troubles, contentions, skirmishings, hurliburly, and heats with us? Then should he be fain to transfigure himself and to change his nature. But let us not imagine that he will deny himself (as St. Paul saith), but he shall be fain to cut us off as rotten members and to show that we belong not unto him when he sees that we come nothing near him. And therefore let us resort to the said sovereignty and dominion which God hath over us, to the intent to allay all strifes and variances that Satan shall endeavor to raise up among us. For if servants, although they be discontented with one another and have heartburning, grudge, or such other things among themselves, do nevertheless bridle themselves for love of their master and agree again among themselves, what shall we do when the case concerns the pleasing of our God? So then St. Paul declares in effect that when we be so wayward and can bear with nothing but will fall out for every small and light occasion, it is a token not only that we despise men but also that we rebel against God and are loath to yield him any subjection. Thus you see in effect what we have to consider upon that saying.

Now he addeth that there is but one faith, and but one Baptism, and but one God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. His saying that there is but one faith is to show that we have one common treasure even in this world. For he hath spoken already of the heritage which

we hope for and which is warranted us in heaven, though it be not manifested to us as yet. Now what is the pledge of the endless life but the Gospel? And that have we in common together. Seeing it is so, then if the faithful should forsake one another's company, surely the Gospel should be as good as torn in pieces. For we must always weigh well this word "one," which St. Paul hath couched here and so often repeated, in saying that there is but one hope of our calling. And how? Hereby he showeth that we go about to break and disperse the kingdom of heaven (as much as is in us) when we live not in concord. It is said that there is but one God: it is then as if it were a hewing of the hope of our salvation in pieces when we cannot suffer God to govern us and to hold us under his protection. So now, when he saith that there is but one faith, surely it is not long of us that the Gospel is not torn in pieces and gobbets and rent all to fitters, as they say, when we cannot agree with our brethren nor bear with them gently and patiently as was commanded heretofore. That then is the thing whereunto God calleth us.

Now we ought to profit ourselves by it doubly. The one way is by abhorring all diversities of opinions and by looking well to ourselves, that we have but one faith in our heart and but one confession in our mouth. For if the faithful do contrary one another, it is certain that they show sufficiently that they have not the Gospel on their side; at least one part must needs err from the truth of God. It is true that every once in a while it may well happen that all of us shall not conceive one selfsame thing; and in that case, St. Paul shows us a remedy, which is that he who is not sure that God has revealed the truth unto him should hold himself in quiet and pray God to lead him further. But yet in the meantime, it behooves us to be fully resolved of the articles of our faith and to agree so together in them that if every one of us be demanded severally, he may show that he holds none other thing than that which is the general belief of the

Church. That then is the first point which we have to mark in St. Paul's telling us that there is but one faith.

Howbeit, this faith is not one because men have found means in their brains to unite themselves together by it; for God must be the one to bring them to it because they cannot come thither nor abide in it one minute, except God strengthen them in His truth. Then there must needs be an interchangeable bond between faith and the Gospel: that like as the Gospel (whereof God is the author) is but one, so our faith also must be but one. Also, as touching the doctrine, it is not enough for us to confess God altogether with one mouth; but it must also teach us to hold ourselves so linked together all in one unity, as every one of us does travel to his neighbor's benefit, and consider wherein we may serve his turn, and apply ourselves faithfully thereto, bearing with those that are weak, honoring those that have received more largely of God's gifts than we, and making no account of ourselves, that we may attain to the highness whereunto God calls us, which is that we may be partakers of His glory when we have so humbled ourselves and walked in this world with all lowliness and modesty. Thus much concerning that it is said in this text that there is but one faith.

Hereupon, St. Paul tells us also that there is but one Baptism. By Baptism, we put on Jesus Christ (as he says in another place) and are joined unto Him to be partakers of His life and of all His benefits. Now there is but one only Baptism, wherein the name of Jesus Christ is always called upon as He is our Redeemer. We are baptized in the name of the Father as the author of our salvation; in the name of the Son, as of Him that has performed all that belonged to our Redemption; and in the name of the Holy Ghost, by whom we are sanctified to possess and enjoy the incomprehensible benefits that are purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ. Seeing then that God

does so call us to Him by a visible sign, must it not needs be that we are too froward, like wild and mad beasts, if we continue not in such unity as He commands? And not without cause has St. Paul matched Baptism and belief of the Gospel here together. For he had respect of our rudeness. We are so dull that we conceive not spiritual things unless they are set down agreeably to our nature. St. Paul spoke heretofore of hope toward God; and now because we perceive not the things that are above the world, or do not easily understand the doctrine, he spoke likewise of the union of faith and of the union of the body and the soul.

Well, some might say still, all this is spiritual and surpasses man's understanding. You see then, that the things which he has spoken heretofore might seem somewhat dark so as we might not find such savor in them as were requisite. But St. Paul brings us back to the visible sign whereby God gives us a glimpse of Himself according to the infirmity of our flesh. For in Baptism we see the water, which shows us that we are washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. For inasmuch as by nature we are all unclean and utterly rejected and cursed of God, in the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are reconciled unto God His Father, and by that means are called to the glory of heaven and renewed by the power of His Holy Ghost. You see then that we must needs be too dull and brutish if we perceive not the thing that is so visible and open. For it is as if God had set before us an image in the shape of the thing that is too high for us because of our frailty. To be short, St. Paul's intent here is not to separate Baptism and the Gospel asunder, but he has rather added it as a visible mark, to the intent that if we at the first brunt understand not the unity of faith whereunto we are led by Baptism, he may show us that it is as if God had printed the mark of adoption in our heart to show that we are His. For being once baptized with

water, we do all hear Jesus Christ according as it is shown to us by that visible sign.

And now that Baptism is ordained, shall every man have a Baptism of his own by himself? No, but Baptism is always but one. And therefore we must have an eye to ourselves and dedicate ourselves to the one only God and to the one only Savior Jesus Christ, and for performance thereof, we must also be well united together. And by these words of St. Paul, we may see plainly that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are but one God. For if Baptism be in such wise one as it serves to bring us to an unity of body and soul, that is to say, to a brotherhood that surpasses all the alliances of the world, what shall it be when we come unto God, of whom Baptism takes all the power that it has? And what is God? He is not only the Father, but Jesus Christ is joined with Him, and also the Holy Ghost. So then let us mark that there is truly unity in the essence of God, and that although there be distinction of persons, yet is not God separated nor divided in Himself. And although the Father be named simply God (as St. Paul will speak thereof hereafter), that is in respect of the essence and order, and for that He is the head of Him who was sent to be the mediator, because Jesus Christ abased Himself, and although He had the shape unto God (as says St. Paul) and that it had been His glory to have showed Himself in such sovereign majesty, yet it was His will to abase Himself, yea, and to empty Himself utterly. But howsoever it be, yet we see that Baptism leads us right unto God. And thereby we see that which we have touched heretofore, which is that if our peace and concord be not grounded in God, and we governed by Him according to His word and by the power of His Holy Spirit, there is nothing but loathness in us. But if we are touched to the quick with that which is said unto us here, that is to say, that Jesus Christ has linked us to Him with the condition that we also should link one with another, we shall be held in such

concord that the devil shall not be able to win so much at our hands as to separate us from the flock, but we shall overcome all temptations, and where there be any vices and infirmities, we shall bear with them mildly and patiently, and continue in the holy union, whereunto we are daily exhorted by the Gospel and by the common Baptism which we have received.

Now let us cast ourselves down before the majesty of our good God with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us so to perceive them that we may dislike more and more of them, and run back unto Him with true repentance to obtain such grace of Him as we may withdraw ourselves from all defilements, and by that means learn to be unabashed or undismayed for any assaults of Satan, and be able to overcome them all, with all the hardness that he can throw in our way to turn us out of the path of salvation. That it may please Him to grant this grace not only to us but also to all people and nations of the earth. etc.

The Twenty Third Sermon, which is the Third upon the Fourth Chapter

6. "There is one God and Father of all, who is above all things, and through all things, and in you all."
7. "But grace is given to every one of us, according to the measure of Christ's gift."
8. "For which reason, he says, 'When he went up on high, he led a multitude of prisoners into captivity, and gave gifts unto men'"

(Ephesians 4:6-8).

We have seen before that God has not neglected any means that might knit us together in true concord and brotherhood. For He has dedicated us all to Himself by baptism (Galatians 3:27), wherein we put on Christ. As we have come together in the Church, just as we are called to one life to be heirs together of the kingdom of heaven, so ought we to know who is the Master that has authority over us.

In short, God is in such a way our Father, and we His children, that He will not have us be in discord; otherwise, it would only cause trouble in His own house and Church. Seeing that we are members of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is fitting that we should link together in true unity, or else we shall (as much as lies within us) tear His body into pieces.

Yet, to the intent that this unity might better touch us, Saint Paul adds now that God, being the Father of all the faithful, sheds His power and grace upon them and is above all things, as if to gather them into one. In short, He so dwells in them by His Holy Spirit that they must necessarily be one body unless they deliberately turn away from Him.

You see, then, that the reason God is our Father is not only because He has once created us or because He has begotten us again by His Gospel, but because He has shed His grace upon us, as I said, and again, because He is above all. The means by which God links us one with another is His casting of His beams (as it were sunbeams) from heaven so that we must necessarily come together into one, knowing from where the things come that belong to our spiritual life, namely, God's gifts toward us. And this is not to scatter us apart, but rather to gather us together into one body.

But the last words yet more clearly reveal the mind of Saint Paul, namely, that God is in us. Then, if each of us knows that God does him so much grace and honor as to take him for His house to dwell in, there is no excuse for us if we are in variance and hatred, and if each man would be separated from the other and live unto himself, to the utter overthrow of all order that God has set, if it were possible.

Now, to confirm the matter yet better, he says that every one of us has received grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Here, Saint Paul shows us that God uses a wonderful manner to draw us to Him: by distributing His gifts among us in such a way that each of us needs to be helped and supported by our neighbors. For by ourselves, we are so attached to our own interests that none of us would be concerned for anyone else if it were not for the necessity that binds us to those whose help we need.

God, therefore, to correct the pride and presumption that are deeply rooted in humankind, has so distributed His gifts in measured portions that each person recognizes he is dependent on others for what he has received, and that there is no such perfection in himself that he can do without other people. Instead, we must communicate together with mutual goodwill, so that each of us endeavors to use the things that God has given him for the profit and benefit of his brethren, while also being willing to borrow from others and allow himself to be helped and supported by them as he sees the need for it.

This brings us back again to what we have seen before: that we shall never have agreement among us without humility and meekness. We see, then, what Saint Paul aimed at. He handles the same matter in the twelfth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. For there he

takes the analogy of a man's body to show that we are far out of our wits when each of us despises his neighbors and is only concerned with himself.

He asks, "How now?" Our members or limbs have no particular understanding by themselves. The hand has no wisdom to comprehend its purpose; neither do the fingers attached to it, nor the legs, nor the feet. No part of the body has any private understanding of itself. Yet, nevertheless, the hand willingly acknowledges its duty to serve all the rest of the body, never refusing to do so. If there is any ache, any disease, or any other need, the hand is always moving from side to side, up and down, continually engaged. The feet, too, without having any other understanding than only a secret self-moving of nature, know how to bear up the rest of the body and are never reluctant or grieved at doing so. Likewise, the hand does not disdain to borrow help from the other members, knowing full well that it is not able to sustain itself alone.

See, then, what an interchangeable companionship there is among the members of a body. And now, has God called us to Him, that He would have us become all one in Jesus Christ, as has been said before? Does it then follow that each of us should be a whole body by himself? No, for we see, on the contrary, how God has given each person his portion and to all in general, so that it acts as a bond to hold us together in concord, so that we should not be puffed up with such foolish self-conceit as to say, "I have enough of my own; I care for nobody else."

God's will, then, is not that each person should be a whole and perfect body by himself, but that one should be as a hand, another as a finger, another as an arm, another as a leg, another as a shoulder, and another as a foot. In short, God has so distributed His gifts

among us that we must realize that if each of us tries to stand alone, he will immediately be as a rotten member, because he can have no firm continuance in the whole body if he insists on being separated from the rest of the members. And what will follow from it? It must inevitably perish. So it is with us.

That, therefore, is Saint Paul's meaning when he says that God's grace is given to every one of us.

He first shows that if we have any excellence, it serves not to make us proud, for we are indebted to God for it. We have nothing of our own, as we have already seen from his reasoning, to prevent anyone from presuming too much of himself, but instead to walk humbly and soberly, giving all the glory to God. So, then, he says again that whoever is most excellent has no reason to exalt himself above his neighbors, for he has nothing of his own, but must acknowledge that he has all from God. And in what manner? Even by confessing that it is His freely bestowed gift.

You see, then, that for the first point, Saint Paul intended to rid people of the vice to which they are so inclined—that every person might beware of exalting himself. True, there is not one of us who would not willingly be a master over others; but Saint Paul says to them, "You wretches, what are you? What is it that you can claim to say, 'I have this or that of my own'? For you hold all things from the mere free gift of your God." Therefore, cast down your heads, every one of you, and consider that there is none but only God who ought to have all preeminence. As for you, you must learn to submit to Him and be content with your own station, so that you may labor and endeavor to serve your neighbors and all the whole community or body of the Church.

Howbeit, Saint Paul adds moreover that it is according to the measure of Christ, according to what I have declared; that is to say, we shall not find perfection in any man alive, but every man has need to be supported, and that not only in respect of this common life. It is true that our Lord shows us beforehand that it is His will to keep us linked together because we would otherwise be too quick to separate ourselves. For not every one of us can be a baker, or a husbandman, or a cutler; there is no one who does not need the help of someone who may seem inferior, or even a rascal, in comparison to himself. We could not live one day in this world without communicating with one another.

Our Lord bridles us in this way beforehand because He sees we are, as it were, harebrained and would hardly be kept in unity. But here, he treats of the spiritual gifts, by which God shows that He is a Father to us and holds us as the household of His Church. Let the most perfect man examine himself, and he shall find that his receiving of more than other men is in such a way that it is by measure. However the case stands, let none of us presume to have all; for it must needs be that a man is too much blinded with pride if he is of that mind.

But when we have our measure, let us consider the two points I have touched on before: namely, that he who has received the larger measure is more strictly bound to employ every bit of it to the common benefit of the Church. Moreover, he must help himself by his neighbors and consider that he cannot do without them; therefore, he should conform himself quietly to them and seek no more than to be a member of the body, so that all of us may hold on together to our head, desiring that Jesus Christ may have such preeminence over us as every one of us may obey Him, and He leads

us to God His Father. And so, you see what Saint Paul meant by speaking of the said measure.

Now, it stands for us to mark well how he says that it is in Jesus Christ because it is He in whom we are linked together. For (as has been shown before), what is our spiritual kinship? Although it springs from God as the fountain of all goodness, yet it could not flow down to us unless Jesus Christ were among us, and that we were gathered together by His means (John 14:6). As we have seen in the first chapter, it is His office to gather all things together, both in heaven and earth, that were scattered asunder before (Ephesians 1:10).

Let us mark, then, that since God has not given men such perfection that every one of us can live by himself alone, we must cling together in peace and concord. For it is certain that God could well have made us perfect immediately, so that nothing should be lacking in us; and He is no miser in enriching us with His goods, as far as He knows to be for our benefit. Seeing then that there is infirmity in us, why does God not knit us to Himself at once? Why does He still hold us in such weakness? Why does He not give us an angelic power and perfection?

As I said before, He will have us learn to live wisely and with awe, knowing that it stands for us to have Him go through with the thing He has begun. And with that, we must also live meekly and gently with one another, not being so proud as to despise others or to draw away from them, but rather consider that they may help us, and that there is not so base a person in God's Church who has not received something with which he may be able to serve his neighbors. That, then, is the thing we have already seen. Again, if we think that a poor, simple soul has no learning to teach us and that we can receive

nothing at his hand, let us beware that we do not prejudge the grace of God.

For it is certain that however many have any taste and feeling of the Gospel, we have a record that God dwells in them by His Holy Spirit. For faith is the singular gift of God, and it is a sure token that God dwells in every man where we see any feeling and knowledge of the Gospel (Ephesians 2:8). Also, it is certain that every little drop of God's grace is worthy to be esteemed, so there is no reason in this regard for pride to hinder our linking together, or that we should not consider that all of us are members of one body. Let that serve for one point.

On the other side, let every one of us look well to himself, for we shall yield account of the benefits that God has bestowed upon us, and the more a man has received, the more he shall be blamed if he does not endeavor to discharge himself of his duty in serving his neighbors, as I said before. For the end of all God's gifts is always to edify one another, that God's Temple may grow among us and be raised to its full perfection (1 Corinthians 14:26). And so, you see how we ought to bestow the spiritual gifts we have received from God's hand.

For the same cause, it is also said that those who know the Gospel ought to show by the conversation of their whole life that they are the children of light, and not blind wretches that wander in darkness (Ephesians 5:8). Therefore, let us learn to make God's gifts available in such a way that He may be glorified by them. And in that respect, mention is made expressly of measure, to the intent that we should not allege as our excuse that this man or that man gave us no good example.

For when it stands upon commendation, then every one of us bears himself in hand and would persuade the world to believe that he is

very excellent. Yet, in the meantime, we do not consider that God has bound us doubly, by vouchsafing to show such large bountifulness towards us, as to set us in a higher degree than our neighbors. Therefore, let us think better of it, both generally and particularly, than we have done. Generally, because we have the Gospel freely preached here among us, and because we ought universally to be as a burning torch, to show the way of salvation (Philippians 2:15).

And particularly, by discharging every man of his own duty, so that we give no cause of stumbling to our neighbors, but rather endeavor to draw those who are far from God and His truth, and also take pains to confirm and encourage those whom God has already set in a good course and in the right way. But alas, men discharge themselves poorly of that duty. For, according to the extent of their gifts, each person wants to overmaster others and be worshipped as an idol; and so, in the meantime, the union is broken on nearly all sides.

Yet, as I said before, it is impossible for us to be truly linked in one without conforming ourselves to those who are of the Church, as to our own members. Without that, it is impossible for us to be truly united, yet every person desires to be held in high esteem. Again, when it comes to the edification of others, we do exactly the opposite of what Saint Paul tells us here. For in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters to the Romans, he shows that we must act as if a strong man saw another man weak: he ought not to display his strength to the detriment of his neighbor but should rather help him up (Romans 14:1-2, 15:1).

It is as if I had a little child to lead; I should not break both his arms and legs by running hastily with him. And if another man, much stronger than I, should tire me out under the guise of testing his ability against me, is it fitting that I should be cast down by him?

Therefore, we must (as I said) fashion ourselves in such a way to our brethren that the stronger do not push their weaker neighbors aside, nor vex them by laboring to overshadow them by force; neither should we be like the goats Ezekiel reproaches, which butt with their horns against the gentle lambs who intend only to be meek (Ezekiel 34:21). That is what we ought to do, and from which we are far removed.

Also, it is certain that the city of Geneva ought generally to be as a burning cresset, to give light to those who are still far off from the Gospel. But it appears how the world goes with us; I refer to yesterday's dealings. I must needs speak of it, for if I concealed it in the pulpit and, in the meantime, the country folk can make a report of it in the streets, and even give judgment of it, would I not be much to blame? Seeing then that the little children can sing of it, as they say, should I not be too much of a traitor to God and His people if I, and my fellows, should play the dumb dogs?

If a goldsmith should make a cross or a chalice, he should be punished, as he deserves. If some other man makes a thing that serves to popish superstition, it shall not be tolerated. If a merchant sells beads, he shall have his punishment as he is worthy. But if a man sells chasubles, albs, and all other trinkets of the Mass, that shall be suffered and borne with. Nevertheless, this has been done. And in whose name? Even by those who ought to bridle others and punish those who have offended. And in what place? In the place which is dedicated and consecrated to God for the execution of justice.

Yet, it will perhaps be said that it was done through oversight, and I believe it. For had the party been well advised, surely he would have kept himself from doing so unlawful and utterly inexcusable a deed.

Therefore, let us beware, let us (I say) beware, that we do not allow ourselves to be blinded by Satan in such a fashion, and so rocked to sleep, that we do not consider what is told to us here. Namely, that if we have received any grace or gift from God's hand, we must set more store by it and put it to such use that God may be glorified and His Church furthered by it, or else we shall have a dreadful account to make for giving cause of offense to the weak.

It had been better that such filthy trash had been consumed a hundred times with fire than to have been so brought forth in an open place in the sight of all who lie in wait for us from afar. For, in truth, we know well enough that there are many who watch us and seek nothing but to find some cause to speak evil of us, not only to mock us for our labor (for we are worthy of that), but to blaspheme God's name. Therefore, if a man has overstepped himself once, it is good that he should be warned of it, that he may take better heed hereafter. And that we, knowing that God has bound us so deeply unto Him by exalting us, and by doing us more honor than we deserve, in vouchsafing to have us be His people, and to make us glory in having the pure doctrine of His Gospel, may profit ourselves the better by it. We ought to fear lest, if we change after this sort, and become so reckless as to begin taking liberties to do whatever we please, God may show us that He is able to take away the things He has given us and to dispossess us of them when He chooses.

Now, Saint Paul adds here the manner how God is so liberal to us in Jesus Christ and yet, nevertheless, deals the gifts of His Holy Spirit to each man by a certain measure and not to every man alike, but as He Himself thinks good. He says that this was done by our Lord Jesus Christ's ascending up into heaven. For then did He obtain sovereign dominion, and the Father gave Him a name which is above all names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow

(Philippians 2:9-10), as it is said in another place. Indeed, our Lord Jesus Christ received all fullness of grace at His coming into the world, according to what Saint John says in his first chapter: "And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16).

That was the cause, then, why the Spirit was given to Him without measure, as it is said in the same text (John 3:34). And the faithful, because they are members of the Church, have received thereof, and God has given to every man his portion, according to the measure of His only Son. But as for Him, God has not given Him His Spirit by measure. And why? Because He is the head, and every man must take his life from there, and He, withal, has all power over us. Wherefore, let us be contented that each of us has his portion so that we may walk in fear before God. And moreover, let us understand that the perfection is in Jesus Christ because God's Spirit rests in Him, and both great and small must repair to Him, acknowledging their poverty, to obtain there the things they lack, and not be ashamed to receive Christ's alms as those who are destitute of all good things.

Furthermore, although our Lord Jesus Christ showed Himself to be the only Son of God while He was in this world and proved the same by His wonders, miracles, and gifts, yet when He ascended into heaven, He showed Himself to be the very one indeed who had the commission of God His Father to give us all things we need (John 17:2). And that is the reason why it is said in the seventh chapter of Saint John that the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:39). It is very certain that our Lord worked even then by the power of His Holy Spirit. For when Saint Peter confessed Him to be the Son of the living God, it was answered him, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17).

In short, we know well that there is nothing but evil in us, and that the good which God gives us is by His Holy Spirit. And all things are committed to our Lord Jesus Christ, and it belongs to Him to deal forth His doctrine unto us, as it is told to us that it is His office and that the Father has given Him a special commission to deal His gifts to us. Indeed, it is also the reason why the Prophet Isaiah says that God's Spirit rested upon Him (Isaiah 11:2), namely, to show that if we are separated from Him, we must perish as it were through drought and emptiness.

However the case may stand, we must always come back to this point, that the Holy Ghost was poured out upon all the faithful when our Lord Jesus Christ was exalted, as it is said in the other text (Acts 2:33). So then, let us mark that when our Lord Jesus Christ left the world and was received up into His heavenly glory, it was to the end that we should henceforth enjoy His goods so much the better. That is also the reason why He said to His disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I tarried still with you, the Holy Ghost would not come" (John 16:7). It is true that our Lord Jesus Christ could well have given them His Spirit while He was still with them in a visible manner, just as He did when He had gone out of the world.

But we must not dispute this matter according to our own fancy; we must understand that our Lord Jesus was humbled for a time, yes, and utterly emptied, as we shall see more fully hereafter. Yet He was received into His heavenly glory, to the intent that He should have sovereign dominion, and be so exalted that all creatures might bow to Him. Thus, you see how our Lord Jesus Christ's will was to absent Himself from us in His body, to the intent that we might the better feel His presence through His dwelling in us by His Holy Spirit. That is the matter which Saint Paul is treating of now when he says that for the same reason, it is said that He "went up on high and gave gifts

to men after He had led away His enemies prisoners" (Ephesians 4:8).

Now, this text (which is quoted from the sixty-eighth Psalm) shows that God is truly exalted in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, in that song, David preaches and sings the praise of God, because, being established as King of Israel and bearing the figure of our Lord Jesus Christ, he had set up God's service in its purity again, redressed the great number of disorders that had been under the reign of Saul, and finally prospered in a great number of victories. In this way, God had poured out such grace upon him that it appeared plainly that his kingdom was not the kingdom of a mortal and transitory man, but rather that God intended to have His glory known there. That is David's proper meaning.

Therefore, whereas he says, first of all, that God is "gone up," he follows the common manner of speaking in the Scripture. For, inasmuch as all things had gone too much to havoc in the time of Saul, God seemed to have been asleep. Again, religion was as good as beaten down, and there was such excessive liberty of doing evil that a man would have said that God governed that people no more. David then shows a wonderful change in that he says, "God is gone up," meaning that He showed by effect that He had a care for His Church, intended to keep it under His protection, and meant to have His majesty known there. That is one point.

Hereunto he adds, "Thou hast led captivity captive," meaning thereby that God had subdued His enemies round about him, of whom there had been a great number, who sought nothing else but the ruin and desolation of the people. Therefore, David means that as soon as God went up, He immediately broke and bruised the heads of His enemies, so they came no more to trouble His people, as if they

had found by experience that all their practices, force, and assaults had availed them nothing at all.

Thereupon, he adds that immediately also He received gifts from men to show that those who had been so overcome had offered tribute to God, as to their sovereign King. True, this was done in David's person. Nevertheless, it was God's mind to have His glory shine forth in that man, whom He had so chosen and singled out, and whom it was His pleasure to have anointed by Samuel (1 Samuel 16:13). To be short, we see what David meant to declare in that verse.

Saint Paul, therefore, applies the same to our Lord Jesus Christ, and not without cause. For whatever was figured in the person of David must be referred to Jesus Christ because He is the truth and substance of all those shadows, and we have in Him a much more royal fulfillment of the things that are mentioned in that Psalm. Saint Paul, therefore, did not misuse that text when he applied it to the only Son of God, saying that He was exalted on high. For (as he will declare hereafter) Jesus Christ was first abased and afterward exalted. You see, then, that God took as it were a new possession of His sovereignty, not over all the world, but over His own people, to the end that He might govern them with their own good will. And afterward, He took possession of it over His enemies too.

For in the Psalm it is said, not only that He received tribute and gifts, to the end that everyone should do Him homage, but also that He subdued the rebels (Psalm 68:18). For there are neither devils nor reprobates, but they are so beaten down by the mighty hand of God, that we may well perceive that our Lord Jesus Christ is He of whom David was the figure. So then, Saint Paul tells us here, in effect, that although our Lord Jesus Christ does not dwell among us in the manner of men, nor do we see Him with our bodily eyes, yet we must

not, therefore, be separated from Him in mind. He has gone up to fill all things, not with His body, but with His benefits and gifts. For however great the distance may be between our Lord Jesus Christ and us, as in respect of the places of heaven and earth, yet nonetheless, He ceases not to dwell in us but will have us also to be all one with Him, which He shows to us by the gifts which He bestows upon us so that we ought of duty to be drawn to the union that He has spoken of.

This, then, is the effect of the things which we have to gather upon this point, for now, the matter must be broken off, but it shall be continued again hereafter.

But, however the case stands, let us mark for a conclusion that Jesus Christ is not so far from us nowadays, but that we may perceive by experience that we are knit unto Him, and that He makes us partakers of His riches, and that He fills us with them as much as is needed, at least according to the measure and portion that has been spoken of. Therefore, let us labor to serve our neighbors, let us foresee what may do them good, and let us follow the order that God has set among us, assuring ourselves that although our Lord Jesus has gone up, yet He is not therefore so far off from us that He has forsaken and given over His Church, but that He is exalted to the end that we should honor Him by acknowledging Him for our head. And seeing we are members of His body, we must serve one another and not be so unhappy as to bar ourselves from coming to Him, but rather, let every one of us come to Him and endeavor to draw others with us, so that the stronger sort discourage not the feeble and weak, but rather strengthen them, and the lusty sort bear the fainter, and those that are already in good forwardness lend their hand to those who come lagging after and have much ado to draw their legs after

them, so that we may all come to the perfection whereto we are called.

Now, let us cast ourselves down before the Majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him that we may be so touched with them, that we may yield ourselves to Him with true repentance for our further profiting and strengthening all our life long, by acknowledging the miseries that are in us.

And let it please Him to bear with us so that, in the end, having obtained the remission of our sins, we may be provoked to come unto Him, not doubting that He will always acknowledge us as His children, and make us enjoy the heritage which He has bought so dearly for us.

And so let us all say, Almighty God, Heavenly Father, etc.

**The Twenty Fourth Sermon,
which is the fourth upon the fourth
Chapter.**

7. But grace is given to every one of us, according to the measure of Christ's gift.
8. For which thing he saith, "When he went up on high, he led a multitude of prisoners into captivity and gave gifts to men."

9. Now, that he went up, what does it mean, but that he first went down into the lower parts of the earth?

10. He that went down is the same who went up above all the heavens, to the end to fulfill all things.

I began this morning to expound the text of the Psalm quoted here by St. Paul (Psalm 68:18), showing that all the things which are spoken there agree with the person of the only Son of God. For although he often says by way of similitude that God goes up when He shows Himself as judge of the world and defender of His Church, yet, inasmuch as when our Lord Jesus Christ came down, He was abased as one that was beneath all men, and afterward was exalted by the power of God, His Father, therein we see most fully how God vouchsafed to be abased for a time in the person of His Son, to be in a state despised before men, and afterward would be crowned again with glory and honor, as the Apostle says of Him in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 2:9). And that is the cause why St. Paul says here that it behooved Him first to descend to be so exalted (Ephesians 4:9-10).

But before we go any further, we must note that here St. Paul has changed the word. For whereas David says that God "received gifts" (Psalm 68:18), that is to say, tribute and homage of those whom He had subdued to His majesty, St. Paul instead says that "He gave." And so, this is not rehearsed as it lies in the Psalm, but the Apostle meant to show that the triumph which our Lord Jesus Christ made when He rose from death surpassed all David's victories and all that had ever been done in shadows and figures under the Law. For it is much more to give than to take.

Also, whereas it is said in the Psalm that God received, that was not for Himself or to His own use, for we know He has no need of

anything; but His receiving was to enrich His Church. And that is the reason why it is said that "the women who never stepped out of their doors shall have their part of the prey or booty" (Psalm 68:12). There, therefore, David shows that God was not glorified for any profit or advantage that He pretended on His own behalf, accordingly as it is said that He is content with His own perfection, for He can neither increase nor diminish, but all redounded to the welfare of His Church.

For God's showing Himself to be rich is not by keeping His treasures under double locks (as men say) but by setting them forth for all comers, at leastwise if we seek them with true faith. And forasmuch as His riches do not diminish, nor yet His liberality which He uses towards us, thereby we know that He surpasses all the men in the world. Then, if we will define in one word how God is rich, it is in being liberal unto us, using bountifulness, and by alluring us to Him to succor us in all our needs and wants, according to this saying of His by His Prophet: "Come, all ye that are thirsty, and drink your fill: ye shall have your fill, not only of water, but also of wine and milk" (Isaiah 55:1).

To be short, He shows that those who wait upon Him and put their trust in Him can lack nothing. Therefore, it is said in the Psalm that all shall have their part of the spoil (Psalm 68:12), not only the men of war (for they might happen to boast that they had gotten the whole prey by their own manhood and policy), but that "the women who never stirred out of the house, and who did nothing but spin upon their distaffs, shall have part of the booty," as though they had gotten the victory.

Hereby, I say, He shows that God's receiving of tributes and taxes from those whom He had subdued to His dominion was not to

increase Himself withal, but to make us partakers of all the benefits that belong to our salvation. And herewithal, let us mark well how it is alleged that when God gives us His gifts, it is not so that we might attribute anything to our own virtue or prowess, but that we should think ourselves beholden to His mere free goodness for all things. And so must all things be referred to His glory.

For the more that He bestows upon us, the more ought we to be forward and ready to confess how much we are bound unto Him. But the chief point is that we endeavor to make the gifts that we have received available to the common edifying of the Church: that is to say, that God may still be more and more exalted, and the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ increased and augmented among men. And so the condition, say I, whereupon our Lord distributes to every one of us the things that belong to Him, and are His own, and which He could keep still to Himself, is that we should do Him homage for them both in word and deed.

But now let us come to that which Saint Paul addeth. He saith that it behooved Jesus Christ to descend, according also as He descended into the lower parts of the earth, and that thereafter He was exalted. Many have made over-violent glosses upon this place, saying that Jesus Christ went down, not only into the grave, but also even into Limbo—a place forged of their own brain. But Saint Paul speaks simply, namely (as it is said in the second to the Philippians), that because Jesus Christ was abased, therefore God, His Father, exalted Him to His right hand and gave Him sovereign dominion, to the end that all knees should henceforth bow before Him (Philippians 2:8-11).

Therefore, whereas Saint Paul saith that Jesus Christ was abased, he meaneth it of His clothing Himself with our nature, wherein He

became despised, without any dignity, and without any reputation to the worldward. According whereto it is said in the Psalms that He was counted as a worm of the earth and not as a man, insomuch that men took scorn to look upon Him, as saith the Prophet Isaiah, and there was nothing in Him that men could like (Psalm 22:6; Isaiah 53:2-3).

You see then that Jesus Christ did so submit Himself to all reproach that He was disfigured, and men did spit at Him, mock Him, and do Him all the wrongs that they could, and afterward, He was exalted. And no doubt, but Saint Paul hath touched the thing here which he discoursed more at length in the forementioned place: which is, that the example of the Son of God ought to teach us lowliness and to make us walk plainly without taking anything upon us above other men. For who are we? What is our state? When every one of us hath sifted himself thoroughly, what shall he find in him to boast of? We have many things to thank God for, but to take upon us that which is His would be a villainous treachery. So, there is nothing for us to do but to cast down our eyes.

For behold, the Son of God could have shown Himself in His heavenly glory and majesty so as He could have made all the world to quake; and yet we see that, being born in a stable, He walked all His lifetime as one unknown and unesteemed, and in the end was put to death, and that not a common death, but a death that was so reproachful, yea, and cursed of God's own mouth, that He was held for accursed before God and His angels, to the intent that we might be blessed for His sake and by His means (Philippians 2:6-8; Luke 2:7; Galatians 3:13).

Seeing then that God's Son was so abased, have not we good cause to stoop low? For God requireth not that we should forgo anything of

our own when He exhorteth us to lowliness. And why? For if we knew what we be, we would stoop low enough. Our head was not in like plight when He came down hither. For why? As it is said in the 17th of Saint John, He possessed His divine glory and majesty before the making of the world (John 17:5). And yet, for all that, He vouchsafed to abase Himself in such wise (as in the sight and opinion of men) that to outward appearance He seemed to have utterly given over His majesty. It is true that He continued still in His perfect state, but that appeared not. And that is the cause why Saint Paul useth the word "figure" or "shape." He appeared, saith he, in the shape of man (Philippians 2:7). For he meaneth that our Lord Jesus Christ's clothing of Himself with our flesh, and His being despised and rejected, were no derogation at all to His divine essence. And why? For it was but an outward shape. Then did He continue always unimpaired, and yet, nevertheless, He was seen to be under all men.

Who will then refuse the same state, that we should not be lowly after His example? The fathers that lived under the Law perceived already that it behooved them to be fashioned like unto the image and pattern of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was their head, and yet they had but very dark figures. Now then, seeing that Jesus Christ showeth us the way, so as He entered into the kingdom of heaven through many tribulations, and into life by death, and is exalted on high after abasing low: what excuse shall we have if we, seeing those things, be still puffed up with pride and cannot find it in our hearts to walk in meekness, considering that we be nothing?

So then, whereas Saint Paul speaketh of the low places of the earth, he meaneth the human nature which our Lord Jesus took upon Him for our salvation, yea, even with the addition of all the things that I have touched. For He showed not Himself as a great prince, neither used He any pomp or trains of men to make Himself dreaded in the

world; but (as it is said in the forty-second of Isaiah) He broke not the bruised reed, He quenched not the smoking flax, neither was His voice or cry heard in the streets (Isaiah 42:2-3).

Again, besides this, we see how He suffered reproach and how He abode it patiently: when He came to His death, all men seemed to have conspired against Him. Therefore, we must add all these qualities to know how Jesus Christ descended into the low parts of the earth. Howbeit, if we compare His divine majesty with our nature, we may well call all the earth the low places; and although Jesus Christ had possessed the whole world, yet it had been nothing in comparison of His heavenly glory. For what are they who are in the highest state of dignity? They do but crawl here like frogs or leap like grasshoppers, as saith the Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 40:22). No marvel then though the whole earth be termed a low and base place in respect of heaven.

Howbeit, Saint Paul's intent here was to note briefly that Jesus Christ vouchsafed to stoop so low as to become a mocking stock to the unbelievers, yea, and even to be condemned and esteemed as a man accursed and forsaken of God—all which things He endured for our salvation. It is good reason, therefore, that we should mildly and without gainsaying receive God's humbling of us and bear in ourselves the image of our Lord Jesus Christ, by being shaken off, despised, and mocked for our simplicity, and that no man should take upon him or challenge to himself the things that are none of his. That is the effect of Saint Paul's meaning.

Now he sayeth, "that he is gone up above all heavens" (Ephesians 4:10). Herein we see that the Son of God hath not as now the lordship of this world. For Saint Paul's declaring that He is above all the heavens is to show that the dominion which He hath is heavenly,

divine, and everlasting. For the heavens themselves shall pass away, and they must needs vanish, as Jesus Christ avoweth with His own mouth (Matthew 24:35; Luke 21:33).

Now, if the heavens be subject to changing and must be done away to be renewed again (Isaiah 65:17), if Jesus Christ dwelt in heaven, He should be subject to the same state; that is to say, He should be frail and transitory (Hebrews 1:10-12). Then He is above all the heavens in His infinite glory, wherein there is neither change nor turning about (James 1:17).

And thereupon he addeth that it is "to fill all things" (Ephesians 4:10). By this word "fill," he meaneth that Jesus Christ is not so locked up in any one place, but that we may feel Him present, and that He dwelleth in us, and that He filleth all things. But surely that is not with His body, as some have grossly imagined, but it is with His power and with His spiritual benefits and gifts. Yet, nevertheless, Saint Paul's intent here is to betoken a presence of Christ, to the end that we may know that we have not lost anything by His absenting of Himself from the earth, so as He dwelleth here no more after a visible fashion.

And why? For He ceaseth not for all that, to execute His power everywhere, and to fill all things; insomuch that we have all things of Him which are requisite for our salvation. That is, in effect, the very meaning of Saint Paul.

Wherefore, let us here put in practice the exhortation that hath been touched afore: which is, that we cannot be taken for God's children, except we become like to Him that hath the right of the firstborn. Since it is so, let us willingly suffer ourselves to be abased, that God may exalt us; for by that means did our Lord Jesus come to His glory. Again, let us apply all our senses to taste thoroughly what the mercy

of God is, in that it hath pleased Him that His Son, which was His image, should be so abased.

Let us consider how great the love of our Lord Jesus Christ is, in that He vouchsafed to hide His divine essence for a time, and took not upon Him as belonged unto Him, but did as it were stoop down to the sight of the world. Since we see this, let us consider, first of all, how precious our souls were to the Son of God, seeing He vouchsafed to stoop so low for our sakes, and let us esteem the Gospel, whereby so great a benefit is communicated unto us, assuring ourselves that if God's Son had not come down unto us, there had been no means for us to have come unto God His Father.

For besides that we are plunged here in mire, and have nothing in us but utter frailty, it is certain that we bear as good as a hell about us, because the devil is not without cause called the prince of this world (John 12:31; John 14:30).

So then, seeing we are under the tyranny of Satan and of sin, how could we mount upward if Jesus Christ drew us not? But first it behooved Christ to come down hither. And thereby we are taught to worship our Lord Jesus Christ always in the person which He hath taken as the Mediator; and whereas the unbelievers and unholy folk take occasion to despise Him because He was crucified, let us honor Him still as He deserveth.

For whereas His greatness and majesty were after a sort darkened for a time, that was to give the greater beauty to His mercy and loving-kindness, which selfsame word Saint Paul useth when he purposeth to express well what earnestness of mind and care God had to ransom us from the dungeons of death. And so you see, in effect, what we have to consider upon the Apostle's words, where he saith that Jesus Christ was so abased.

And whereas he addeth that "he went up above all the heavens," I have told you already in one word that it is all one as if he meant to exempt Him from the array of creatures, knowing that as now He is not subject to any change. For the same cause, it is said in the sixth chapter of Romans that "He suffered once in dying for our sins: but yet for all that, He died not forever, because He is entered into the life of God" (Romans 6:9-10). That is to say, He is made partaker of the immortal glory, so we have just cause to cast down our eyes.

And because we do not fully conceive this high sovereignty which was given Him, let us honor it, seeing that even the angels of heaven bear us company therein. For it is not for nought said in the Psalms that "all the angels of God worshipped Him when He showed Himself to the world" (Psalm 97:7), which text the Apostle also applies to His person in the first chapter to the Hebrews (Hebrews 1:6).

Herewithal, let us mark that although Jesus Christ is not shut up in any one certain place, yet He ceaseth not to keep still the true nature of His body. For the Papists have imagined that although He be in heaven, yet He is everywhere else as well as there. Yea, and therewithal they have their speculations to show how it is no inconvenience at all that God should have His being above and also be beneath here with us.

And thereupon they imagine themselves to have the body of Jesus Christ in the Almonry, by reason whereof they bear it abroad in the streets and cause all men to worship it. And yet, in the meantime, men know it is but a morsel of bread. Yes (say they), it is God. But that is an utter annihilation of the true nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. In defense thereof, they allege that if it had the property of a body, it must needs be in one certain place. But above the heavens,

there is no place (to speak after the manner of the philosophers), and it is said that Jesus Christ is there. Therefore (say they) His body hath not the properties of a body. Yes, and we know that the angels have no bodies, and yet they are not everywhere, for they are fain to go wherever God appointeth them.

Now, seeing that the angels are not tied to any place, notwithstanding that their essence is not infinite but comprehended within a certain measure, though they have no proportion of members, why should not Jesus Christ be above all the elements of this world, yea, and above all the heavens, and yet not cease to be very man? Not that He can die anymore, or be subject to any of our passions and infirmities, as He was heretofore when He was conversant in the world. For as now He is quite rid of all those things, but that, however the case stands, He holdeth still His true nature of man.

And although He be above the heavens, yet let us assure ourselves that that distance hindereth not His presence with us and in us. How? We must mark what has been touched afore. It is said that "He filleth all things," (Ephesians 4:10), but that is with the power of His Spirit. You see, then, that the filling whereof Saint Paul speaketh is that we should have our fill of the benefits of our Lord Jesus Christ and that when we are grafted into His body and made one with Him by belief in the Gospel, then we may assure ourselves that He is the fountain which never dries, nor can ever be emptied with drawing, and that in Him we have all variety of good things and all perfection.

Now then, if Saint Paul had meant as the Papists have forged, and as is maintained nowadays by many ignorant and willful persons, namely, that Jesus Christ filleth all things with His human nature, surely he would not have forgotten it. But he letteth it alone as an

absurdity. Wherefore, let us mark well the two sayings that are set down here: that is to wit, on the one side, that Jesus Christ is gone up above all the heavens, and yet, notwithstanding, that He ceaseth not to fill all things.

It is said that He is gone up above the heavens, even to the end that we should not be tied to this world and to our fleshly fancies when we intend to resort to Jesus Christ, but that we should lift up our minds on high and seek Him there by faith (Colossians 3:1-2). Insomuch that when the Holy Scripture says that God is in heaven, it intendeth not to assign Him some peculiar place. The respect is far different, and altogether unlike, between God in His spiritual essence and Jesus Christ in respect of the body and human nature which He took of us.

For when we speak of God, we must always lay this ground: that He hath an infinite essence which filleth all things, so that heaven is as His royal throne, and the earth is His footstool (Isaiah 66:1). Not that He hath any feet, nor any seat to sit on, but it serves to show that there is no distance so far or wide that can contain the majesty of God, which is infinite, as I said. That is a thing which we must bear in mind when God is spoken of unto us.

And why then is it said that God is above all the heavens, and why does Saint Paul speak after the same manner here of Jesus Christ? It is because we are dull and earthly, that if God should not tell us that He hath His temple and palace in heaven, we would tie Him to every pillar, to every stone, to every waterspring, to every tree, and (to be short) to everything that we see. Therefore, to correct such vice, our Lord saith to us, "Mount up, mount up aloft," as though He lifted us by the chins, and said, "Wretched beasts, why seek ye to see Me here beneath? What intend ye to liken Me to? Assure yourselves, ye must

be conveyed up above all the world when ye think upon Me and My majesty. Therefore ye cannot worship Me except ye be rapt up aloft and consider that I am incomprehensible." Lo, how the Scripture speaketh of Him.

And when we say, "Our Father which art in heaven," it is to the intent we should lift up our minds unto Him, as He calleth us at all hours (Matthew 6:9). Not that we must imagine, as the Papists do, who think to please God with their much babbling and with their using of many ceremonies, which may have a gay gloss to the worldward. I say, we must not think to please God so, for let us be sure that that were a transfiguring of God, to make Him like ourselves. But we must rather bethink us, that instead of having our minds weighed down to the world, we must strive to lift them up on high.

And as for Jesus Christ, it is said that He is "above all the heavens," even in His human nature (Ephesians 4:10). And how is that? Being God in respect of His essence, He is equal to His Father, so as He filleth all things. But in respect that He hath put on a human body, He is above the heavens, so as He is not in the world. And it is too fond a grossness to say, "Why then, are not the two natures so knit together as they cannot be put asunder?" All this is true, but yet it does not follow that they cannot be distinguished.

So long as we remain alive, our soul and body are joined together, and yet it does not therefore follow that the soul is not of another nature than the body or that they cannot be distinguished. Even so is it with Jesus Christ. If a man demands, "Why then, is not our Lord Jesus Christ all whole with us, according as He is our head and mediator, and hath gathered us to Him in such wise as we live of His own substance?" Yes, He is with us all whole, if we take Him in the person of the mediator.

But if a man demands, "Is every part of Him among us, which is in Himself?" No, nor is it requisite that He should anymore be so conversant among us, as to be subject to the suffering of anything, but He must be quite and clean exempted from all that gear. And that is the cause why the Apostle telleth us, "that He appeared once, and that henceforth we wait for Him" (Hebrews 9:28). And so you see what we have to consider upon this saying, that Jesus Christ is exalted above all the heavens.

Now let us go back again to the word "fill," for therein Saint Paul showeth us that the sovereignty of our Lord Jesus Christ hath no bounds to be locked up in, but that it reacheth even unto us. Therefore (as I have said twice already), our Lord Jesus Christ's filling of all things is by His power. For He is not a King after the manner of those whom we see in this world. They are subject to hunger and thirst, they are subject to diseases and other things, so as they must have officers at every stone's cast, or else they shall not be obeyed.

They then are fain to do their affairs by other men, which they cannot do by themselves, and to borrow help at other folks' hands. But it is not so with Jesus Christ; for He reigneth not by force of arms, nor after the manner of worldly princes. Now then, He reigneth by His Spirit and by the means of His Word. And by that means are all things filled with Him, even by the Gospel. Saint Paul saith in the first to the Corinthians that we communicate with Him (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). And to that end also doth God call us day by day, namely to make us partakers of His only Son. And how may that be unless He extend His power unto us?

Now truly, in this case, it standeth us in need to have more than our senses can receive. For the power of our Lord Jesus Christ carrieth

with it a wonderfulness above all our understanding, as Saint Paul will show yet again hereafter. For when he hath said that Christ is the head of the Church, and as it were a husband (which is all one person with his wife), he crieth out, "It is a great mystery or secret, between Jesus Christ and His Church" (Ephesians 5:32). If it be a secret, surely then can we never attain to it by our own mother wit, nor by our own conceits.

And therefore, whereas Saint Paul saith that He "filleteth all things," let us assure ourselves that instead of common reason and common opinion, we must have the experience of faith if we intend to know how Jesus Christ dwelleth in us and to be persuaded of it, as hath been said thereof already. However we fare, let us not think that any distance can separate us from the Son of God. And why? For His dominion extendeth high and low, and therefore we shall feel that He is in us, and we in Him, that we shall be made all one together, yea, even to be joined unto God His Father and to be brought to the perfection that is spoken of in Saint John, where He saith, "It is expedient for you that I go my way, for my Father is greater than I" (John 14:28).

Our Lord Jesus Christ's meaning there is not to make Himself inferior to His Father in respect of His divine essence (for we know there is but one God), but He taketh us there, to lift us up according to our rudeness and infirmity, as if He should lead us pace by pace and step by step like little children. After that manner then doth He join us to God His Father, till we be rightly transformed into His glory, whereof we enjoy part already by the Gospel. For we see not yet but as it were through a glass, and darkly, as Saint Paul saith in another place (1 Corinthians 13:12). That then is the thing which we have to bear in mind.

Now it behoveth us to honor well this King, which is set over us by God His Father, and consider that we ought to be His people indeed, yea, and even His own body. Seeing He doeth us such honor, let us look that we be so much the more inflamed with the love of Him, and consider that Jesus Christ, being exalted above all the heavens, is also Judge of the world, yea, even to call us to account, not only of our outward deeds but also even of all our thoughts.

And therefore, let us walk in His fear and obedience, assuring ourselves that when the trumpet soundeth at the last day, we must all appear before Him (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

And further, let us consider also that He filleth all things in such wise as it is to the overthrow of all our enemies and to the bridling, or rather to the fettering of them, so they cannot hurt us, do what they can. Therefore, according to that which is contained here from out of the Psalms, it is very requisite that He should be above to obtain the upper hand of our enemies; for else, what would become of us?

And indeed, let us consider what they might be able to do, having infinite hosts to overthrow our salvation continually withal. For the devil is not as a mortal man; he hath such force as is terrible out of measure. What might he do, were it not that Jesus Christ filleth all things? Yea, even to show that He hath power both over Satan and over all his upholders, insomuch that they may practice, prepare, and turmoil as they can against the Church, yet shall they never bring their enterprise to pass, because Jesus Christ holds them at the stave's end, as it were, with His foot upon their throat.

You see then that the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ was given Him, with full warrant, that we shall ever be defended by His strong and invincible hand, because He hath taken us into His perfection, even He that is exalted above all the heavens. And that also is the

cause why Saint Paul saith expressly, “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Philippians 2:10).

Now, when we hear that the angels stoop to our Lord Jesus Christ, let us understand that He applieth them to our service, so as they be our keepers, and watch to defend us against Satan. And seeing that this charge is committed to them by our Lord Jesus Christ, who is their head, we ought to be well assured of our salvation. And so, you see how we ought to put this text in use.

Moreover, let us walk so under the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we may feel that He filleth us indeed, (as I said afore) because He is above all things, through all things, and in all things. This was spoken of God His Father; however, we know that Jesus Christ is the means whereby God dwelleth in us. Wherefore, let us be His true temples, and, since He, being the wellspring of all pureness, vouchsafes us the grace and privilege to dwell in us, let us endeavor to keep ourselves holy unto Him, both in body and soul.

For if we give ourselves to our own uncleanness, it is all one as if we went about to drive away the Son of God, who cannot be intermeddled with our corruptions and filthiness. Not that we can be clear from all spot and blemish, but that we must not delight in them, but rather fight against them, and labor more and more to fashion ourselves after the pureness that is in our Lord Jesus Christ. And like as He sanctified Himself on our behalf, so also let us be holy, namely by the grace and power of His Holy Spirit, and let the same holiness be consecrated by the doctrine of the Gospel, as is said of it in another place (John 17:17).

Now then, as touching this filling, you see that inasmuch as we know that our Lord Jesus Christ holdeth the devils and all the despisers of

His majesty fettered in subjection, we may assure ourselves that He dwelleth verily in us, and that the same is peculiar to us, because He hath chosen us for His temples and intendeth to show that the conjunction which He hath taken upon Him with mankind is proper to us in respect of the human nature, and also in respect of His Spirit, because He maketh it to take place in us.

And not only that He is man still, as He was, but that there is yet more—that is to wit, that we be bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh. Not that we be created of His substance, but that by the power of His Holy Spirit, He maketh the substance of His body and blood to flow down unto us, wherewith we are filled; insomuch that we have there not only meat to eat but also drink to drink, so as there is sufficient to content us withal, conditionally that we consider the benefits whereunto He allureth us, and which He offereth us and will have us to enjoy, so we be not letted by our own unbelief.

Now, let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to touch us more to the quick with a true knowledge of ourselves and of our wretchedness, that we may be so cast down in ourselves, as we may resort to Him with all lowliness, and confess ourselves to be beholden to Him for all good things.

And let us have no other anchor than our Lord Jesus Christ, since it is to Him that we are called. May we be so clothed with Him that it may put away all our fleshly lusts and affections, which hinder our union with God. Let us continue in the hope that is given to us, until, being taken out of this world, we enjoy the everlasting rest that He has purchased for us.

May it please Him to grant this grace, not only to us but also to all people and nations of the earth. Amen.

The Twenty Fifth. Sermon,

Which is the Fifth Upon the Fourth Chapter.

11. And the very same hath given some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers.

12. For the reparation of the saints, to the work of administration, and for the edifying of the body of Christ.

We have seen heretofore how our Lord Jesus Christ has not withdrawn His power far from us, though He is exalted above the heavens. There is a great distance between Him and us, in respect to the absence of His body out of the world, but yet we find Him always present by the power of His Holy Spirit, and by that means, He fills all things.

Now, Saint Paul shows that this manner of filling is to the intent that every faithful man should, with all lowliness, serve his own turn with the gifts and grace which it has pleased our Lord to bestow upon those whom He has set in His Church to govern it. And, on the other side, they that have received the larger measure should not advance themselves for all that, nor draw alone by themselves, but endeavor to do service to the common benefit, salvation, and welfare of all God's children.

The sum, therefore, of what Saint Paul was minded to say is that Jesus Christ, having all riches in Him, has not dealt them out to every one of us equally, at least not so that we should all be thoroughly perfect (for He meant it not), but that He has distributed them by measure.

And indeed, the order which He has set in His Church shows it. For all are not prophets, all are not teachers, all are not evangelists. Then it follows that Christ intends to distribute His gifts by a certain measure. And upon this, we have to conclude that he who presumes of himself and imagines that he has all that is requisite, does foolishly deceive himself in two ways. For there is not any man who has received such perfection, but that he needs to profit still with his brethren. That is one point.

Again, he who is the most excellent of all others is most bound to do good with the things that God has committed to his charge, or to his trust as a patron. On the contrary part, the meaner and more ignorant sort must not envy those who go before them in learning and wisdom, because it is Jesus Christ's will to have it so, and so must it be, seeing He will have His Church governed by the means of men.

Now then, we see what the Apostle aimed at: namely, that we should allow ourselves to be filled with the spiritual gifts that belong to our salvation, and that none of us should refuse to be taught by the means of men. Let us not be like these fantastical persons who would have God send them some revelation from heaven, so that they might have no need of preaching or reading. Let us not be carried away with such foolish overweening, but let all of us, both great and small, submit ourselves soberly to the order that our Lord Jesus Christ has set.

That order is that those who have great skill and are well-versed in the Holy Scriptures and have the gift of teaching should strive to serve the whole Church as they are bound to do, for to that end, God has advanced them above others. And that the meaner sort and the ignorant be not envious because they see themselves not to have the

same portion, but consider that it is enough for them that God has not forgotten them, and that the dealing of His gracious gifts in that manner was for their profit and salvation. It was God's will that all things should be made common, and that every member of the body should have his part of them, so long as the order is always kept.

Now, Saint Paul, in saying that our Lord Jesus Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers, helps us to understand that the preaching of the Gospel and the gathering of people together to hear the Holy Scripture expounded is not a thing invented by men. Rather, God has so ordained it, and our Lord Jesus has set it down as a law, and we must keep it without breaking it.

For, in truth, were it not set down by the sovereign authority of the Son of God, men are so high-minded that many of them would shake off that yoke. "What have I to do," would every man say, "to be taught by my fellow? Seeing we have the Holy Scripture among us, ought we not to fetch from it whatever is fit for us to know? Why then should any one man be preferred before the rest of the company?" Thus, there would be a horrible disorder in the Church, so that no man would submit himself to be taught. No man would be a learner or have a master or teacher over him unless we were fully persuaded and resolved that this order was not devised by man but is a government set down for all the faithful by the Son of God, who will have them heard who have the charge of teaching, as men sent by Him, telling men that they despise Him, do Him wrong, and rebel against Him and His Father if they do not receive His doctrine with all humility. Whosoever will be taken for a Christian must also be a child of the Church.

And so you see, in effect, what we have to remember when Saint Paul attributes the having of prophets, teachers, and others to the person

of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, to the intent that we should be more gentle and tractable, making no hesitation in receiving the doctrine that has been preached to us, and to be always learners in the school of our Lord Jesus Christ, Saint Paul tells us also that when we have good and faithful teachers, and others who labor to show us the way of salvation, it is a sign that our Lord Jesus Christ has not left us nor forgotten us, but that He is present with us and watches for our salvation and welfare.

Therefore, let us not think that men can put themselves forth of their own head, for no one can speak one word to the glory of Jesus Christ except it is given to him from above and the Holy Ghost governs his tongue. Indeed, it is for this reason that it is said that the Holy Spirit is a wisdom that surpasses all human understanding, and that the natural man understands nothing of it, but that God must be the one to reveal things to us which are otherwise too high and hidden from us.

Now then, when we see the Holy Scripture truly expounded and rightly applied to our use, let us assure ourselves that God's Spirit gives us a record that He abides among us. Therefore, let us learn to receive so excellent a gift, assuring ourselves that it is the homage which our Lord Jesus demands at our hands.

That is also why the Gospel is called the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 4:17). For we reveal very clearly that we do not take God for our King, nor are willing to honor our Lord Jesus Christ when He is sent to us, if we do not allow ourselves to be governed by the means He commands and approves, which is the preaching of the Gospel.

We must yield such obedience to it as to receive its doctrine without gainsaying so that he who has the charge of teaching acquits himself faithfully, and the rest are not so high-minded as to say, "Tush, I can do without it," but instead receive willingly the things spoken to them and allow themselves to be taught, for fear that they should resist the Son of God. In this way, we may continue in them all the days of our lives, as shall be declared more at length again soon.

Now, besides this, Saint Paul, by mentioning the diversity of the offices which he sets down, further expresses how greatly our Lord Jesus Christ has shown Himself to be concerned for the salvation of His own, in that He has left nothing lacking which was requisite and convenient to bring them to the heritage of salvation.

We must note here concerning these offices which Saint Paul mentions, that some of them served only for a time, such as the office of apostleship. For the apostles were not chosen to continue to the world's end but only to publish abroad the doctrine of the Gospel until it was received throughout the whole world (I mean in all kingdoms and countries), even though not everyone showed themselves obedient to it (Romans 1:5). There was a special reason why our Lord Jesus Christ ordained the twelve apostles (Luke 6:13), to whom Saint Paul was later joined to preach among the Gentiles; it was as an entry into the possession of His kingdom. But after the Gospel was once established in this manner, the office of apostleship ceased.

Yet, they had companions and helpers who were not of equal rank or commission with them, to spread the seed of the Gospel. These companions Saint Paul names evangelists or gossellers. According to this, in writing to Timothy, he says, "Do the work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5). These two offices, then, served only for that time.

Now, as touching the office of prophets: we do not have it so excellently nowadays as it was then, as men can see. For God has diminished His gifts because of the ingratitude of the world. Not that He does not show Himself as liberal as is necessary for our salvation, but because, however the world goes, we are unworthy to have His treasures poured out so abundantly as they were at the first rise of the Gospel. Therefore, He gives us but a small portion of them. However, the prophets served to be, as it were, expositors of God's will and had a much higher understanding of the Scriptures than the common teachers, whose office was to instruct.

As for the shepherds of whom Saint Paul speaks, they are the ministers of the Word who have an ordinary charge to teach in some place. The same is to be said of the teachers, as we see by the example of the church of Antioch, in the thirteenth chapter of Acts (Acts 13:1). It is true that none can be a shepherd unless he teaches, but the teachers have a separate charge by themselves: which is to expound the Scripture so that there may always be a good and sound understanding of it, and that it may serve its purpose in the Church, preventing heresies and false opinions, so that faith may remain steadfast and sure above all things.

Therefore, we see by the report of Saint Luke that the apostles were not tied to any specific place, nor did Jesus Christ ordain them to that end. "Preach the Gospel to all creatures," says He (Mark 16:15). For this reason, according to the opportunities given to them and as gaps were opened to them for the preaching of the Gospel, they applied themselves accordingly and were not tied to any specific place. And why? Because their commission reached further.

You see, then, that the apostles were charged to go to and fro and had no resting place; that is to say, they did not have the charge of

any individual church committed to them, so that they might say, "Here will I remain." The same is to be said of the evangelists, for they traveled about the world too, except when they were called specifically to some place. In this way, Timothy had been chosen for a time; however, because he could not be spared from the office of an evangelist, he was forced to change his place, now one here, now another there. Titus was assigned to the Isle of Crete (Titus 1:5). It is true that he was not altogether settled there, but he was bound to that church, although he was moved to and fro according to the present opportunity and need.

Herein we see how those lewd folk who would pervert all order of government and seek nothing but confusion, despite God, saying that a man must not always stay in one place but follow the example of the apostles. But that is a flat mockery of Jesus Christ, as we see by this text. You see, then, how we must note that the apostles were like trumpets to proclaim the Gospel everywhere, and they had evangelists in like charge with them to accompany them. But in the meantime, there were also prophets who were more often found in one place than another, according to how it pleased God to distribute His grace. Yet, nevertheless, there were prophets in every church, as we see that in the Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 14:1-5), where Saint Paul strongly emphasizes that the gift of prophesying should be preferred before all other gifts because it is more profitable and serves more for the edifying of the Church.

Regarding the shepherds, we see how Saint Paul and his companion Barnabas ordained them everywhere (Acts 14:23), and also how he commands Titus and Timothy to ensure the churches are so provided that they might always have some shepherd to guide them; otherwise, there would be nothing but disorder. Now, since we see that the choice of ministers and shepherds was made by the

authority of Jesus Christ and that they had, as it were, their appointed places, such as saying, "You must look out here," as if a man were set in a bulwark or in some tower to keep it when it were in any danger, it becomes every man to keep his place and not to covet to wander here and there but to hold himself bound to the place where he is.

This, I say, is what we must observe when Saint Paul speaks of such a variety.

To be brief, let us learn that our Lord Jesus knew whatsoever was profitable for the welfare of His Church, and He showed it by having a care that the faithful might not lack anything, but that they might have sufficient and convenient means to draw them to the kingdom of heaven. Nowadays, we have no more the office of apostleship (as I told you before), nor do we have any ordinary evangelists. Yet, for all that, God nonetheless draws us to Him and gives us all the helps that are suitable for us.

Indeed, He chastises our unthankfulness, and because He sees His Word despised, He gives us things "with a wet finger," as they say, which we should have more fully if we had such zeal for them as were requisite. Yet, let us not think our state is worse because we have no apostles nowadays; for it were more than necessary. It was indeed necessary, considering the confusion and disorder of the papacy, that God should stir up men who were not chosen according to the order of the Church, but to whom He gave grace, and they served His purpose.

But now that there is order established both here and elsewhere where the Gospel is preached, we must return to the point previously mentioned—namely, that when God gives us such shepherds as labor to guide us faithfully, and furthermore, we have teachers who are

able to maintain the purity of the doctrine among us, to strengthen us in the pure truth of the Gospel, and to withstand all sects and errors, we must understand that such grace ought to be highly esteemed. We must not grudge against God.

Moreover, it is very certain that if the Gospel were received with such reverence and earnestness as it deserves, God would also be more bountiful on His side. Whereas now we see so few good preachers, and that there steps up a sort of dirt-daubers worse than naught, and far more lewd than the monks in the papacy, who are as ready to preach Muhammad's Quran as Christ's Gospel, so long as they may keep their livings, and when, besides these, we also see a sort of drunkards who have no more zeal than swine, but are like mastiffs that do not bark, never opening their lips but to confound light and darkness together so that all things might be put out of order, let us understand that God is executing just vengeance upon the despising of His Gospel.

For let us see for a moment what humility and submission men yield to God, despite hearing the sound of this doctrine and seeing the setting up of the scepter of His Gospel to show that He is minded to reign over us. We see that most men could find it in their hearts to have no religion at all. Again, those who make the fairest countenance would still very much like the Gospel to remain just a covering of ceremonies. And however the world goes, they are loath to bear any yoke; they cannot abide being rebuked for their vices but would have a beastly licentiousness. Provided they might do what they wish, they would be content for the Gospel to be preached, as if they would grant it to Jesus Christ by composition and covenant. But in the meantime, all is but hypocrisy, and they cannot so conceal their counterfeit behavior that the world does not well see that they are as shameless as harlots.

For doubtless, a man shall find more religion and fear of God in the papacy than among those who are in the places where the Gospel is preached. But the greatest mischief is that a sort of these wicked persons step up into the chair of truth, of whom some are drunkards, some whoremongers, and some blasphemers; to be brief, there is such wickedness among them as is horrible to see. Since we know this, let us cast down our eyes and condemn the unthankfulness and rebelliousness that is in us as the cause of all the disorder that we see. However the world may be with us, yet if our Lord is still so beneficent to us as to have His doctrine preached to us, therein we have a sure and infallible token that He is near at hand with us, and that He seeks our salvation by calling us unto Him, as though He spoke with an open mouth and we saw Him personally before us.

Then, we cannot fail or be deceived in assuring ourselves that Jesus Christ calls us to Him, and that He holds out His arms open to receive us as often as the Gospel is preached to us. And we need not seek revelations from heaven, nor wander abroad; for seeing that the Word is in our heart and mouth, what more would we want? "Who shall ascend into heaven?" (Romans 10:6) or "Who shall descend into the deep?" (Romans 10:7). Let us assure ourselves that God offers Himself to us in the person of His only Son when He sends us preachers and teachers.

And herewithal, let us still have an eye to that which I said before: that those to whom God gives most of His grace must consider that, by that means, they are the more bound to employ themselves in the place our Lord has assigned to them, and where it is His pleasure to use them. He, then, who has knowledge must not exalt himself for it but consider that he is a benefit to the whole body, and (thereupon) examine well how he may serve to the glory of God with the things that He has put him in trust with and make the gift which he has

received profitable, assuring himself that the use thereof is common to all men. Though God has committed it to his custody and will have him to be the keeper of it, yet must he not hold it as a treasure locked up in a chest, but impart it abroad to those who want it and have need of it.

Moreover, let us keep ourselves from envying those whom it is God's will to honor in that manner, so that there is no spitefulness in us to say, "Why, is it fitting that such a one should be preferred before me?" For in so doing, we spite God. Therefore, let each of us know his own state and degree and not stand in contention with our God, assuring ourselves that the things He has ordained in His Church are done by an irrevocable judgment. Wherefore, let us abhor those madbrains who would take away the order we see to be grounded upon the authority of the Son of God.

There are those who think the preaching of the Gospel is a needless thing, that it serves only for little children, and that they themselves have the Holy Ghost at their command to reveal things to them from heaven every minute of an hour. But it is certain that the devil blinds them in that overweening, and men know that he has won the goal if the means of our salvation were abolished and taken away. For as St. Paul says, the preaching of the Gospel must serve to make the Church perfect, that we may be brought to the kingdom of heaven (Ephesians 4:12). Conversely, when there is no more doctrine or shepherd, the devil must needs so overmaster us that we shall be scattered asunder, and nothing shall remain but ruin and destruction.

Seeing, then, that this order is not of men, let us learn to submit ourselves to it, and let all of us, both great and small, without gainsaying, suffer God to guide us by that means, seeing it has

pleased Him to appoint it. Also, we see how God's children are called the children of the Church. And St. Paul shows that our Lord Jesus will reign over us, with the condition that His Word is always in men's mouths (Colossians 3:16). He does not say that the angels will come to reveal to us the things that God would have us know, but that we must understand God's will by the means of those who have the charge and office to tell it to us.

For just as in the time of the Law, it was said that the priests were God's angels, and men ought to inquire at their mouth (Malachi 2:7), so now also, God will not have us flitter in the air after our fancies, but go to the fountain that is open for us when we wish to drink. If a man would seek the head and wellspring of a fountain (meaning as it is hidden in the earth) and would scorn to drink until he had found it, would not men take him for stark mad and beside himself? Yes, they would. But behold, God has provided for our infirmity in that He will not have us take too long windings to be taught His Word faithfully. For He makes the wellspring come home to us, which was hidden and far from us; He makes it come home to us as it were by conduits, so that we need do no more than open our mouths to receive it.

Just as when there are fine conduits that run with continual water abundantly, men will come to draw from them for their needs, so it was our Lord's will that His Word should be set forth to us by His ordaining of men to be the instruments of His Holy Spirit. Then, seeing it is so, let us learn to hold to it; and if we will be taught of God, let us receive the doctrine that is preached to us by the mouths of men. This, I say, is what we must remember upon this text so that we are not so foolish as to say, "Why has God not given me such grace or gift? Why is it His will to use such means?" Let us be content with this, namely, that His ordinance ought to suffice us, and if we

must fall to reasoning the matter, we shall ever be put to shame because there is no wisdom but only His good will.

Also, let us mark what is said immediately in this text: that it is God's will that there should be an order of ministry or service. As if it were said, God could well bring us to perfection by Himself, without any other means or help. However, forasmuch as He will be served by men, and He applies them to such use, making them ministers so that men perceive that the praise of our salvation is always due to Him, and that all goodness comes from Him, it behooves men to submit themselves to it.

But here it might seem strange why St. Paul, instead of speaking of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, brings us to offices. For he began with this matter, namely, that our Lord Jesus Christ gave gifts according to the measure which He knows to be fit for us and in diverse manners, by means whereof He fills all things. Now, to confirm this, he says that there are apostles, shepherds, teachers, and evangelists. It might seem that St. Paul does not well continue the process of the matter he treated. But here we must note (as we see also more largely in the First Epistle to the Corinthians) that forasmuch as our Lord Jesus has established the order we have spoken of already, and continues it still in His Church, so that it is His will that there should be shepherds, prophets, and teachers, He also furnishes them out of hand with the things that are requisite for the execution of their office.

For He does not deal in the manner of men. We, for our part, may choose one man to be in the office of magistrate and another to be a preacher, but in the meantime, we cannot give them what is requisite for them, for we cannot make a new man of him who is advanced to honor; he must remain the same that he was for all of us. Also, when

it comes to the election, every man gives his voice. Very well, he who is chosen shall be officer, but in the meantime, he shall remain still the same he was before. The same case is with shepherds. We may well choose a man, and he shall perhaps prove a beast, for we cannot cause him to be qualified as he ought to be.

But when men are of God's own choosing, so that He bears the whole sway, then the gifts are joined inseparably with their charge. When our Lord Jesus chose His apostles, He chose silly fishermen and such as were unlearned, yet He used them for publishing His Gospel—not to teach as yet, but to go abroad as His heralds to give warning that the King was come. But when He intended to send them forth to their office, He sent them the Holy Ghost (John 20:22), showing thereby (as is said in many other texts) that all things requisite for the welfare of the Church must come of His free gift, because it is well known that all things proceed from Him to the end that all praise should be given unto Him.

Then it is no marvel that St. Paul, speaking here of the diversity of gifts and of the measure it has pleased God to deal with every man, sends us purposely to the offices. As if he should say, "It is not without cause that God does not distribute His gifts alike to all, for He will not have all men be shepherds, prophets, teachers, apostles, or evangelists. He calls whom He thinks good and thereby tries our humility. Therefore, if we are willing to be subject to Him, let us not hesitate to accept all authority in good worth, which is grounded in Him and upon His ordinance."

Now, it is so: God leaves many men alone in a private state and, in the meantime, chooses whom He thinks good to preach His Word. Therefore, men must hold themselves there.

Furthermore, let us mark that if men proceed to their elections with the fear of God and seek to obey Him, surely He also will show by effect that those whom He has called to teach, and to whom the charge of ruling the flock is committed, shall not be destitute of His power, but that He will furnish them with all things requisite, as experience shows well enough. It is witnessed to us that if we meet together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—so it be truly and unfeignedly—He will be in the midst of us (Matthew 18:20). Thus you see what we have to bear in mind.

Yet, notwithstanding, we see that the papacy has so contrived men and framed them to their own lure, that they have utterly departed from the order of our Lord Jesus Christ and from the manner of governing the Church, which was known to the Apostles.

Let us look back again to the matter that Saint Paul treats of here. His meaning is to bring us to the unity mentioned before. Therefore, he will have us to be of one accord, to link together like brethren, and to shoot all at one mark, as having but one head which knits us all together so that there is neither envy, nor ill will, nor sects, nor anything else that may divide us. Now, to bring us hereunto, he says that there is but one God, and one Lord, to whom all sovereignty is given (Ephesians 4:5-6), and that there is but one baptism, and one faith, and that we are all called to one inheritance. After saying this, he adds that Jesus Christ, for the better ratifying of that unity, would have one man alone teach the rest, and that the company should give ear to him. Furthermore, he would have all of us—both he who speaks and those who hear him—have one and the same faith.

For as much, then, as all of us cannot be apostles, teachers, and prophets, He has chosen some of us to be in that state and office so that we might be brought to the said unity, and Jesus Christ be

acknowledged as our head, and all of us be gathered together under Him. This is how St. Paul speaks of it.

But now, if there had been any chief authority or supremacy, so that it had been God's mind to have assigned a seat in this world, the bishop of which should have had superiority over all the Church, and his commission have reached so far that his sovereignty must have taken place everywhere—surely, Saint Paul would not have forgotten it, or else if he had, it would have been a very grievous fault. Did he speak by the Holy Ghost, and yet leave out the principal and most necessary point of his matter? No, and therefore, if there were no more but this text alone, it would be enough to confound the shamelessness of the Papists when they say there must needs be an under-head in this world, and that because Jesus Christ is gone out of this world, He must needs have a vicar.

But it is certain that Saint Paul meant to show the thing which we have seen in other texts: which is that Saint Peter's apostleship extended not unto us. For he was appointed peculiarly to the Jews (Galatians 2:7-8), as is declared in the Second to the Galatians. But however the case stands, we see here the continual order we must keep and to which we must hold, if we intend to be subject to our Lord Jesus Christ. And that is not to have a Pope, but that every church should have its shepherds and teachers, according to their need, according to the number of the people, and according to what the place requires. When we are so knit into one body of a church, we may have a lawful government, which it is impossible for us to do without by reason of our rawness and the weakness of our faith. In respect thereof, it is necessary for us to have the remedy which our Lord Jesus Christ has given us, that men may hold themselves to His saying and authority.

That is, in effect, what we have to mark upon this point.

Again, Saint Paul proceeds to show us the inestimable benefit we have by such order and the fruit that we reap from it. For (as I have touched upon before) men are so high-minded that every one would be a lord. Therefore, there is nothing better than to know that God works for our welfare by ordaining this order of government, namely, that there should be shepherds to teach us. For it is like fighting against our own salvation when we play the stubborn fools and do not like the thing that God has ordained for our supreme welfare. Truly, if there were no more than this, namely, that God has so willed, woe to him who dares check against the majesty of his Maker.

Yet, notwithstanding, the world sees our naughtiness, and although we grant it to be good reason that we should obey God, we still cannot find it in our hearts to do it willingly and with a free heart unless we see immediately before our eyes that it is for our profit to do so and that God's intent was not only to humble us under Him, but also to advance us thereby by willing this order to be kept. And so, you see what Saint Paul aims at here. For it is not enough for us to reverence the thing that God commands or to tremble at it, only to do it half-heartedly and half-willingly. Rather, we must go to it with an earnest desire. And how may that be done? By knowing that it is for our profit.

Now, since we know it is so, and especially that it pertains to our salvation, we ought to apply all our wits to it. Otherwise, our unthankfulness will be less tolerable when we thrust away the thing that God offers us—not so much for any respect of Himself, but for our own profit. That, then, is the thing which Saint Paul intended in saying that the preaching of the Gospel and the appointing of men

expressly to that purpose is to link us together, so that there might be no dissension among us (Ephesians 4:11-12).

On the contrary, Saint Paul also declares that all fanatical persons who reject common order and would be so spiritual as if they were lifted above the clouds are separated from the body of the Church and, with that, renounce God. Therefore, they ought to be abhorred and shunned as deadly plagues because they set dissension in the Church. For even if we are most desirous of unity, all that we can do will be in vain if we do not hold to the thing that Saint Paul speaks of here, which is to say that our Lord Jesus intended to knit the knot fast and sure in His own body.

Therefore, if any man says he will withdraw himself from the obedience of the Church, it is all one as if he would cut asunder the sinews of a body. I may pretend, perhaps, to love some body, and yet nevertheless cut asunder the sinews of it everywhere, so that the whole body, being disjointed and dismembered, falls into a swoon and finally rots away. Even so stands the case with us. For we should link together, and God has provided very well for it. How? By giving us prophets, teachers, shepherds, and evangelists. Now, if we reject them, what else is to be said but that we are minded to break apart all the unity that our Lord appointed to be among us?

To be short, Saint Paul shows here that all such as do not submit themselves to the doctrine of the Gospel and yield reverence to the minister thereof are deadly enemies of God's people and seekers of their own confusion. Therefore, men ought to shun them as wolves, for they are utterly intolerable inasmuch as they procure the overthrow of the Church, despise God in the things that were well ordered, and forsake the perfection of all good things.

To be brief, Saint Paul adds immediately after that it is for the edifying (or building up) of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12). This also serves to make those who will not yield themselves to this spiritual government that our Lord Jesus has approved of more abhorred. For the body of our Lord Jesus ought to be precious to us. Indeed, it would have been enough if he had said, "the Church." But by using this honorable title, Saint Paul shows us that it is a heinous treason for us to seek to rend the body of our Lord Jesus Christ into pieces. Now, it is so that it cannot be built up—that is to say, it cannot be brought to perfection nor continue in good state—but by means of the preaching of God's Word.

So then, if we are willing that God should be honored and served, and that our Lord should quietly have His royal seat among us to reign in the midst of us, if we are willing to be His people and to live under His protection, if we desire to be built up in Him and to be joined unto Him, and to continue in Him to the end—if, to be short, we desire our salvation, we must learn to be humble learners in receiving the doctrine of the Gospel and in hearkening to the shepherds who are sent to us as if Jesus Christ spoke to us Himself in His own person, assuring ourselves that He will approve of the obedience and submission of our faith when we listen to the mortal men to whom He gives that charge.

Therefore, let us show the desire that we have for God to be honored, and also the desire and care that we have for our own salvation and the common welfare and edifying of the Church, which will then come to pass when all of us, both great and small, give our consent that Jesus Christ shall have His instruments to speak to us and draw us to Himself. If we observe this order, He will so bless us thereby that we shall have cause to glorify Him, for we shall see how it has always been His will to procure the salvation of our souls and that He

is ever at hand with us and will so work that we shall not lack anything that is for our benefit or profit.

Now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us so to feel them, that we may be cast down in ourselves and seek nothing else but to be set up again by Him. May our Lord Jesus have such preeminence over us that we may honor Him as He deserves, and that, being under His keeping, we may be guided by His Holy Spirit so that His Word may profit more and more in us and show forth His strength.

May He bear with our infirmities, and may He never cease to take us for His own, as long as we live in this world, until we are all gathered together into His kingdom.

May it please Him to grant this grace, not only to us but also to all. Amen.

The Twenty Sixth Sermon, which is the Sixth upon the Fourth Chapter

11. And the same hath given, some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Shepherds and Teachers.

12. For the reparation of the Saints, to the work of administration, and for the building up of Christ's body,

13. Until we all come into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the perfect man, unto the

measure of the full age of Christ.

14. That we may no more be babes, wavering and carried to and fro with every wind of doctrine, by the wiliness of men, and through their crafty conveyances to deceive us.

We have seen this morning how God, having respect for our frailty, has vouchsafed to use this means to draw us to Him: that is, that we should be taught familiarly by mortal men like ourselves. Therein, He shows also that He had regard for what might be most fitting for His servants. For in saying that He will always send a prophet in Israel from among the people (Deuteronomy 18:15), He meant to show that we need not seek far for Him, but that He would find a way to be familiarly present among us. Therefore, when the Gospel is preached among us, God's applying of Himself in that manner to our frailty is as much as if He came down to us Himself.

So little, then, ought we to disdain the order that He has set among us, that our ingratitude shall be the more grievous if we do not consider how greatly He loves us in that He deals with us according to our own limited capacity. For, inasmuch as we do not have such excellent ability as the angels, He gives us such means as He knows to be necessary for us.

Moreover, Saint Paul adds now that this must not serve us for a little time only, but that we must continue in it all the time of our life. For, had he not added further, the thing that we see—a man might say that we ought indeed to conform ourselves to the rule that God gives us, but that this must be only for a while, as if a man should send little children to school, but not to spend their whole life there.

And so it would have seemed that what has been spoken of before served only for a time, and that when we have been trained in it for a

year or two, that should suffice us, and every man would be a clerk well enough learned, so that he might forgo all instruction afterward. But Saint Paul tells us that, as long as we are in this world, we must still profit in God's school and have our ears continually filled with His word, that we may, on the one side, be bridled, and, on the other side, be strengthened and advanced more and more.

For, put the case that we were of such good ability and capacity as to learn all that is necessary for us within two or three years' space, yet we are so fickle-headed that every one of us would soon be starting out of the way if we were not held back. Therefore, God's willingness to have His word preached to us even to our dying day serves to make our faith sure and steadfast.

But there is yet a greater necessity, which is that those who think themselves the most advanced, if they examine themselves thoroughly, shall find themselves still far off from the mark at which they aim (Philippians 3:12). Therefore, it is important for us to be strengthened daily more and more and to have the light of our faith increased, like the day that grows brighter and brighter until high noon. So must we continue to make progress until the day-spring of righteousness appears to us.

It is true that many are so self-assured that they do not believe it, but that is because they are satisfied with their foolishness. For you shall see a great many who are so proud and presumptuous because they have studied three or four Latin words that, in their own opinion, they surpass all the greatest doctors in the world. And surely those who are just beginning to study some science often think they have already reached the perfection of it, even when they have scarcely entered into it. It is the same with trades; no one is as bold as the blind horse — he ventures to do all things more readily than the man

who has truly gained experience. So it is also with these lightheaded Christians: once they have some saying of Scripture on the tip of their tongues, they believe themselves to be (in their own opinion) half-angels and do not care to make any further progress.

However, those who devote their whole endeavor to continuing to learn in God's school find themselves behind even after ten or twenty years. Regardless of how things may be, let us mark well how the Apostle says here that God will not have us trained in the Gospel for just two or three years only, but He will have us go through it so that, even if we lived a hundred years or more in this world, we must still be students, and all our wisdom is to know that we have not yet come so near to our perfection that we do not need to go forward still.

Hereupon, each of us must stir up and spur ourselves on. And, along with this, God must be so gracious to us as to be always ready to continue teaching us without ceasing so that we may never grow weary. When we have learned some lesson that may do us good in one day, let us assure ourselves that it is not so well printed in our hearts as is necessary, nor yet so well known to us as is requisite. And again, when we have learned one point, or even two or three, we still lack much more. There is no person so well qualified that they do not need to be continually exhorted.

To be brief, let us be assured that in every way, God's ordaining of this government in His Church — that the Gospel should be preached — is for the intent that, as long as we are in this earthly pilgrimage, we should resort continually to the school where God teaches us. For, as Saint Paul says, "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7), wherein he shows that we are not yet capable of beholding God's glory (1 John 3:2), nor shall we be until we are wholly transfigured and made like unto God; then shall we see Him as He is.

As it is now (as Saint Paul says in another place), we see but in part, and we know but in part (1 Corinthians 13:12), verily because we walk by faith. Now, from where does faith spring? How is it nourished and increased? By the Word of God. When we have preaching and are diligent to be edified by it, that is the first point where our faith begins, and it is the means by which it continues and increases until it is thoroughly perfected, as we shall see.

For the same cause, Saint John calls both old men and young men, and those in the prime of their lives, to the intent that they should all submit themselves to the obedience of the Gospel. "You old men," says he, "come hear Him that was before all time" (1 John 2:13), speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ who has appeared. "And you young men and little children, learn to know that you have a Father in heaven. And you stronger sort, know wherein your strength lies."

To be brief, Saint Paul shows us here that God's children must be so humble as to submit themselves to instruction and teaching from day to day and from year to year, and consider that they are not yet come to where they would and should be.

And to the same purpose does he add, "Until we are knit all together in the unity of faith." For as much as we might quite wander away, and no bridle could hold us back if necessity once constrained us (as I have shown you already this morning), therefore Saint Paul tells us that we are not yet come to the point which these fanciful persons, who are puffed up with their vain overweening, think themselves to have already reached, as though they lacked nothing more. Saint Paul says we are not there yet.

It is true that we ought to endeavor to be all one (as I have shown already), for without concord there can be neither church nor religion among us, nor is God honored and served. Nevertheless, we

are still progressing toward this concord as we are toward all other virtues. And as long as we live in this world, we must always go further and further, according to which this life is not in vain named a race or way, appointed to us by God (Hebrews 12:1).

In this manner, then, he speaks to us of the unity of faith — not that Christians ought to vary from one another and maintain contrary opinions while they are in the process of growth, but Saint Paul shows that their faith cannot be fully united until it is well settled. Now there will always be imperfections and infirmities; there will always be clouds of ignorance. Therefore, we must keep our eyes on the mark set before us here.

Furthermore, we must carefully note what Saint Paul adds concerning the knowledge of the Son of God. For in this, he shows us the sum of our faith: not to wander to and fro, but to know who Jesus Christ is, what His power is, and what benefits He brings to us. That is the true perfection of faith. Therefore, I said that it is a notable point, for we see how the wretched world has been misled and beguiled in times past and still is within the papacy. There, those who possess some devotion torment themselves greatly and take pains to inquire about this and that, always full of anxiety, always full of questioning, yet still belong to that sort whom Saint Paul reports as "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7).

Saint Paul speaks there of those hypocrites who despise the simplicity of the Gospel and turn away from Jesus Christ to follow their own foolish inventions. They will have their speculations on either side, and they will take enough trouble, but yet they shall never be the wiser (1 Timothy 6:4). For inasmuch as all the treasures of wisdom and understanding are laid up in Jesus Christ (Colossians

2:3), we must aim at Him; in Him alone shall we find the whole substance of our salvation.

When we once know that Jesus Christ is given to us by God His Father to reconcile us by His death and passion, when we once know that it is He alone in whom we must seek our righteousness, when we once know that we are washed from all spots and uncleanness by His blood, that He has made satisfaction for all our debts wherein we were indebted, that He by His Holy Spirit has sanctified us and dedicated us to the service of God (Hebrews 10:10), and that He is our advocate to make us find favor in all our prayers and supplications (1 John 2:1), I say, when we once know this, we may despise all the things which the other sort think themselves to know, and which they have imagined without any certainty.

For that reason, therefore, does Saint Paul add here expressly "the knowledge of the Son of God," to the end to define better what the word "faith" means. For it is commonly enough spoken by men's mouths, and everyone will say he believes. But meanwhile, if those men who vaunt themselves with full mouth to be as pillars of the church, and as good Catholics as may be (as the world sees well enough), are asked what faith is, they fall short of it. They will say perhaps that it is to believe in God. Yes, but the Turks and Papists will say so too; yet for all that, we will condemn the Turks because they do not know what true belief is.

As much is to be said of Papists. And wherein do we differ from them — we, I say, who call ourselves Christians? In knowing that God has sent us Jesus Christ to lead us higher, so that we may be sure that because He is our Father, He will not lay our sins to our charge but receives us into His favor through His own free goodness, accepting us as righteous when we condemn ourselves by true repentance and

seek all our welfare in Jesus Christ, acknowledging that there is nothing in us but utter curse. You see then that our Lord Jesus Christ is the very mark at which we aim.

If a man should shoot with a longbow, or with a crossbow, or with a gun, and have no mark or target before him but should discharge at random, now this way, now that way, what kind of shooting would that be? Even so stands the case with all those who do not aim at our Lord Jesus Christ. For they do but wander, and entangle themselves in many troubles; and we should be ever in danger of being misled and deceived by men if we did not know Jesus Christ and settle our whole satisfaction in Him, assuring ourselves that He is the whole sum of our faith.

Now Saint Paul adds yet further that the same is for the age of perfection and for our true accomplishment. By this, he lets us know (as I have touched on already) that as long as we live in this world, we must still grow and go forward, knowing that there are still many infirmities in us and that we have not yet come to our full stature. Yet it is not to be said, therefore, that we are still little children, as he will add shortly. Here he sets down, as it were, three degrees of age.

First is infancy and childhood; secondly, the years above twelve, before there is yet discretion and skill to govern ourselves, during which time we must still profit more and more. And when a man reaches the age of forty years, then he is in his prime. For by that time, he ought to have some measure of maturity, both of body and mind, upon which to stay and rest. Not that we must not continue to profit, even at sixty years, but I speak of the comparison that Saint Paul sets down here.

First, therefore, he says that we must hearken to the Gospel until we come to full age. And when is that? At our death, says he. For here we

must not count our years after the manner of men. After a man is once past fifty, to all seeming, he declines both in his senses and in his wit. But Saint Paul says that we shall never be at our full growth until we are rid of this body. So then, the spiritual age of Christians is when they have gone out of this world.

But now, let us see what manner of people we are since we began to profit in the Gospel. We are like a child that is half a man. He is past fifteen years old, or perhaps past twenty, and yet he ceases not to learn still daily, for he has need of it. He is sure that although he has studied a good while, yet he is not come to the last step; he has not gotten so settled and sound a judgment as is required.

However, it may well come to pass that a child of twenty years shall have all the sciences at his fingertips, in which he has been trained and instructed. But yet shall he be nonetheless lightheaded for all that, neither shall he have the skill to apply them to his use, because he is not yet mature; for he is like green corn or like a vineyard that makes a fair show of a good vintage, but the grapes are not yet ripe. Even so it is with that age. For that reason, Saint Paul says, by a comparison, that as long as Christians are alive, although they be sixty, eighty, or a hundred years old, yet must they still be like children—not children in wit, but young men who are of age to profit and do willingly submit and suffer themselves to be governed because they know well they are not yet of mature discretion.

Nevertheless, Saint Paul tells us we must not be like little babes who have neither wit nor discretion and can scarcely yet discern between good and bad (Hebrews 5:14).

First and foremost, therefore, we must bear this lesson well in mind: when we have seen and tried never so much in the world, traveled from place to place, and been exercised in many affairs, though we

think ourselves to be the wisest in the world, yet we are not so wise that we need to learn no more. And why? Because here the case concerns God's wisdom, which surpasses all the wit of man. We may be commended enough and too much by the world, and yet we shall know things only in part (1 Corinthians 13:9). Therefore, let us not deceive ourselves.

So, away with this foolish overconfidence, to think ourselves wise enough (I speak even of those who are able to teach others), and let us continue as learners still. For although Jesus Christ has appointed certain ones to be as leaders and guides to show other men the way, it does not follow that they are so wise that they must not be learners as well as the rest. For he who speaks must take instruction by it himself, and a man shall never be fit to declare God's will to other men unless he himself learns daily.

The thing, then, which we have to bear in mind is that we must be thoroughly persuaded that if we do not profit ourselves, we go like sea crabs. For they that do not go forward in the doctrine of salvation, no matter how much they vaunt themselves for being taught in God's school, undoubtedly go backward. Therefore, let us beware in any wise that we do not fall asleep or stand still as though there were no more to be learned.

Let us consider that our life is likened to a way and, thereupon, learn to go forward continually, to gain always some ground, and to spur and urge forth our slothfulness and slowness so that it may appear, day by day, that we have gained more knowledge than before—either by understanding better the things which we thought had been thoroughly imprinted in our minds or by conceiving some other point by others' instruction, which was unknown to us before. So then, let us increase the hoard of that treasure from day to day.

If old folks are much more careful to gather goods as they draw nearer to their grave, because they see themselves to be weak and in need of succor and are always afraid to be destitute of man's aid, so that their foresight drives them to burning covetousness, ought we not, on our side, to be greatly ashamed if we do not make provision of God's Word in our old age, seeing we perceive how there is much feebleness and sin still in us? Or if we do not labor to be continually enlightened until the Day-Sun of righteousness (which is our Lord Jesus Christ) shines upon us, as at high noon, seeing we find our own ignorance by experience (Malachi 4:2).

You see, then, that the means to put this doctrine of Saint Paul's into practice is, first, to humble ourselves in such a way that no man takes more upon himself through vain self-conceit than belongs to him, but that we keep on our way wisely, assuring ourselves that we have not yet come to our journey's end. That is also why Saint Paul said that he looked not back to the things he had already done, but forward to the things that remained (Philippians 3:13).

Saint Paul had made a great journey and taken much pain for the Gospel's sake. He had been taken up before into the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2-4), and there he had heard and seen secret things which it was not lawful for him to speak of among men. You see, then, that he was as a man who had been taught in the school of angels. And in respect of men, he had surpassed all the other Apostles, and yet, for all this, he says he strains himself forward and labors to attain to the mark he aimed at. Now, if Saint Paul spoke so, what ought we to do, who are yet as it were but at our ABC?

Therefore, concerning this full ripeness of age, let us assure ourselves that we cannot forbear new and daily instruction until we are completely rid of all the infirmities of our flesh. Until we are

departed out of this world, we must suffer ourselves to be guided and governed like teachable and meek young folk, and we must believe good counsel, assuring ourselves that we have need of it.

Therefore, Saint Paul attributes that (full ripeness of age) to our Lord Jesus Christ, as if he would say that men beguile themselves through their own foolish rashness by beholding themselves in themselves (Ephesians 4:13). For once we know what Jesus Christ is, we shall perceive full well that there are yet many imperfections in us. He is called the wisdom of God His Father, He is called His everlasting Word (John 1:1), He is called His image (Colossians 1:15). And all this is to the end that we should learn of Him and behold God's glory in His person, which otherwise would be invisible to us.

But now, can we comprehend God's infinite wisdom? Can we attain to the understanding of God's glory so that we may have the full sight of it? Alas, we are far short of it. Therefore, whenever we are tempted with foolish overconfidence, thinking we know more than we do, let us lift up our eyes to our Lord Jesus Christ and not presume in ourselves, as many fantastical persons do. For when we know that our wisdom is in our Lord Jesus Christ, then shall we perceive well that we are still far from it.

Herewithal, Saint Paul warns us also that it is not in our own power or ability to believe faithfully, but that we must be reliant upon having it given to us by God (Ephesians 2:8). It is true that we must do our best to establish our faith: we must be diligent in hearing God's Word, attend sermons, read, and listen to good exhortations and sound doctrine, whereby we may fare the better. We must give careful heed to those things. And yet, notwithstanding, we must not presume at all upon our own abilities, as though our wit were able by itself to receive learning and instruction. Instead, let us learn that

our Lord Jesus Christ must bring us to that understanding by His Holy Spirit.

So then, let us be humble that we may be the scholars of our God. Such humility involves ridding ourselves of all self-conceit and recognizing that we have no more than what is given to us by God.

On the contrary, Saint Paul says that we must not be like little children, wavering with every blast of doctrine, or being tossed and turned to and fro, like chaff in the wind, and to be short, we must not be deceived by the craftiness of men (Ephesians 4:14). Here, we see even better the thing that I touched upon before: that Saint Paul sets down, as it were, three stages of age. The first is as a childhood. And what is that? It is before we have any instruction at all when we are yet, as it were, half beasts, without the discretion to discern God's truth. And there are many such children in the world. At what age? Even at three or four score years. For here, Saint Paul speaks by a likeness or resemblance and does not stand upon the counting of days, months, or years.

His meaning, then, is that those who are wavering and floating like a boat that is tossed upon the water are little children. It is true that Scripture often uses the word "child" in another sense: as when Saint Peter exhorts us to be as newborn babes and to desire the milk of soundness, even putting away all malice (1 Peter 2:2). Also, our Lord Jesus exhorts us to be as babes (Matthew 18:3), that is, not puffed up with presumption and pride, so that we make no reckoning of ourselves, nor are troubled with the lusts that vex us when we begin to know what it is to live among men. In that manner, it does us good to be babes or little children.

Again, in another place, Saint Paul says that we should be babes in naughtiness, but not babes in understanding (1 Corinthians 14:20).

That is the thing he repeats again in this present text. Therefore, he condemns those who are babes in understanding, that is, who are so doubtful and wavering that they are sure of nothing. They do not know what faith to hold or what God to worship.

Now, I have told you that the world is too full of such babes, who harden themselves in their brutishness and ignorance. Indeed, how many can a man find who are so thoroughly settled in God's truth that they cannot be made to dance to another man's tune, as Saint Paul speaks of them here? For if it is asked what the Gospel is, some will answer, "It must needs be a good thing because God is the author of it." But meanwhile, being able to give a reason for their faith is no point of their skill, and they harden themselves in their ignorance, yea, and desire to remain as little babes still.

Others may be well enough skilled to give an account in such a way that a man might think there is some good root of faith in them. Yet, if there comes but one blast of wind, you will see them in such perplexity that they know not anymore in which God they believe. For if any heresies or stumbling blocks arise, the most of those who spoke wonders before are so wind-shaken that they say, "How now? Such opinions have never been heard of, and what does this mean? Which may a man hold for the best?" In doing so, they show well enough (as I said before) that they never strained themselves, nor took any great pains to go forward, so they might no longer be so wavering.

Furthermore, besides this likening of men to babes, Saint Paul provides other comparisons, saying that such people are like reeds shaken with every wind or like a boat that floats upon the waves of the sea or some lake. Indeed, this does not only apply to little babes, but Saint Paul's intention was also to show how wretched their state

is when they are not thoroughly grounded in the Gospel. For is there any greater wretchedness than to be drifting and wavering at every wind, and to have no steadiness at all in matters that concern our salvation? If we were threatened every minute of the hour, and so scared that we were in continual fearfulness and trembling, would we not rather be dead out of hand than to linger after that sort and die a hundred times a day?

But now, we stand upon the everlasting salvation of our souls, and do not know where to turn in that case? Will there be no steadiness in us? Saint Paul, therefore, meant to show us this thing to redress the slothfulness or recklessness to which we are too much given.

And to prick us forward yet double, he says that we must not be subject to men's trickery. He uses here a word that is taken from dice playing. For we know that those who make a trade or occupation of that craft must have many sleights, for there is no faithfulness or trust in it. Indeed, it is said that a man shall see the trial of one's wit and disposition by play. But it is also known that all dice players are deceivers, insomuch that even the simplest of them would like to have the cunning to beguile those they play with.

Indeed, not all are so cunning as to strip others of their goods by their sleight of hand, but for all that, we see it is the general and universal nature of that play to be deceitful. And it is not only in that game but well near in all others. Saint Paul has set down here but one kind, but experience shows how the case stands, and even little children ought to bear it well in mind. And whereas I call them little children, I mean not those who are still at the breast, but these little "cockchickens" that are tied to swords and are such pert fellows who think themselves men when they ought to have a rod for another half

a dozen years, and yet for all that, take offense if a man keeps them from being deceived.

For if all games were set at liberty, surely there would be plenty of tricksters everywhere. And a young heir should no sooner come to a dozen years old than he should have a new livery on his back (as they say). He would find tricksters enough who would take him by the hand to pick his purse and keep him good company until he were quite stripped of all that he has. Now then, although Saint Paul speaks here of the steadfastness of the faith of the Gospel, he borrows comparisons from common life and things seen day by day.

His saying, then, is that unless we have a well-settled faith, so that we are fully purposed and determined to walk in God's truth even to the end and to stand invincibly in it, we are but little children who are subject to every man's trickery, and we shall always find tricksters and deceivers who will rob and spoil us without us ever perceiving it, so that we will wonder how we became poor.

We are in the same condition. And all comes to this point: to show us that we have great need to be well-guarded. For when we are out of fear, every one of us falls to reveling; we take no care, and we keep no watch. But if there is war and we are threatened, then we think it behooves us to keep good watch, and we stand on our guard. If we fear any surprise attacks, then we think ahead, lest we are caught unprepared. Saint Paul, therefore, tells us here that there will be nothing but deceit and that we shall fall into Satan's snares every minute of the hour if we do not watch carefully.

And why? Among whom are we conversant? What a sort of tricksters are there in the world? There will always be wicked company seeking the overthrow of our faith; there will always be scoffers, heathenish folk, and other troublemakers who would like everything to go to

havoc and who will endeavor to spread their poisons and heresies abroad to corrupt and infect men. To be short, the devil has a thousand ways to deceive us, and men are ready enough for it, and there are supporters enough who will offer themselves and desire no better living, as they say.

For this reason, Saint Paul shows us that if we do not labor earnestly to profit in God's Word, we shall surely be caught and carried away from every side, drift to and fro, be led by the nose, and run about like little children, so that we shall have no discretion at all. Then if we are not well advised, even those who are the most advanced among us shall stumble, and within a step or two, break our necks, notwithstanding that we seem to be well along our way already.

And it is not only here that the Scripture tells us we must not be like little babes in understanding. We see that the people of the Jews were also reproached for it, insomuch that Isaiah tells them they are but as little children always at their ABC (Isaiah 28:9-10), and that they must always be rapped upon the heads because they continue still in their brutishness. When a man has cried out to them a hundred and a hundred times, "A, B, C," they immediately forget it and are ready anew to begin. Thus, he complains of them. And again, to make them ashamed, "How do you profit?" says he, "especially in God's doctrine? There you act as though you were little children and play the fool."

In worldly affairs, you are crafty enough, but in the doctrine of salvation, you understand nothing at all. Now herein God shows that He will punish those who scorn to be taught in His school. So then, let us labor to come to the middle age,* whereof Saint Paul spoke not long ago. And although we cannot attain perfection so long as we are in this world, yet let us not be stark idiots and altogether unlearned,

nor let us ever remain novices, but let us show that God has not lost His time in being so gracious to us as to beat our ears with His Word. That is the thing we have to bear away.

Furthermore, let us understand also that it is due to none but ourselves that we are not well-armed against all the wiles of the devil and the world, namely by laboring to profit in the Gospel and in God's Word. For from thence we must fetch armor and weapons to furnish ourselves withal when we are weak. That is the way to withstand the deceits and falsehoods of Satan; that is the means for us to beat back all his assaults: that is to wit, by having the said Word, which will serve us as a sword, shield, and helmet,* as we shall see in the sixth chapter. To be short, we shall be well-armed to withstand all attacks.

Therefore, if we are fickle-headed, and thereupon it pleases God to punish our unthankfulness according to His threatening by Moses in Deuteronomy 13, where He says,* that if He stirs up false prophets and the people give ear to them, it is a token that they did not love Him, and that those who continue in His fear will abide firm and steadfast: I say, if we are so light and fickle-minded, let us arm ourselves with these exhortations; and (as Saint Paul says) if heresies spring up, let us understand* that it is for the trial of those who are rightly minded. Therefore, let us mark well that it is due to nothing but our own recklessness that we are not always steadfast in God's Word, and that our faith does not always get the upper hand of all temptations, as Saint John says in his first Epistle. This ought to provoke us to take pains,* not only to get ordinary food to sustain our souls withal but also to withstand Satan and all his champions, and to beat back all assaults that shall be made upon us.

And forasmuch as our Lord matches His sacraments with His Word, let us make our profit of them altogether. And whereas we are to receive the Holy Supper next Sunday, let us understand that it is our spiritual armor, with which it behooves us to be fenced against Satan, and is added for a further strengthening of us after we have been instructed in God's Word. Wherefore, let us not, through our unkindness and vanity, suffer the means to serve for nothing, which God has given us and which He knows to be fit for us. Instead, let us follow this counsel of Saint Paul's. And on one side, let us consider that we are weak, and that we have need to be relieved, and that God's coming after that fashion unto us is to draw us unto Him, that we might yield Him thanks for the loving-kindness which He uses. And for our own part, let us endeavor to advance ourselves the more by matching the Word with the sacraments, and the sacraments with the Word, so that we may be provoked thereby to resort to our God, that He may further us in the way of salvation, so that it may appear in the end that we have not walked in vain, nor been disappointed of our expectation.

Now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us feel them so deeply that we may utterly dislike them, and be always provoked to true repentance. Let us not only be sorry that we have offended, but also resist all the wicked lusts of our flesh, which hinder our true obedience in ruling our lives according to His holy Word.

And forasmuch as the right way to attain this is to profit in His Word, may it please Him to grant that we may never be destitute of that benefit. When we have it in our hands, may we use it well and labor to profit in it. May He work in such wise in us by His Holy Spirit that it may not be a sound that vanishes away in the air, but a root that grows fast in us, yielding fruit in our lives, even to the end.

May we be so grounded in Him that His love and fear grow more and more in us until He has gathered us together into His heritage. May it please Him to grant this grace, not only to us but also to all people and nations of the earth. Amen.

**The Twenty Seventh Sermon,
which is the Seventh upon the Fourth
Chapter.**

15. But to the end that following truth with charity, we might grow in all things in Him who is the head, even Christ,
16. By whom the whole body, being knit together and joined by every joint throughout, with furniture according to the operation of each part in measure, takes the full growth of a body, to the building up of itself in love.

We have seen heretofore that we must keep the order which God has set among us, that we may profit in God's school all the time of our life. For inasmuch as God has not ordained any superfluous thing, we must conclude that we shall never attain to such perfect learning while we live in this world, but that we shall have need to go further still. Moreover, we shall never be at our journey's end until we come to the end of our life.

Forasmuch then as we know that we have yet but a part of the thing which we must have, and that our faith will always be weak, let us strive so much the more to be strengthened and to draw near unto

God. Then shall we not be like little children, and such as waver and float to and fro with every wind, having no steadiness in their faith. For if we are diligent to profit in God's Word, surely we shall be armed and fenced to withstand all the wiles of Satan and the wicked men who would beguile us.

Although God does not bring us to perfection all at once, but holds us still in some feebleness, we shall never be destitute of a good remedy if we receive the things that He offers us and are not careless in applying them to our benefit. The means to bring this to pass is shown to us here: namely, that we follow the truth and love one another. As if Saint Paul should say, the knowledge of God and the love of our neighbors are two things that ought not to be separated asunder.

And he putteth truth foremost, purposely, because our linking together would not benefit us at all, unless Jesus Christ were the bond of our concord and that God allows it because it is grounded upon His Word. Saint Paul then meant here to put a difference between us and the heathen and unbelievers. For all men will grant well enough that there can be nothing but havoc among men when they are like dogs and cats. This has been known as a grounded principle in all ages, in all countries, and among all people, insomuch that even the heathen folk, and such as knew not what true religion means, have simply commended and esteemed the benefit of concord and agreement together.

But yet they builded without a foundation. Therefore, Saint Paul begins with God's truth: as if he should say, we must not only be united among ourselves, but God must also go before us, and we must obey Him, so that we must be gathered together under Him. He must sit over us, and we must choose to be at defiance with the whole

world rather than to slip away from Him. Thus, you see that the thing which we have to mark upon this text is that God will not have us to be knit together without knowing how or why; but He will have us to agree to worship and serve Him, and to put our whole trust in His infinite goodness, so that Jesus Christ is our head and we all are members of His body through the power of faith.

Again, when we once know that we have a Father in heaven who has adopted us to be His children and that Jesus Christ has vouchsafed to take our flesh and substance upon Him, to the intent that we should be flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone, the same should move us to love one another, to be careful each for another's salvation, and to help one another according to the ability that God gives us. According to which it is said in the Psalms: "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" (Psalm 133:1).

Afterward, the prophet brings us to the ointment that was poured upon the priests, as if he should say that men, having no more but even their mother wit, may perceive that there is not a more wholesome thing in the world than to live in peace and amity. However, therewithal he declares the order of it after the same manner that is shown us here by Saint Paul and says that the said brotherhood must be consecrated and dedicated to the name of God. For the anointing of Aaron and his successors was in such a way that the ointment did shed down upon the whole body and upon the garment of them.

Now, therefore, let us mark that if we intend to link together well, we must draw unto God, and our linking must be allowed of Him. Otherwise, we may well have fellowship together, but it shall be but a cursed fellowship, and the end of it can never be but utter confusion.

Wherefore, that we may rule our life well, let the end that we begin at be to cleave unto the truth.

Right necessary is this warning for us nowadays. For the Papists accuse us of troubling the world and that the debates that are now, nowadays, spring from our fault. Insomuch as heretofore all was dead, everyone said, "Amen," to them, and there was no disputing. Indeed, there was no great travail spent in seeking God or the salvation of men. Now then, to cast the devil out of the possession that he had gotten, it behooved us to use great vehemence, according as it is said, that he will never give over his place except he be enforced.

Therefore, it stood us on hand (as you would say) to thunder and lighten, to waken the world that was so fallen asleep, and after a sort bewitched. For inasmuch as the unbelievers are extremely stubborn in striving against God and cannot abide that the truth should take place, but uphold their lies with devilish willfulness, that is the very cause why there is so much trouble and war in the world nowadays—I mean for religion. Now the Papists would lay the blame on our necks, but let us see who is at fault. For we desire that every man should do homage unto God, that both great and small should submit themselves to His Word, and that there should be one true unity of faith so that the simplicity of the Gospel goes before it and guides it. These are the things that we seek, and the Papists find fault with it.

Yet notwithstanding, there is nothing else to be found in our doctrine but that we would gladly have a harmony between men and Angels to worship the true God and to follow His Word, which is our true rule, so that there should be no corruption in His service. On the contrary, the Papists would maintain all their abominations and errors and

cannot endure that Jesus Christ should have His preeminence. For they have deprived Him of all His offices and made, as it were, a spoil of them. They have an infinite number of male and female saints to whom they give the title of their Advocates, saying that by their merits they obtain favor at God's hand for those who pray unto them.

Moreover, in all the rest of their doctrine, there is nothing but what is perverted, and even falsified. Besides these errors and superstitions, the Papists are also so spiteful as to bend themselves even against God, to spit out their madness, and even to endeavor to wipe away the remembrance of Jesus Christ by fire and sword. What should we do in this case? There is no compromise with them except by renouncing God's truth. But we know what order is taught us here by the Holy Ghost. For Saint Paul could well have said in one word, "Agree, my friends." But he saw well that he would have spoken only half, and that his doctrine also would have been misconstrued. Therefore, he says, "Let us be knit together in the truth, and let us rather give up all the friendship of the world, and procure the anger of all unbelievers, and of all such as rebel against God, than swerve one whit from it." But if we seek to be in good agreement in the truth, and none of us be wedded to himself, but rather every one of us seek the welfare and salvation of his neighbors, that is the concord which ought to be among us.

The thing then which we have to remember upon this passage is, on the one side, we must beware of confederating with God's enemies, that we do not strike sail (as they say) to please them. For although it behooves us to seek to have peace and unity with all men, as near as we can, yet God's truth is always excepted, and we must make more account of that than of all the world. Indeed, they who will needs gratify creatures, and in the meantime turn away from God's truth as much as they can, shall always be unhappy. Therefore, let us

evermore abide steadfastly by our God, and hold ourselves under His yoke, and not shrink away in any wise, but rather defy the whole world, even if there were no man to hold with us. That is one point.

Again, if the world may be won to obedience, and we be able to do so much as to draw one or two to consent in one faith with us, then we must put our endeavor and labor thereto. For we must shun these two extremities: namely, of offending God and of turning away from His pure Word to purchase men's favor; and also of being so high-minded and full of stateliness as to trust every man to himself and to let others alone, and to care for no one but himself; for these are two evil extremes which we must beware of.

But let us learn to join these two things as inseparable: namely, that we yield God true obedience through faith by holding ourselves to the pure simplicity of His Word; and again, that we do not despise our neighbors, but endeavor to win them, that they may submit themselves quietly unto God, and by that means all of us, both great and small, may speak as it were with one mouth, through the Holy Ghost reigning in our hearts. All of us should have the knowledge that has been spoken of, namely, that God is so the author of our salvation that He has also shown Himself a Father towards us in adopting us and in vouchsafing to have us be all of His household, which cannot be unless we live all in good concord because He is the God of peace.

And although we should be driven to fight against the whole world, yet let us be of good comfort because the Angels of heaven are our companions in cleaving unto God. Should we then in these days separate ourselves from an infinite multitude of men who presume upon their riches, their greatness, their pomp, their credit, and even their wisdom? Yes, let us esteem every bit of it but as trash. And for

our own part, although they call us schismatics and count us as the offscourings of the world, let us hold ourselves contented in that we know that the Angels of heaven, the holy Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Apostles, and the Martyrs agree with us.

To sum up, all God's chosen people from Abel to this present day bear us sufficient company. And so we may despise all that shall be laid to our reproach when we have God's truth and the mark by which we know ourselves to be His children. For inasmuch as God cannot deny Himself, He will always continue with His Church, of which we are a part, if she clings to His Word. Let that, therefore, be one point.

But in the meantime, let us not forget to seek peace to the utmost of our power, according to the text that I have already mentioned from Romans. Therefore, let us not willfully separate ourselves from the world, but let us have, as it were, our arms stretched out to receive all who willingly yield themselves to the obedience of God, so that we may have one faith together; and let us endeavor to bring it to pass.

The very same reason is why Saint Paul tells us here that the faith and obedience we yield unto God should not puff up our hearts with pride so that we reject other men, and every one of us loves himself and looks out only for himself. Instead, it should make us follow the example of our Heavenly Father, who draws near those who were far off and is ready to be reconciled with His enemies. Since He has shown us this in our Lord Jesus Christ and given us such an excellent pledge of it, we also must have this same doctrine of peace in our thoughts and hearts. As much as is possible, we should endeavor to bring those who are yet separated from the Gospel to its union. If those who have been as if stark mad against God yield themselves like lambs and sheep of the flock, we must be ready to receive them.

Let us then commit ourselves to this and not be given to each one's profit. Let us assure ourselves that since God has knit us together and bound us one to another, each of us ought to employ himself to the utmost of his ability and according to his own measure, to draw his neighbors with him, so we may rightly be one body and Jesus Christ reign over us.

For the same reason, he adds that we should "grow in all things in Him that is our head," that is to say, in Jesus Christ. Now, by this word "grow," Saint Paul continues the matter we have seen before, which is that we must not stand so much in our own conceits as to think ourselves to have already reached the mark we are aiming for. For, as I told you, our life is a journey; therefore, we must keep moving forward. He who lingers by the way shows that he never knew what he was aiming for. Therefore, although we must not be like little children, we are not yet come to full age, nor have we obtained the strength that is requisite.

Wherefore, let us grow. That is to say, let each of us look well to our own infirmity, and when he sees his own weakness, let him, therefore, take heart and thrust himself forward. Let him press unto God, and let all our minds be continually bent in that direction. It is not enough for us to have begun, nor yet to have gone a good way unless it is imprinted in our hearts that we must continue to grow until our dying day. Otherwise, it is certain that we shall only be dazzled by our own pride, and that will make all of God's gifts vanish, which we had received before. Therefore, let us not imagine that we have such power or understanding in all the things requisite for our salvation as to not consider how it is not in vain that the Holy Ghost exhorts us here to grow.

Here, you also see how lowliness ought always to accompany faith, according to this saying, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7). The greater a man wishes to make himself, the more he shuts the door against himself so that he can have no entrance into the school of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, let us look well to our own frailty, so we may be meek, and nothing may hinder us from hoping continually more and more in our God. The same ought also to quicken us, provoke us to serve Him, and confirm ourselves continually more in His Word.

For what is the cause of such great sloth and coldness as is seen in many men, but that they think themselves to be great scholars already? In this, they deceive themselves because the devil has dimmed their eyes through their own foolish pride. Seeing it is so, let us continue as little ones still, not in understanding but in innocence (as has been said before); and since we know that we need to profit, let us endeavor to do so. However, let us also keep an eye on the means that are shown to us here, which is to resort to Him who is our head.

Truly, Saint Paul adds to this, "all things," to show that when a Christian examines thoroughly what is in him, he shall find that if he has any virtue, there will be vices mingled with it, and that in all his virtues there is always some blemish or flaw. Therefore, let all of us cast down our heads, and let the most excellent men in the world understand that God has still reserved some piece of grace to Himself, which He has not given to them, so that we should not be puffed up with foolish pride, thinking ourselves to be that which we are not.

But let us come to the head that is spoken of here. For Saint Paul tells us that our only sure foundation must be to know Jesus Christ (as has been declared before), that “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him” (Colossians 2:3). Otherwise, many would stray far in God’s Word and end up always learning but never knowing anything, as it is said in another text (2 Timothy 3:7). But Saint Paul tells us that in Jesus Christ, we shall find all that is necessary for our salvation, and that He also must have the preeminence, as the head appears above all the rest of the body.

For if we grew in such a way that the shoulders would rise halfway up the head, what kind of growth would that be? Would such growth be well-regarded? It would be better for a member to be dead than to disfigure the body in such a way. Therefore, since the head ought to be uppermost, Saint Paul tells us expressly that it is not enough for us to grow, but we must always grow under our Lord Jesus Christ so that He may stand over us, and all of us, both great and small, submit ourselves to Him.

We see by experience that this was not spoken in vain. For how many are there who carry a great appearance and show of knowledge and yet do nothing but set all things in disorder and turmoil through their vain glory? There are many who would be pleased to have our Lord Jesus Christ buried so that they themselves might rise up, have all the world gaze upon them, and be held in high esteem and rejoicing. Many wretches come to the point where they do not care what comes of it, so long as they may keep themselves in reputation.

Again, some mix our Lord Jesus Christ with so many superstitions that He is utterly overshadowed by them. We see what has happened in the Papacy. For they thoroughly verify their own proverb: that the Son of God cannot be distinguished from His Apostles. And why?

Because they have stripped Him and robbed Him of the honor that belongs to Him and have made a mockery of it, dealing to every man his share and portion of it. Thus, the Papists are well grown, but it is only in ignorance and superstition because Jesus Christ does not have His preeminence among them, nor is He their foundation.

Yes, even among us, you shall see some so desirous to gain renown among men that Jesus Christ will mean nothing to them. So much more, therefore, it stands on us to pay careful attention to this lesson of Saint Paul's, that our growth must be in our Lord Jesus Christ, according to this saying of John the Baptist: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Let us follow that example, namely, that the excellence which is in the Church should remain undiminished, and yet in the meantime, Jesus Christ be the foundation of all men.

For although the stars have their brightness, yet the sun must shine above them, and men must know that it is He by whom we have the true light indeed. Therefore, let our Lord Jesus, who is the "Sun of Righteousness" (Malachi 4:2), be so regarded that nothing may hinder Him, nor obscure our eyes so that we should not look at Him, and our faith be focused only on Him. That, then, is why Saint Paul adds expressly that Jesus Christ must be our head, and we grow in Him, and resort to Him, and set our whole study and mind upon Him.

To express this better, he adds that it is He by whom the whole body is knit and joined together by its joints, and that it is He who furnishes it with substance and life, according to the measure and portion of every member. When this is done, then the body is well proportioned; however, love must reign among us, or else there will be nothing but confusion. If there is greatness, it will be overly large, so much so that it will not be a natural body, but rather a monster.

Now, in saying that we receive our growth from Jesus Christ, that it is He from whom the knitting of the body proceeds, and that it is He also by whom we are maintained in life, he shows us our ingratitude in that we do not yield Him the honor He deserves. For must it not be that we are exceedingly wicked when the Son of God gives us all things, and yet we rob Him of the honor He requires for showing Himself so bountiful towards us? He does not desire that we should yield Him any recompense, nor can we, nor is it necessary. Yet, He will be glorified.

Now then, seeing we are so enriched by Him, and yet we fall to robbing Him of His honor, so that He is defrauded and deprived of it, must it not be that we are worse than devilish? Therefore, let us mark well what Saint Paul aimed at: for he intended here to rebuke the world for its excessive ingratitude in not yielding our Lord Jesus Christ His due honor, insomuch as He is not exalted among us. Neither do we think upon Him, nor do we place Him in chief sovereignty, so that all men might do Him homage.

Moreover, he shows also that we are almost out of our wits when we do not honor Jesus Christ or exalt Him as we ought to do. For there is no man who does not naturally desire his own profit. Now then, in forsaking Jesus Christ, we seem to have conspired and sworn our own confusion, that we might be deprived of all His grace and be as rotten members without strength. For He is as the head of a man's body and as the root of a tree; it is He from whom all our life and sustenance proceed.

Now then, if the hands, the feet, the belly, the stomach, the legs, and all the rest of the members should conspire together to say, "Let us forsake the head," what should they gain by it? Or if they should conspire together to put the head down and thrust it into the belly,

that men might not see it, what profit would the whole body have by it?

Even so stands the case with all who would diminish the glory and majesty of God's Son, lessen His power, and not acknowledge to what end He was sent by God His Father—namely, that they should seek all their welfare and all the parts of their salvation in Him. For it is as much as if they would put down their head.

But Saint Paul tells us that there must be no knitting in the body but that which comes from the head. For whence does all come? Behold, the veins convey nourishment everywhere through the whole body, and the sinews hold the bones together and give them movement; but yet all these things must have their root in the head. So then, if we will despise God by diminishing the glory of His only Son, surely all will turn to our confusion. Jesus Christ can well enough do without us; but we must needs perish wretchedly like rotten carcasses if He does not give us whatever belongs to our life. Thus, you see what Saint Paul meant to show us.

Hereunto he adds that there is a certain measure in every member and that the furnishing thereof comes from the head so that it flows through the whole body. However, (says he) that is in measure. When he says it is in measure, he lets us know that all the excellence which we can see here does not detract from the perfection that is in Jesus Christ. For there are two reasons to be noted. The first is that all that is in man is imperfect, and therefore we must resort to our Lord Jesus Christ, that He alone may remain unimpaired and not be mingled with other creatures. The second is that the measure and portion which is in every member are not there as having a peculiar seat. For what could the hand do if it were not continually nourished and maintained by the head? The bond that holds everything

together must be maintained from there. Also, the natural heat and movement must come from there, insomuch that the hand would wither every minute of an hour and rot away if the head did not continually work. The same relationship exists between Christ and His Church.

For if we consider well what is in men, even if we were to admit one to be like an angel, yet he still has only his measure. And why? So that Jesus Christ should not be deprived of the honor that belongs to Him. Seeing then that every one of us has his portion (as has been shown before), it is good reason also that every one of us should humble ourselves and not lift up our horns to take anything upon ourselves, which God reserves for His only Son. That is one point.

Again, let us understand that the same measure comes from free gift, as has been shown already; and yet it is not without reason that Saint Paul repeats it here again. For we see the foolish presumptuousness of men, how every man would be a lord, and we would gladly rob God of His right to advance and esteem ourselves. Therefore, to humble that loftiness and cleanse us of such vice, Saint Paul reminds us once again that we have nothing that is not given to us. And therefore, we must resort to what he says in the First Epistle to the Corinthians: “Who art thou? Hast thou made thyself so excellent by thine own cunning? Hast thou anything which thou canst challenge as thine own? No: it is God that hath advanced thee so: and therefore humble thyself” (1 Corinthians 4:7).

His meaning then is that all the whole knitting and all the whole furnishing come from the head. For it is not enough for us that we were once created and shaped, but it is necessary for us to have our members still maintained in their condition. That, therefore, is the reason why Saint Paul adds the word “furnishing” or “shedding

down,” as if God should shed down His inworking upon the head, and the head shed forth the same inworking throughout all the members. And that is what Saint Paul meant when he said that Jesus Christ is our spiritual head, who has received all fullness of grace, according to the first chapter of John, where it is said that it was given to Him not for Himself alone but also for us who are His brethren (John 1:16).

Seeing that this is so, let us understand that all the grace which we have received from God has crept into us by means of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that we have the full furnishing of it throughout also by Him. True, this strength or inworking passes through every member, and in coming from the head, it shall be in the shoulder before it is in the arm, and afterward in the arm before it is in the hand. But for all that, shall the arm therefore glory in itself and give the hand no part with it? No, for its receiving is to impart it to the rest of the limbs, and all comes from the head. Again, shall not the hand, on the one side, give of its power back again to the arm, on the other side? Yes, for every member knows its own office; that is to say, every member has naturally an inclination to serve all the rest of the body, as though God had given them discretion and wisdom to say, “Thus it must be.” They are bound to it and know the need that each has for the help of others.

True, it is that my hand cannot judge anything, but yet God has put such an endowment and disposition into it that it desires nothing more than to employ itself in the service of all the rest of the body. Also, the foot does its duty without entreaty or bidding, as though God had imprinted such a discretion in them to consider that all of them receive their power from Heaven, and that the things which they have received must be fitted thereto.

Now, if a man should demand, "Is every man then alike and equal in the Church?" Saint Paul, in speaking of portion and measure, does not mean that God has distributed an equal portion to every member. For the leg is not the eye, and yet, nevertheless, the leg, according to its quality, has that which it needs. For the same reason, Saint Paul says that the members should be so knit together that they might make up one whole body through love, and by that means, have everyone be contented.

There are then two things we must mark: first, that God's gifts are diverse, and that some are much more excellent than others. For the eye is a more excellent member than the foot, and we see also how it is honored. The mouth is more than the leg. Mark it, then, for one point, that there is such diversity that our Lord exalts and honors whom He wills more than others. There are both great and small in the Church, and not all must be teachers and prophets.

Yet, this diversity does not prevent every member from having its desire and that which is fitting for it, so that the foot does not envy the hand, nor does the hand envy the foot, any more than either of them envies the eyes. To what purpose would it serve the hand to have sight? It would be a thing that not only could do it no good but also could harm it. If every member had all offices in itself, surely the body would be confounded and come to nothing.

So then, the hand has its perfection in what belongs to it, I mean, in its degree; and likewise the foot. However, Saint Paul's meaning is that it ought to suffice us that the Church be edified in common. For if our neighbors are enriched with God's gifts, the same redounds partly to us. And on the other side, if we have received a larger measure of grace, we are the more bound to impart the same to those who have need of it.

That, therefore, is what Saint Paul means to set down in this text, saying that if the knitting is in this manner, the body shall be well built and made up.

And here we see how he continues his matter, which is that we must be so linked together according to the doctrine of the Gospel, that Jesus Christ may reign over us. We must know that the Heavenly Father has given us Him, with the condition that we should all link together under Him and maintain a brotherly unity among us. Yet, above all things, we must be subject to Him who has all sovereign dominion and consider that, forasmuch as the Heavenly Father has set Him in that degree, we must all aim at Him and continue in His obedience to the end.

And, moreover, let us understand that this cannot be done without love; that is to say, unless each of us rids himself of the cursed affection of seeking too much of his own profit. For indeed, it is easy to perceive that such an affection blinds us, making us despise our neighbors. Therefore, it is all the more necessary for each of us to endeavor to give up his own right and to know that God has not distributed His gifts so that each man may be a world or a Church of himself. Rather, forasmuch as every man has need of his neighbors, the same is the very means by which He will hold us together. This ought also to provoke us so much more to do what we can for one another.

Although there is but one fountain from which we draw all spiritual gifts, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ, God nevertheless makes the fullness of the grace He has put in Jesus Christ to flow forth as if by channels, so that we may receive each our portion, as is expedient for us. Thus, you see, in effect, what we have to remember here.

Now, if this doctrine were well put into practice, surely all the troubles that are nowadays in the world would soon be appeased, and there would no longer be so many bickerings and disputings; rather, we would easily agree altogether. For ambition or vainglory is the mother of all heresies; when men need to exalt themselves, they must necessarily seek to thrust down Christ, if they could. Again, whence spring superstitions but from this: that men do not know the inestimable benefits brought to us by our Lord Jesus Christ, which are daily offered to us in Him by the Gospel?

This ignorance has made the world always wanton and wandering after its own lusts. This has caused men to forge so many patrons and advocates, to advance their own deserving, and to devise so many satisfactions and new services, namely, because they are not contented with Jesus Christ. This is due to their lack of understanding of who He is and that, when we once have Him, He ought to suffice us. We should hold ourselves to Him because the Father has so glorified Him that we ought, out of duty, to do Him homage and honor Him as our sovereign King.

Forasmuch as we see the wretched unbelievers scattered here and there because they turn away from Jesus Christ, we have so much the more need to be warned to hold ourselves simply to His obedience. We must understand that all our welfare comes from Him, and therefore we ought to return to Him, yielding Him His due honor and putting our whole trust in Him. To do this, we must recognize that there is nothing but filth in us, that we hold our spiritual life from Him, and that not for once and away, but in such a way that He continually works in us, strengthening and furthering us until He has brought us to His perfection—that is to say, the perfection we hope for in Him.

For this reason, the Holy Supper was left to us as a remembrance that our Lord Jesus Christ is He in whom we must wholly seek all things belonging to the life of our souls. There, we profess that He is our nourishment, even to satisfy us to the full. Therefore, the reason we come there to eat and drink is to remind us that we have in Jesus Christ not only the half of our life but the whole of it, and that when we are fed with Him, we must be content with Him and not seek one drop or mite elsewhere.

In this manner, then, must we come to the Holy Table: after examining our sins and knowing that we are nothing, we must seek by what means God calls us to Him and how we may keep our way thither, even till we are perfectly knit unto Him, namely, by knowing that Jesus Christ is given to us and that in Him we have all that is needed and lacking in ourselves. Therefore, let us so esteem our Lord Jesus Christ that we may take Him for our very sustenance, and let our faith (as I have mentioned before) not be drawn away to wander here and there, only to vanish away. Instead, may it rest upon Him, knowing that there is neither righteousness, holiness, merit, power, nor anything else in ourselves, but that we shall find all in Him and that we cannot be partakers of Him without also being partakers of all the goods that He has received from God His Father.

Seeing then that all the good things which God has put into our Head are communicated to us by His means, let us learn to humble ourselves, and not to climb in such a way that He should be defrauded of His honor, but confess simply and without feigning that whatever is given to us through His free goodness, He maintains and preserves it, and moreover, increases and establishes it in us more and more.

Furthermore, let us note that we cannot possess the goods of our Lord Jesus Christ to take any profit by them unless we first enjoy Him. This is why He gives Himself to us. He does not think it enough to give us some part and portion of His righteousness, of His merits by the sacrifice of His death and passion, of the obedience that He yielded to God His Father, and of all the gifts which He received fully from God His Father. I say, He does not think it enough to give us some part and portion of them in His Sacraments, but He says, "I am yours, possess Me."

Then it is not enough for us to seek our needs at His hand that He may impart them to us; we must first consider how He offers Himself to us and says, "Lo, here is My body which is delivered for you, lo, here is My blood which shall be shed for the remission of your sins." This is done so that we should know that He truly dwells in us by His Holy Spirit, and that we live by His own substance. It is not said here without cause that the knitting of the body comes from Him, that He is its support, and that forasmuch as we lack the grace and gifts that belong to our spiritual life, we must draw them out of that fountain.

If we resort to Him with perseverance in the faith of the Gospel, we shall feel ourselves more and more strengthened and established in all grace, even until He has rid us of all our imperfections and infirmities to make us enjoy His heavenly glory with Him.

Now, let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us so to feel them that we may be sorry for them, and also to work in us hereafter so that we may, from day to day, be cleansed of all our imperfections and vices more and more. May our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the wellspring of all purity, so shed forth the grace of His Holy Spirit,

that we may be made new creatures thereby, to do our sovereign King the honor that belongs to Him.

And so, let us all say, Almighty God, Heavenly Father, etc.

The Twenty Eighth Sermon, Which Is the Eighth upon the Fourth Chapter

17. This I say therefore, and adjure (you) by the Lord, that henceforth you walk not as the (rest of the) Gentiles, (who) walk in the vanity of their mind,

18. Having their understanding overcast with darkness, and being strangers to the life of God, by reason of the ignorance that is in them, and through the blindness of their heart.

19. Who, without remorse of conscience, have given themselves over to lewdness, to commit all uncleanness, even with inordinate greediness.

Considering how corrupt we are by nature, it is not enough for us to have the good shown unto us unless the vices that are rooted in us are also corrected, just as it would do little good to sow corn in ground overgrown with nettles, weeds, rushes, and thorns. Therefore, notwithstanding that Saint Paul has heretofore shown the true rule of godly life, he adds (as needed) that it stands every man on hand to bethink himself, to change completely, and to become a

new man. Until God has cleansed us both in mind and heart and in all parts of our soul, there will never be anything but filthiness.

So then, the doctrine that we have heard heretofore would not profit us if that which we hear now had not been added. For we know that the Ephesians to whom Saint Paul speaks, before they were converted to the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, had lived a certain time in ignorance and been given to all naughtiness and lewd life, even to the uttermost. Yet, Saint Paul sets it down here in general that all those who have not been taught in God's school are blind wretches, unable to discern between good and evil, even as stark beasts, insomuch that even with the very root that comes with them from their mother's womb, every man hardens more and more until they fall into such excess that they become as monsters and no longer appear to be creatures fashioned after the image of God.

You see then that, in effect, Saint Paul's intent is that, after he has declared God's establishment of His government over us, now to the end that our walking in this world should be to go unto God and to the heavenly life to which He calls us, he shows that we shall never obey Him nor bow our neck to receive His yoke until we have changed both our disposition and mind and forsaken ourselves because we are utterly corrupted.

And so there are two parts in the instruction that is given to us. The first shows us what God calls us to, and the second, that we must fight against our own sinfulness and utterly imprison ourselves, that we may become teachable to receive the doctrine that God sets out for us. However, because this is hard to do, Saint Paul thinks it not enough to give a single warning; he also cites us and, after a sort, sets himself in the seat of justice before whom we must yield an account, intending to move and quicken those to whom he speaks.

For it is no small thing to make men renounce themselves, considering how every man soothes himself and believes he is able to work wonders. Although he is sapped in naughtiness, he still thinks he has some virtues in him. Even when we have our faults proven to our faces, we will labor to cloak them through hypocrisy and set some fair color and gloss upon them, or else we will maintain them willfully, never admitting guilt, though our shame lies open to the whole world.

To be brief, it is a very hard encounter when a man must lay down all the wisdom he believed he had in governing himself according to his own fancy and must tame his affections so that he may be subject to God, having nothing in himself that strives against Him. For our flesh is too stout in that regard, and we hear how it is said in another text that all a man's thoughts, and all that he can conceive, are enmity against God (Romans 8:7). Likewise, it is said in Genesis (Genesis 6:5), even when the world was in the greatest soundness it ever had, that whatever comes out of the warehouse of our own brain is all stark naughtiness and rebellion against God.

So then, it was necessary that great vehemence be used in this regard. Therefore, Saint Paul uses it, saying that he not only teaches but also cites those to whom he speaks, so that they may know they are as it were in God's presence. It is not for them to fall asleep in their vain self-flatteries, but as the devil has many allurements to beguile us, so on the contrary, God's Word must enlighten us. Although we are slow to consider our vices and would prefer to conceal them, we must understand that it is more for our profit to come to reason and to examine thoroughly what is in us.

That is why Saint Paul, intending to exhort the Ephesians to a change of life, sets down this adjuration and kind of witness-bearing, as

though he were present before God's judgment seat. If there is any covenanting between man and man, this solemnity and ceremony of swearing will move them and cause them to think carefully about what they promise, at least if they are not quite out of their wits.

However, here there is not some notary to take notice of their oaths, nor the customs among men to ratify things they agree upon among themselves, but here is Saint Paul, who stands in the behalf and person of Jesus Christ, from whom he has authority not only to require us but also to summon us to make our account if we do not endeavor to discharge our duty. He tells us that it is not for us to let slip the things he says, nor to hear them with deaf ears, because God is present to punish our recklessness in despising His Word.

Since it is so, let us learn to cease flattering ourselves, as many do, whom we see pretending deafness: and whatever countenances they make, they continue always the same as they were before. Therefore, let us mark well that God, thinking it not enough to teach us, intends to take away all excuse, and tells us that He will not suffer such contempt of His Word when we do not vouchsafe to give ear, seeing He was so gracious as to speak unto us, to give us a guarantee of our salvation.

Now let us come to the effect of what is contained here. Saint Paul says, "Be not as the rest of the Gentiles are." I have already told you that those to whom he writes were for a time wholly given to all naughtiness and without the fear of God. For even from their cradle, they had been brought up in all manner of idolatry, and yet they thought themselves well discharged when they had done some sacrifice to their idols.

Just as today, in the Papacy, they that play the greatest mummery are counted most holy, and they think themselves out of God's debt if

they have once done a sort of petty trifles. For that reason, Saint Paul sends the Ephesians to this similitude, saying that if they look upon the rest of the Gentiles, there they may see in what plight and condition they were before God gathered them into His Church. "Look upon yourselves there," says he, "for there you shall see your own images: before such time as God reached you His hand and drew you out of the dungeon of unbelief wherein you were plunged, you differed nothing at all from them. Now then, at least, you ought to consider the grace that has been granted to you, that it may bring forth fruit in you."

By the way, let us mark that in using this speech, "the rest of the Gentiles," Saint Paul comprehends here all mankind. For he speaks not of two or three men only, nor of any one nation, nor of some country; but he says generally that all those who have not been trained in the Gospel are blind wretches, as we see. To be short, he shows what manner of ones we are until God has prevented us with His grace, to the intent that we should not cast this exhortation away nor bear ourselves on hand that we are exempted from all the things we shall see hereafter.

Therefore, to the end that we surmise not a privilege to withdraw ourselves from the common array of men, Saint Paul has here knit all Adam's children together as it were in one bundle. For in all mankind there is nothing to be found but lewdness and corruption. Here, therefore, are two points that we have to mark.

The one is that here, as it were in a looking glass, we should behold what our own state is, so long as God gives us the bridle and lets us follow our own swing. Mark that for one point, and I will lay it out more at large anon.

The other is that when we see the enormities that are committed throughout the whole world, and that men are so shameless in evil doing, or rather altogether bewitched, and some so besotted that a man can by no means move them to learn to fear God; when we see (I say) on the one side such stubbornness in men, and on the other side such gross and beastly senselessness, let us learn to see ourselves there, and to consider that God did us a singular good turn when it pleased Him to touch us to the quick, that His Word might prevail in us.

For we differ nothing at all from the worst and most disordered in the world, nor from such as are in the most horrible confusion. You see, then, what we would have been if God had not pitied us. This ought to touch us well to the quick, so that the grace which God has granted us is not darkened and quite quenched in the end, leaving us quite and clean bereft of it. After this manner, therefore, we ought to apply this text to our instruction, where Saint Paul sets other men before us, who have not yet been enlightened by the faith of the Gospel but are left alone. By comparing our state with theirs, we may consider how merciful God showed Himself unto us in drawing us out of such a dungeon, to the intent that we should be the more diligent in giving ourselves unto Him.

Hereupon he says, "Walk no more henceforth as they did in the vanity of mind." By this word "henceforth" or "hereafter," he intends to shame those who are trained in the Gospel if their life does not prove that they have not misused their labor. For to what purpose are we called to the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, but to separate ourselves from the stumbling blocks of the world? Therefore, we must not excuse ourselves by our upbringing in evil customs, nor by any examples that might allure us to lewdness, nor yet by the fact

that there is nothing but frowardness around us. For seeing that God has adopted us to be His children, He will have us live thereafter.

And therefore, let us mark that faith imports such a reforming of ourselves that our life is clearly changed. For the same cause, it is said, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). For we may prate of the Gospel enough and too much, and we may be marvelously fine-headed; but that shall be worth nothing until the said change appears in us—that is to say, until we lead a new life.

Besides this, we have to mark here that after Saint Paul has spoken of the vanity of mind, he adds, "Blindness of mind," or "Darkness of understanding," and lastly he says, "Blindness or stubbornness of heart." This description of men serves well to put them quite out of conceit. For when the philosophers spoke of the excellence and worthiness that is in human nature, they always set down reason as an overruler. Next, they set down discretion between good and evil, when men debate in themselves and make a searching and a turmoil for things.

After that manner, they made as it were a court of law, to the end that man might judge between good and evil. It should seem, then, that Saint Paul here debases man too much when he says that reason has nothing in it but vanity, untruth, and deceitfulness; and again, that all that men can conceive is but a maze of vain fancies, and that they do but overthrow themselves more and more, as if a blind man should wander abroad in the dark. Yet, notwithstanding, the Holy Ghost is the only competent judge to give sentence on the things that are in us, lest we might think ourselves to have won the goal by flattering ourselves, according as he told us before, that men have their eyes so blindfolded with the fond opinion they have conceived

of their own worthiness, that they cannot be ashamed and confess their own lewdness.

That was the cause why the philosophers always magnified the nature of man, and yet, notwithstanding, experience shows the contrary: for the vanity that is in them is apparent. But they blamed that upon men's negligence and recklessness, so that if men would apply all the senses of nature thoroughly to know what is good, they should be as little angels. They imagined so, but that was for want of probing them to the bottom. For they never knew what God is, and that made them discharge themselves so lightly towards Him, insomuch that even they who disputed most cunningly of God's majesty, and had a higher understanding than the common sort, and (to be short) were esteemed the wisest men in the world, could not, nevertheless, ever come near the truth of God. And whenever His service came in question, they were so gravelled that they turned all things upside down.

And so, the wisdom of the world will not suffer us to come to the heavenly light, for it is a special gift of God and not to be found in ourselves. You see, then, that even the greatest men of skill deceived themselves, and that is the cause that men fall asleep in this foolish opinion, to which they were too much inclined before. Yea, and we see that this foolish or rather devilish overweening has gotten place even among the Jews, insomuch that they have always been of opinion, (as men are nowadays in the popedom) that they have free will. True, it is that the Papists will grant more than the heathen folk, namely, that we are corrupted by original sin. However, their meaning is that, notwithstanding the infirmity which is in man, yet there abides some remnant of goodness in him, insomuch that we have half an understanding still, and also a will that is able to train us unto good, though it be but weak of itself.

To be short, such as will need to judge according to their natural understanding say that men are as sound and uncorrupted as angels. The Papists, being convicted by so many records of Scripture, will grant well enough that we have fallen from our original state and that there are many vices in us. But yet, they say, that is no impediment; we are still half clean and are able to do good of our own power when we are once humbled before God. In short, they make such a partnership between God and men, saying indeed that we have need to be enlightened from above to attain faith, but yet that we have some light in ourselves, and God makes up what is lacking. Again, they will say that lust reigns in us so strongly that it is hard for us to submit ourselves to God, but yet we must labor to do it, and we are able to do it, provided God aids us and reaches us His hand.

This is the concurrence (as they term it)—that is to say, the matching or combining together of God's grace and the goodness that remains in man, though we are corrupted. But (as I said), let us rather listen to what God Himself, the only competent judge, has spoken of it by unrepealable sentence, which is that all those who follow common reason and the things that man has of himself are blind wretches. And what then shall become of reason? For although men think that it serves to give them light and to show them the way, it is certain that it does but always tumble them into the pit, and whereas they think themselves to be well-advised, they shall be stark beasts. And the reason why this is told to us continually is to make us understand that God must be forced to reform us, not by half, but entirely throughout.

And here a man might ask a question: If men (I mean those whom God has left alone) were without understanding and discretion in that behalf, could one see examples of it or not? It is very certain that they are not like horses, nor yet like dogs; but yet, let us mark that all

the understanding and discretion which is in us, and all the judgment which it is possible for us to have, serves to no other end than to make us inexcusable.

Therefore, we must understand that although we have some discretion between good and evil, before God has taught us by His Word and enlightened us by His Holy Spirit, yet the same serves only to bereave us of excuse, so that we might not make a shield of ignorance, as we are wont to do. For although every man has not had the written law, yet he must bear the sentence of damnation within him in his heart, as says Saint Paul in the second to the Romans (Romans 2:15), and God must drive him to perceive it beforehand, by making him feel heart-biting, whether he will or not, so that he shall say, "I am guilty in this thing and in that." Thus remains there some understanding in men; however, not to lead them in the way of salvation, but only to make them so much the more guilty before God.

As for our affections, it might be said that there are many who live honestly and without blame, though they have never tasted of the Gospel. Yes, truly, but in the meantime, their hearts are fraught with malice and stubbornness, and no doubt, all such as have not been reformed by God's Spirit shall still feed a sea of wicked, froward, and malicious lusts within them. Therefore, let us not stay upon the outward show, but let us mark how it is not for nothing that God claims the searching of men's hearts as His peculiar office, and therefore that must be reserved unto Him.

Also, let us call to mind how Saint John in his epistle says that we do not see all the sins that are in us, but that God, who sees far more clearly, is the judge thereof (1 John 3:20). However the case stands, when men have done the best they can, yet they cannot rid their

hands of condemnation when they come before the heavenly Judge, especially seeing that the stars are not clear in His sight, nor even the angels, insomuch that if He chose to examine them with rigor, they should not be able to come to the perfection that is in Him (Job 15:15).

So then, let us note that until God has visited us, and has come unto us, and has subdued us unto Him, we shall always continue ignorant and blind wretches. There shall be nothing but vanity in all our understanding; in our hearts, there shall be nothing but pride and presumption, and our lusts shall be so far out of square that they shall strive against God, and we shall fight against His justice and against all right. And surely, we see what has followed from it when men would need to govern themselves by their own wit.

For what fashions of serving God have been brought into the world, and how wicked! Was there any lack of great cunning or any lack of great skill? No: for we see that God has poured out His gracious gifts in such wise that man's wit has shown itself to be truly excellent in all manner of sciences and knowledge, except in the chief: that is to wit, of coming unto God. In this, all have failed; they have all wandered away, and there was nothing but falsehood and deceit in their case. And the further they endeavored to thrust themselves forward, the deeper did they plunge themselves into the mire.

Wherefore, let us note that although the light shines (as it is said in the first chapter of Saint John), yet, notwithstanding, we, being darkness, do not perceive it (John 1:5). Saint John shows that even from the beginning, God separated men from beasts, imprinting His image in them and giving them discretion to discern between good and evil. The life of man, then, serves not only to eat and drink but also to consider that we have a better life, and that is, to have some

order and common policy here beneath and to understand that there is a God who rules all.

Lo, here is the light that was before Adam's fall. And this light abides yet still, but it shines in darkness, and the darkness does not comprehend it but rather quenches it quite and clean out. So then, if we have any small insight or aim, let us consider that it is but as a little spark, which passes and vanishes away out of hand. But in the meantime, as concerning our own nature, that we should be able to have regard for goodness, or to seek it, follow it, and continue in it: it is utterly impossible. And why? Because our understanding is stark blind (Ephesians 4:18). To be short, there is nothing but vanity in us, according to this saying, that God perused the thoughts of men and saw there was nothing but vanity and leasing in them (Psalm 94:11).

Now, to express this yet better, Saint Paul says that they had their understanding darkened and were strangers to the life of God. Herein he cuts off the occasion of all excuses that men can make. For they will reply continually against God, and though they be condemned, yet will they always have the last word, saying: "What can I do if there is nothing but vanity in me, seeing that God created me so? Why did He not make me otherwise?" But Saint Paul tells us here that we have our understanding overcast with our own darkness. And why? Because the light is quenched by the corruption that has come upon us in Adam.

To be short, Saint Paul shows us here that we must keep our mouths shut when the Scripture reveals that we are both ignorant, blind, and brutish. We must not think to further our case by alleging that God ought to have made us otherwise, for the evil proceeds from Adam's fall, because not only was he bereft of the good that he had received, but we also were all impoverished in him. Just as he who forfeits his

goods must beg, and his children too, so must we also, in our penury and poverty, consider still today the misfortune that has come upon us through the fault and offense of our first father. Thus, you see how Saint Paul has here closed all loopholes that men are wont to set before themselves, to show themselves to be righteous and innocent before God.

For whence comes the vanity of our mind in that we are both blind and ignorant? Even from our being in darkness and by the darkening of the light that God had put into us in our first creation. And, forasmuch as this is a hard matter to accept, Saint Paul brings us to the life of God: and that is to laugh to scorn all the trifling imaginations that men have contrived to maintain their own free will, reason, and discretion. For (as I have said already), the books of the philosophers are full of such stuff.

In the Popedom, there is still bickering for free will, as though all were marred if man had not some good self-moving and ability to prepare himself to receive grace and were made a fellow with God, and could make the grace effectual which is offered him. By this reckoning, men shall not only be hale fellows with God (if they may be believed) but of better ability than He, so as He shall but add some little portion to them. But Saint Paul says that we may well be alive in our own opinion, but as in respect of God, we shall not fail to be as dead carcasses, or rather even as rotten and stinking corpses.

Then let not men take upon them, through their foolish overweening, to have reason, wisdom, and free will: but if they would know their own state, let them lift up their eyes and consider that their living must be the life of God, and not the life which every man fancies here to himself. Saint Paul, in the seventh to the Romans, confesses that he thought himself alive for a time, namely, before he had been

converted to the pure doctrine, because he was full of hypocrisy and possessed with such pride that he thought himself to be as a little angel (Romans 7:9). But when I once entered into myself (says he) and knew what it was to lust: then did God's Law wound me to death, and I perceived that the life which I had lived before was but death, and that I had made myself believe wonders, taking myself to be that which I was not, as fools do, who believe that they are kings and princes, when in the meanwhile lice eat them up, or else they starve for hunger and cold.

So then, Saint Paul confesses that before he was converted, he was alive to his own seeming, and he triumphed at it: but when Christ had once humbled him, and made him feel what God's judgment was, then he gave over that life and saw well that it was but death.

Likewise, he says now that although we are alive in the opinion of the world, so that people clap their hands at us and magnify our virtues, and we ourselves are also besotted with the same opinion, it is nothing at all, but we must go unto God. Now, we shall find that God has a special life which he reserves and keeps as laid up in secret for his children. For albeit that he makes his day-sun to shine both upon good and bad, and shows himself liberal towards all without exception, yet he does not scatter abroad the things that serve for his chosen, according to this saying of the Psalm: "Lord, how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up in store for them that fear thee? It is as a treasure that thou hast hoarded up for them" (Psalm 31:19).

So then, whereas Saint Paul speaks here of God's life, he shows that in living according to our nature, we do not have our life from him. Whence then? Is it not God that has created us? Is it not he of whom we have our being and moving, as it is said in the seventeenth of the Acts? Then is our common life of God, inasmuch as he is our maker:

but inasmuch as he is the Savior of the chosen, and inasmuch as he is the father of his children whom he has adopted, this life which is common both to good and bad is not named God's life, but man's life: God lets it alone in its plight.

And which then is God's life? It is when, upon his choosing of us, he shows us the way of life and salvation, and renews us by his Holy Spirit, so that Jesus Christ dwells in us by faith (as we have seen before) and utters his power in us, causing our old man to be crucified with him, yea, and even buried too, that we may be raised again, even to be separated from all uncleanness of the world, that we may not resemble the unbelievers, who are wholly prisoners under the tyranny of Satan, and are driven and haled by him, and give over themselves to all evil. That is, in effect, the cause why Saint Paul has spoken to us here of God's life.

And now, that we may the better be awakened and receive this exhortation unfailingly, let us not deceive ourselves any more with the opinions that each of us may conceive in our own head, nor yet with the judgment of men, which often praise and commend the thing that is nothing worth. Verily, we know how our Lord Jesus Christ says in Saint Luke: "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15).

To the intent, therefore, that we may no more be deceived by them, let us understand that until God has made us new creatures, and begotten us again by his Holy Spirit, we are blind in our understanding, we have nothing in us but vanity, and we are utterly ignorant, yea, and stark beasts. That is, in effect, the thing that we have to bear in mind. Wherefore, as often as we fall to our accustomed bias and follow our own fancy, let us learn to cite

ourselves before God and to weigh well what is meant by the life that he reserves as peculiar to himself.

Not that it serves for none other but himself, but because he bestows it upon none but his own children. For thereby it is that he shows himself to have chosen us, as we have seen in the first chapter.

Now, hereupon he sets down immediately the hardness of their heart—not a simple hardness, as we commonly understand it, for the Greek word betokens a thickening (or muddiness), as when a piece of wine that was very well fined becomes so troubled that it turns into lees and grows thick and muddy like a puddle, so that there is no more clear liquor in it. Even so, Saint Paul says that the heart is thickened when it is so blinded and hardened in this way that it cannot yield to the obedience of God, and that there is no clearness in it but all is troubled like a puddle.

This word "heart" in the Holy Scripture sometimes represents all the lusts, likings, and will of man, and sometimes also his understanding. However, since here Saint Paul has made a distinction between a man's understanding, his mind, and his heart, we may well think that he meant to include the will, together with all the scanings and debates we make in ourselves about judging good and evil, and finally the whole understanding we have and the reason that reigns in us. Saint Paul, therefore, meant to show, in effect, that man is so corrupted in all parts of him through the sin of Adam, that neither wit nor will is inclined to anything but evil and is utterly sapped in it.

Therefore, just as earlier he condemned the beastliness that is in us, so now he also shows that we are like blocks and cannot be willing to follow our God wherever he calls us, but are stubborn, with stiff necks that cannot bow, as Moses also upbraids those that rebelled

against God, telling them that they had a neck of iron or brass. Even so are we by nature. For that reason, it is said in Ezekiel, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). This metaphor shows well what is in us until God has worked an alteration in us. For we have nothing but hardness, which is as much as if the Holy Ghost should say that we are God's enemies and refusers of all truth until God has softened us and corrected the crookedness and stubbornness through which we cast up our rage so vehemently against God.

To be short, all our lusts are like men of war marching in battle to prevent God from reigning and exercising his power and authority, which he ought to have over us. This is what our nature is. Now, let us go and boast of our own free will and reason, as we see these wretched Papists do, who are always harping on that string. But let us learn to humble ourselves willingly, and (as I said before) let us consider that Saint Paul blames human nature, showing that all of us, from the greatest to the least, are plunged even to the bottom of hell until God pulls us back again.

Moreover, let us consider all the enormities that are done throughout the whole world, and conclude that we ourselves would do the same if God did not show us his mercy, and let this stir us up to restrain ourselves, lest we overreach ourselves at some time. Seeing it has pleased God to draw us to himself, let us not turn back again to mingle with the lewdness of the unbelievers. It is no wonder that they stumble, tumble, and reel to and fro, for they have no light to guide them. But our Lord shines upon us by his Word and gives us eyes by his Holy Spirit; therefore, let us avoid being like them, as Saint Paul exhorts us here.

Hereunto he adds the height of all mischief: which is, that men go astray after their own kind, continue in going from worse to worse, and flatter themselves, whereby they cast their consciences into such a sleep that they feel no more any remorse or grief. That is the high road to make them utterly beyond recovery.

First of all, let us learn here to prevent such vengeance from God, which ought to make us quake. When we hear that those who remain in their own nature overshoot themselves so far as to be without scruple of conscience, and become like brute beasts, void of discretion, unable to be moved either by life or death, or by any manner of feeling concerning their own soul's health, let us, in God's name, walk in fear and awe and bewail our sins every hour, early and late, that we may not be hardened after that fashion. For we see how those who become beastly in that way do gather such a hard-heartedness that a man cannot bow them once they have gained such boldness in giving themselves over to evil.

As touching the first point, let us be rightly assured that God revenges Himself in a terrible manner against all who indulge in their vices and take excessive liberty to do as they please, so that in the end they become brutish, like asses and dogs.

Now for the second point, if God uses such rigor toward those who were never yet trained in the Gospel, what will He do to us, when He has shown us the way of salvation for a long time, and yet we continue still like those who have never tasted good instruction? Do we not think that the punishment will be more horrible and dreadful upon us? Just as when Saint Paul declares in the first chapter to the Romans, that God gave men over to disordered and shameful lusts, so that they were utterly past all shame, he speaks expressly of the heathen and unbelievers who had no other knowledge of God than

through the skies and the earth, and the creatures. They had no other help than that great book by which to glorify God, and yet, forasmuch as they did not do so, therefore they are condemned in that manner.

But now we can have no such excuse as those poor souls had. We cannot say we are unable to discern what is good because we were blinded by Adam's sin and there is nothing but vanity in us. For God has given us His Word, which is justly called a lamp to guide us (Psalm 119:105). We have the Gospel, where our Lord Jesus Christ declares that He is our guide. Yet for all this, if we will provoke God willfully by disavowing the doctrine of salvation, where we should follow it (of which sort there are many even today, who seek to wallow in all lewdness and disorder, and despise God openly), what shall become of us?

Therefore, let us learn to walk in the fear of God. Let us note well that Saint Paul has not without cause set down here the height of all mischief, to show us what wages God will pay to all who do not yield to Him in due time and place, but rather take liberty in all wickedness as though they had escaped out of His hands. Let us be afraid to overshoot ourselves so far, and then, although we have wandered far before, God can skillfully enough draw us to Him.

Let us be afraid lest God should execute the said vengeance upon us, as well as upon them, according to this saying of Solomon, "When the wicked man is come to extremity, he despises all" (Proverbs 18:3). That is to say, he regards neither life nor death but flings forth like a brute beast.

Therefore, let us quake at such threatenings, for fear lest God execute them upon us when we cannot abide to be rebuked for our vices. On the contrary, let us practice the doctrine of Solomon, where he says,

"Happy is the man whose heart pricketh him and quickeneth him up night and day" (Proverbs 28:14). Let us learn, then, to be our own solicitors and to touch ourselves for our vices. When we enter into them, let us be abashed at them, cast down, and condemn ourselves until God has relieved us with His mercy.

After that manner, we must put this doctrine of St. Paul in use, to the end that when God has once knit us to Him by means of our Lord Jesus Christ and given us life, we may take good heed that that life is not defaced and quenched in us through our own lewdness and unthankfulness. Again, being minded to continue in this doctrine, we must learn first of all to humble ourselves (for it is certain that humility will cause us to resort unto God), and secondly, that our humility be matched with wariness, so that we are not reckless to flatter ourselves, but that through the same wariness, we strain ourselves to the utmost to fight against all our vices and lusts, tarrying for our Lord's leisure until He rids us of them quite and clean.

In the meantime, let us always win somewhat over ourselves, be it never so little, so it may continually appear that our Lord Jesus Christ works in us and makes His grace to prevail by causing us to go forward in goodness. Let us be so disposed that we may grow more and more until God has taken us out of this world.

Now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God with acknowledgment of our sins, praying Him to touch us to the quick, that it may draw us to true repentance and continue in it all the time of our life. Being utterly beaten down and made nothing in ourselves, may we learn to seek all our welfare in Him, and He, thereupon, lead us familiarly by the hand of our Lord Jesus Christ, so we may go to seek it there and go forward more and more in the profession of His

Gospel, with the intent also to be filled with His gracious gifts, which are the true fruits of that root.

May it please Him to grant this grace not only to us, but also to all people and nations. Amen.

The Twenty Ninth Sermon, which is the Ninth Upon the Fourth Chapter

20. But you have not learned Christ so:<

21. At leastwise if you have heard him, and been taught in him, even as the truth is in Jesus:

22. That is to say, that you put off the old man after the former conversation, which is corrupt after the lusts of error:<

23. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

24. And put on the new man which is created after God in righteousness and holiness of truth.

Saint Paul shows us by the example of the heathen men and unbelievers how wretched man's life is when he suffers himself to be led by his own affections and lusts. For we are so blinded by the sin of Adam that we do not discern between good and evil. However, that is not perceived at the first glance; but if you look into the whole

course of man's life, you shall find that they do not hold to any certain way, but that they wander to and fro, and in the end become stark beasts, so as they have no heart grief nor scruple of conscience at all.

Now, he shows what diversity there ought to be between the life of Christians who have been trained in the Gospel, and the life of the ignorant and blind wretches who never knew what God or His will is. That is the reason why he adds that we ought to keep a far different path, we (I say) that are trained up in Jesus Christ. As if he said that such as have not the light of God stray here and there, and no wonder though they do so, for they are blind and wander in darkness. But seeing that God has enlightened us, and we have Jesus Christ, the "dayspring from on high" shining upon us (Luke 1:78), what a shame is it if we are mingled with those that have no direction at all?

Therefore, there is no excuse for us if we allege the heathen. For so little can their example serve to lessen our sin that it shall double our condemnation. And why? God sets them before our eyes as looking glasses, wherein to behold what we ourselves are and what our nature is, all the while that we are unguided by the Holy Ghost. On the contrary part, we have our Lord Jesus Christ to show us the way of life. And it is not for naught that He has said that He is the light of the world (John 8:12), and that whoever walks in Him cannot stray; and again, that He is also the way, wherein a man cannot go amiss (John 14:6).

That, then, is the cause in effect why Saint Paul adds that it is not so with us, for we have learned Jesus Christ. And how? "You have heard him," says he. And his setting down of those words is of purpose to cut off all occasion of making a shroud of ignorance. For men are

loath to be counted fools, except it be when they should come to accounting with God. But then they would fain escape by saying, "I am a silly idiot, I am not able to busy myself in so many matters, it is impossible for me to set my mind unto that."

You see then how we can well enough acknowledge our ignorance when we are called and cited to make our reckoning before God. Again, another sort will say that the Gospel is too high and deep a thing for them. Saint Paul answers unto all this in one word, saying that we have heard Jesus Christ. As if he should say, it is long of none but ourselves that we have not been well and duly instructed, seeing that the Gospel has been preached unto us. For why? There God shows Himself so far forth as is expedient for us. Therefore, there is sufficient learning in the Gospel, and it is not for us to allege our own rawness, no more than our darkness; for God does the duty of a good and faithful schoolmaster.

To be short, if we continue still in our beastliness after we have heard the doctrine of the Gospel, we must blame ourselves for it. Surely, it is not on account of God, who knows what is meet for us. And that is also why Saint Paul protests, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). There is no veil in his preaching, but men might see Jesus Christ if they were not blinded by Satan with unbelief, leading them away into destruction. However the case stands, we could not fail on God's behalf to be guided and governed as is meet for us if we gave diligent ear to the things that He shows us in the Gospel.

He further aggravates the lewdness of those who do not profit in God's school when he adds that they have been taught, not as though it had been shown to them who Jesus Christ is for once and away,

and that they had only had some small taste of it. For then, it might seem that their ignorance were excusable. But seeing that our ears are continually beaten with it from day to day, and we have been confirmed and furthered in the faith, and yet we still abide in our beastliness, that is utterly inexcusable.

For he has shown heretofore that if all this does not benefit us, but that, notwithstanding men's stirring us up early and late to come unto God, and their offering of the food of life unto us to feed us withal, so that we have been confirmed in it from day to day, to the intent we should not lack anything, we remain at our ABCs like young beginners, not knowing what the rule of good life is. We can blame none but ourselves. Neither can we say that we are silly, ignorant souls, or that God speaks to us in too dark a language, or that we have not been trained up in the knowledge of the truth.

All this is settled by what Saint Paul tells us here: that God has not ceased with the preaching of His truth to us once or twice, but that He has ordained the Gospel to be preached continually, so that we might be confirmed in it all the time of our lives. The things which we did not conceive or understand at first are repeated to us and laid forth more familiarly in a known tongue, to the end that we might have greater confirmation of it. If we do not profit despite His calling us to Him without ceasing, we see our ingratitude too apparent in that we do not know Jesus Christ after our ears have been beaten so long with the Gospel.

This is spoken unto us; therefore, let us learn to reckon the time well.

When those who have known God's truth from their childhood come to an adult state, let them think thus with themselves: "I ought to be a great teacher" (as the Apostle also shows in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have

need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God" (Hebrews 5:12)). "It is now fifteen or twenty years since I came to the age of discretion, so as a number of men are still behind me, and it is God Himself who calls me. For the preaching of the Gospel unto me is not by chance, but thereby God shows the care that He has for my salvation and the love that He bears towards me. Seeing then that I have heard the Gospel for so long a time without ceasing, or might have done if the fault were not in myself, must I not need look for a terrible condemnation when I continue still in my beastliness?"

Again, let those who have been sometime in darkness and afterward are enlightened think thus: "It is now a year, five, ten, or more since God opened my eyes by His Word and drew me out of the dungeon wherein I was, in which if He had left me still, I had been a wretched, forlorn creature. Now that He has vouchsafed to enlighten me with the knowledge of His truth, which is so precious a thing, should I be reckless in the hearing and receiving thereof? Again, on the other side, God, pitying my rudeness, applies Himself as much as can be to my capacity, insomuch that He does even lisp (as you would say) to show me His secrets after a sweet and loving fashion, as if one should feed a little babe, and chew his meat to him, to the end he should have no more to do but to swallow it down. And shall I, notwithstanding, continue a dullard still?"

Then let us mark well all these things, and bear well in mind these words of St. Paul, where he says, not only that we have heard of Jesus Christ, but also that we have been taught by Him, because through God's goodness the Gospel was not preached unto us for one day and no more, but has rung a long time already in our ears.

We have to mark that St. Paul, speaking of the doctrine of the Gospel, matches Jesus Christ with it, according as it has been told us heretofore, that the thing which God shows us in His Word is the knowledge of Jesus Christ, who is also the end and substance thereof. Therefore, let us mark it, "to the intent that we wander not when we would fain profit in God's Word, but may have always a certain mark to aim at" (Romans 10:4). For we see a number who have turned over the Scripture leaf by leaf and are able to make a great report of it. But in the meantime, they do not know what the effect or pith of it is, for their aim is not at our Lord Jesus Christ.

So much the more behoves it us to mark well all the texts wherein it is shown to us that when we once know the benefits brought unto us by the Son of God, what power He has, and what treasures He offers towards us, then we have the true understanding of the Gospel. But without Jesus Christ, we have nothing.

Verily, we ought to be more provoked thereto by the example of those who name themselves Christians and yet do not know to which saint to vow themselves, as they say. For example, see how the Papists gad up and down without any certainty and are as reeds that bend with every wind. And why? Because there is no steadfastness but in our Lord Jesus Christ, and they are justly punished for not seeking Him. For although they are never so stout in their own imaginations, yet they must be fain to know in the end that the things they have built and forged in their own heads are nothing.

Therefore (as I have touched already), let us understand that Jesus Christ is the anchor whereunto God the Father calls us, and that we must not be drawn from Him for anything but apply all that we have unto Him. And that is the reason why St. Paul, in God's name and

authority, exhorts and warns those again who have heard Jesus Christ and been taught of Him by the doctrine of His Gospel.

Furthermore, he saith, "If ye have learned him well, according as the truth is in our Lord Jesus Christ." This is set down on purpose because there are a number of fickle-headed folk and fantastical fellows who make great protestation with full mouths that they are Christians, as though they had devoured the whole Gospel; and yet they have neither wisdom nor discretion in them. And would God that examples thereof were not so rife nowadays in the world.

But if a man should demand of every one of them whether they would not have the Gospel, "Yes, what else?" say they. That runs roundly with them without any stop, for saying is good cheap. But let a man examine the most part of them on how they have profited, and he shall scarce find one among a hundred of them who knows in good earnest what belongs to Jesus Christ. To say that men may lawfully eat flesh upon Fridays and to mock at all the superstitions of popery, and to say that they are but gewgaws and trifling things—that they can do with ease.

But in the meantime, if a man asks them what it is to be regenerated, what patience is, what newness of life is, and what it is to be fashioned again after the image of God, the most part of them will show that they never tasted of the truth of the Gospel but only quibbled about the bark of it and never came to the very substance of it. And this is not nowadays only, for St. Paul shows well that even in his time many folks abused the name of Christ and would need to be taken for great Christians, and yet never knew what the Son of God was.

Wherefore, let us mark well what is said here. For it is as if St. Paul should find fault with himself—not that the things which he had

spoken needed any amendment, but to give a sharper check or rebuke to such as did so falsify Christ's name and wickedly abuse His Gospel by making it a cloak for their wickedness. St. Paul then, making a countenance as it were to bethink himself better, says, "Yea, forsooth, but I pray God ye have learned him." As if he should say, "I speak indifferently to all such as have heard the pure doctrine of God. Howbeit, forasmuch as a great many will wrest and wring the things that are told them and take but only some patch of matter, I know not what: therefore, have they not any good foundation to build upon. To be short, they have no root of faith. And yet, for all that, have they once but fiddled over, I know not what; by and by, they are great clerks, to their own seeming."

And therefore, look well to it (says he), that ye make not a vain protestation, lest ye be convicted of falsehood before God and His angels; and that the name of Jesus Christ, which ought to be holy to you, be not taken in vain; and that whereas every one of you boasteth himself to be a Christian, yet notwithstanding ye know not to what end Jesus Christ was given of God His Father, nor how we are made partakers of Him, nor what our redemption is, nor how we may enjoy all His benefits. For if ye know not these things, it is certain that all this bragging of yours shall cost you right dear, for that you have with full mouths protested yourselves to be Christians, and yet notwithstanding know not which are the qualities of your Christendom, nor to what end to apply them. This, in effect, is the thing that we have to remember upon that strain.

Behold, St. Paul tells us here that if we have been trained in the Gospel, it behooves us to differ from the ignorant and the unbelievers. For God's selecting us and His setting of us in array alone by ourselves after that fashion, and His enlightening of us, is to the end that we should no more be as wanderers at random, nor as

silly blind wretches groping in the dark, but that we should know the right way of salvation. And especially, seeing we are daily exhorted to come unto Him, and He gives us means to further us more and more in the faith, let us be very wary that we do not profane so holy a thing as is the truth of the Gospel and the pure doctrine of God.

But we profane it if we know not to what end God has given it to us, and that we must bear in mind. For I have told you already that many fantastical persons will pretend Christianity well enough, but yet for all that, there is no substance nor root in them. Therefore, let us look well that we know whereunto we are called, and that God be not disappointed of His intent when He does the office of a schoolmaster towards us, but that we consider how He shows us the way of life and salvation; and like as He is a good and faithful teacher, so let us be like scholars unto Him.

But let us come now to the truth whereof Saint Paul speaks, which is (says he) that you put off the old man, which is corrupted with earthly lusts, even according to the conversation that you have led heretofore. He expresses yet better that all they who vaunt themselves to be the disciples of Jesus Christ, and yet nonetheless lead a lawless life, and do but give occasion of offense in the Church, are falsifiers, as if a man should bring forth a counterfeit deed.

Wherefore, let us mark that it is a cursed treachery when we say we intend to be Christians,* and profess it also with our mouths, and yet nonetheless go from the thing in our works which we protest in our words, as says Saint Paul in another place. For he that takes leave to do all evil, and yet will be taken to be of the number of God's children, it is certain that he denies Jesus Christ in his whole life, however much he confesses Him in words. Therefore, let us bethink

ourselves and consider that if we mean to be allowed of God, we must learn to rid away our old man.

By that word, the Scripture means all that we have of nature. For we know there are (as you would say) two wellsprings of mankind, that is to wit, Adam and our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, as in respect of our first birth, we come all out of the wellspring of Adam, and are corrupted with sinfulness, so as there is nothing but frowardness and cursedness in our souls. It stands us then on hand to be renewed in Jesus Christ and to be made new creatures.

For that cause, the "old man" betokens all that we have by birthright from our fathers. Now then, if a man be let alone in his first state, surely he shall be but a blind wretch, full of rebelliousness and spite against God. To be short, he shall tend all wholly unto evil, for we are altogether steeped in it. That is the thing that is meant by the old man, lest we should think that Saint Paul's intent was to rebuke only the vices that are apparent before men, like as when men will rebuke one that has played the wastrel for a time, they will say he must cast his old skin.

But here Saint Paul passes yet further, which is, that our likings are utterly untoward, that there is not one drop of goodness and uprightness in us, that all our thoughts are wicked, and that all our desires and affections are rebellious against God and against His will and justice.

Furthermore, whereas he speaks of unclothing or putting off, it is a common enough similitude, whereby it is meant that we must give over all that is our own and cast it quite away, that we may be clothed again with other ornaments, as he will add anon after. Here we see that there are two parts in ruling our life and in coming unto God.

The one is the forsaking of ourselves, and the other is that we be governed by God's Spirit. For needs must all that is our own be laid down before God takes in hand the guiding of us. And why? For our thoughts and God's doctrine, our affections and the commandments whereby God will have us to be ruled, are as fire and water. Therefore, all that is of our own nature must be cut off before God does govern us. That is the cause why we must begin at the forsaking of ourselves: which also is the very order that Saint Paul has followed in this text. "We must," says he, "put off the old man."

And secondly, we have to mark that Jesus Christ was sent to us to the end that we should be repaired after the image of God. It is true that He has reconciled us to God His Father by His death and passion, and that the shedding of His blood washes us from all our filthiness, and sets us free from damnation and endless death, and that His offering of Himself has made full satisfaction for us. Insomuch that if we resort to Jesus Christ for remission of our sins, God, of His own free goodness, accepts us as righteous, because He passes not what we are, but buries all our faults, and ceases not to favor us as His children, notwithstanding that we are wretched sinners. This benefit we receive by Jesus Christ.

But yet we must not separate the second point from it: which is, *that we must be sanctified by His Holy Spirit*, according to this saying, that He has received the fullness of all grace, to the end that all of us should draw out of Him. And Isaiah declares that the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of judgment, the spirit of uprightness, and the spirit of the fear of God rested upon Him (Isaiah 11:2). And was that for any need that He Himself had? No, but to the intent that we should receive that which we want, according to the measure that it pleases Him to deal unto us, as we have seen heretofore.

And that is the cause why Saint Paul, in the second to the Corinthians, says, "*He became poor to the intent to fill us with His riches*" (2 Corinthians 8:9). Then, if we desire to be received to mercy at God's hand, by the death and passion of His only Son, and to have our sins un-imputed to us because He has made discharge and payment for them: let us learn also that He is given to us to make us holy, to the end we should be governed by His Holy Spirit.

So then, if we intend to begin to rule our life well, we must forsake ourselves and fight against our own nature. And again, we must note also that there is no Christianity in us, neither can we have any knowledge of the Son of God, or of His power, or of His office, until we know that we ought to be repaired by Him according to the image of God. Those are the two things which we ought to mark well. It is true that this deserves well to be laid forth more at large: howbeit to the intent that the whole may be knit together in one link, let us note briefly, that we can never be allowed of God, nor do Him any service that He may like of, unless we enter into the said battle of offering force and violence unto all our thoughts and affections, to subdue them as prisoners to the obeying of God, and to kill them quite and clean. So much concerning the first point.

Now, to the end, this doctrine might not seem more than needed: Saint Paul puts the Ephesians in mind of what they had been. For we know that men are not willing to be rebuked, that is to say, they are loath to abide it and would rather be spared. Insomuch that when any warning is given them, they could find in their hearts to put it far from them. On the other side, we are so newfangled, that if a man tickles us not in the ear with some new thing, we do as it were despise and disdain it.

As, for example, if a man speaks to us of walking in the fear of God: "Who knows not that?" say we. "Let him go preach that to little children," will many a man say. And why? Because it seems to them to be but lost time to speak of things that are so well known to them. But does it therefore follow that they are familiar and in use with them? No, for as for them that say, "Do we not know well enough that God must be loved, honored, and served, that we must abstain from theft, extortion, lying, deceit, blasphemy, whoredom, and all other such things?" are they not the greatest despisers of God and of all right dealing? Yes.

But let us hearken to what Saint Paul tells us here. "Go to," says he, "I exhort you to put off the old man. If you say you have it not: advise yourselves well, and consider what you were at the time that God drew you to the knowledge of His Gospel: that is to wit, that you were as folk lost and utterly forlorne." So then, assure yourselves it is not for naught that I exhort you to rid away the old man: for you are not quite stripped out of him as yet. It was as a double garment about you before, and therefore you must be fain to labor the more earnestly now to lay away the residue that remains of it still.

Again, on the other side, he tells them also that it must not grieve them to be exhorted, as though the things that are spoken of were sufficiently known to them, especially seeing that experience shows that they never knew how to order their life. For to know that it behooves us to do this or that is not all that we have to do; but we must also show that our life is well acquainted with God's doctrine. Then, if it be perceived by our fruits that we have such a root in us, so as we can skillfully frame ourselves wholly to God's will, then may it be said that we are well learned. But if our former life betrays us to have been as stray sheep, or rather as utterly peaked away after our own lusts, and that there remains yet still a smatch of the same, that

we are not so well cleansed as were requisite: let us bow down our ears and hearken willingly to the thing which we see to be profitable, yea, and needful for us.

And so Saint Paul spoke not only for the Ephesians but also for us all in common. Wherefore, as often as it seems to us that we could well forbear the often putting of us in mind of one thing, let us examine our life, and if we find not ourselves yet thoroughly rid of the diseases that we are told of, let us abide to be taught more and more, assuring ourselves that it is not enough for us to have the doctrine of God swimming in our brain, but that it must be well settled in our hearts, so that our life (as I said before) may answer for us, that we are learned in good earnest.

And Saint Paul, having spoken of the old man, says that he is corrupted according to the lusts of error and deceit. In saying that it is corrupted, he compares the agedness of our souls with the agedness as we see it in our bodies. When a man comes to old age, he becomes weak in respect of strength, both of body and mind; he forgoes all his lustiness and hangs his wings. To be short, he is as good as half dead: for his age does so abate his courage that he must look still towards his grave, which waits for him. And Saint Paul takes a resemblance hereof in the old agedness of the soul. Now I have told you already that to put away the old agedness of the soul (or the old man) is to forsake our own nature, because it is altogether cursed, and we bring nothing with us from our mother's womb that is good and clean.

Therefore, if we are given to our own imaginations and follow our own fleshly reason, and give the bridle to our affections, then is the soul in its old agedness. And Saint Paul says that by that means it is corrupted; that is to say, there is no life of God in it, as we have seen

heretofore. Let us understand then that we are corrupt so long as we continue in our old man, that is to say, so long as we continue still in our own state and nature. No doubt, but we will think ourselves to have liveliness enough: but that is but madness, and all the mastery that we try shall be but to break our necks until we have forsaken and given over both our thoughts and our lusts.

And that is the cause why Saint Paul speaks purposely of the desires and lusts of deceit. For he shows that men are so blinded that they do not discern how the devil deceives them by the enticements which he sets before them. For whosoever is not touched with true fear of God will let himself loose; and if a man says to him, "Unhappy creature, wilt thou undo thyself so?" He will answer, "No." For it seems not to him that he serves the devil. And why? For they that are bewitched with Satan's illusions after that sort do so cleave unto him that they become stark dolts and dullards.

To the end, then, that we learn to flatter ourselves no more in our own conceits, nor to fall asleep thereupon, Saint Paul tells us that our lusts are full of deceits: as if he should say, "When you take yourselves to be in good case, and you have all your own wishing, and fortune (as you term her) smiles upon you, so as you prosper in all things everywhere, and you want nothing: behold, all your felicity is but falsehood." To be short, Saint Paul meant to warn us here that we ought to suspect ourselves in all our desires.

Therefore, if a man intends to rule his life well, he must first and foremost dislike himself and consider that all that he imagines of his own conceit is but an illusion of Satan, wherewith he deceives and beguiles himself, and that as many as are of them are but as snares to entangle him on all sides. When we once know this, we shall have profited greatly, not only for one day but for all our life long. And

forasmuch as we see such a number of wretched souls cast away themselves upon the hope of some profit which they have imagined in their own heads, let us beware that we hold not the same trade, that is to say, that we follow not our own good intents, as men term them. For we shall but throw ourselves headlong into destruction if we follow the way that our own nature drives us to.

And why? For all our own lusts and likings are deceitful. Then there is no other shift but to lay aside the reason which we think we have, together with all the enticements of Satan and the world, so as every whit of it be cast away, and we well appointed, knowing that the sweetness of them serves but to beguile us the sooner, that we might not perceive the deadly poison which is hidden underneath. Thus, in effect, we have to bear in mind how Saint Paul tells us that until such time as we have learned to deny ourselves and to hold ourselves as prisoners under God's Word, yea, and to rid ourselves quite and clean from the things that we have of ourselves and of our own nature: we know not what Christianity means, we know not whereto the Gospel tends, nor to what end it is preached.

For it is not enough to have put away the old man for once; but we must profit in it more and more, according to the warning that is given us here. And in good sooth, Saint Paul had taught the Ephesians, and they had received his doctrine; and yet nevertheless, he exhorts them a long time after, as we see. Hereby he shows us that it is for us to inure ourselves to patience all our life long. Although then that we have already struggled greatly to thrust all our affections, all our lusts, and all our likings underfoot: yet shall we never have so overmastered ourselves that we shall be thoroughly reformed. And therefore, it stands us on hand to give all our endeavor thereto, and to labor for it all the time of our life.

And so in few words, you see the stoutness which we must have to forsake all our own lusts and all our wicked thoughts.

And hereupon we must proceed to the second point, which is that we must be renewed. For it is not enough that men dislike themselves and hate their vices by shunning them; we must also frame ourselves to God's will, according to this saying: "Hate evil, and do good" (Psalm 34:14). So then, the things that Saint Paul has spoken of hitherto are as a preparative to set our life in good order, just as when a man intends to have a good crop in his field, he must first stub it to rid away the brambles, bushes, and evil weeds. Afterward, he must plow it and harrow it and then sow it, and so fruit will spring from his labor.

Therefore, if we purpose to bear fruit unto God and are desirous to order our life in such a way that His name may be glorified by it, we must first cause ourselves to be stubbed, for we are full of naughty affections, which are as thorns and thistles and therefore must be cut away and plucked up by the root. Afterward, we must be tilled so that the plow passes upon us. That is to say, when our Lord makes us feel His justice, we must be so sorry that we are so given to naughtiness, that it may be as a good tilth to us at God's hand. This is what Saint Paul has taught us thus far.

Now, he sows the good seed, to the end that God may gather the good fruit which He requires of us—that is to say, that He may be honored by our hands and that we may show that we do indeed think ourselves beholden to Him for all things. That is why he speaks next of being renewed in mind and understanding: that is to say, that we must be reformed in all things throughout and be so changed that men may perceive that we have not only forsaken ourselves but also that God reigns in us without any gainsaying and possesses us both

in our affections and in our thoughts, as He rightfully deserves that we should be wholly given unto Him.

Now, let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us feel them so deeply that it may make us truly sorry for them and lead us to walk straight in the path wherein He has set us. And that, to bring the same to pass, we may consider to what end our Lord Jesus is sent to us, so that the things He has done for us may not be lost and perish through our lewdness and carelessness, but that we, being renewed, may learn to serve our God in holiness and righteousness, showing how greatly we value the most noble and excellent redemption which He performed, in that He spared not His only Son for our sakes. And so let us all say, Almighty God, heavenly Father, etc.

**The Thirtieth Sermon,
which is the Tenth upon the Fourth
Chapter**

23. Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind,

24. And put ye on the new man which is created after God in righteousness and holiness of truth.

25. Wherefore put away lying, and speak truth every one to his neighbor: for we are members one of another.

26. Be ye angry, and sin not

We have now to lay forth the second part of the well-ordering of our life set down here by Saint Paul, which is that we must walk in newness of life, because it behooves us to be reformed by God's Spirit. And to the intent that we may know that our changing must not be in part only but in whole, Saint Paul takes here the thing that seems most excellent and most esteemed in man's nature: namely, knowledge, understanding, wit, reason, and all manner of ability of mind.

Then, if there be any wisdom in us, Saint Paul says, it must be corrected. And why? True, it is that our reason, of itself, is always commendable, but we are so corrupted by Adam's sin that we have not the skill to think so much as one good thought, which is not crooked and full of malice and rebellion against God (Romans 8:7). And although this be not perceived openly, yet there will always be some secret hypocrisy lurking, which is enough—and too much—to condemn us before God.

You see then, that the thing we must enforce ourselves to, if we purpose to please God, is that, being rid of all our own conceits and affections, we get us a new guide—that is to say, God's Spirit. According to this, he uses a like manner of sentence in the twelfth chapter to the Romans, in speaking of the Christian life: "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2).

It behooves us to be transformed, not only in our affections, which are sinful, as every man may judge, but even in the thing which seems faultless—that is, in the reason that we have spoken of. To be short, we must be sacrificed, or else our life will always be unholy and unclean. And this sacrificing is expounded by Saint Paul in the text before alleged, to be the laying away and mortifying of all that

we have of ourselves. Our true perfection, then, is that, fighting against all that is of our own nature, we suffer ourselves to be governed by God's Spirit so that it may be perceived that we are utterly changed.

For it is not enough that our life has some honesty to the worldward, so as it may be commended and had in good reputation among men; but also ambition and all other vices that lie lurking within us must be cleansed away, and our Lord must have the guiding of us.

And for that cause also, he adds that we must be reformed according to God, namely in true righteousness and holiness. Just as he has previously condemned the old man, which (as I have told you already) is all that we bring from our mother's womb, so now he says that we must be new creatures. For the same reason, he directs us to the example of our Lord Jesus Christ in the sixth chapter of Romans, saying that we must be crucified and die with Him, namely in respect of the old man, and also be fashioned like His rising again, to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4-6).

It is true that he uses other words there; however, it all comes to the same thing: that just as our Lord Jesus is the second Adam, so must He be a pattern to us, and we must be fashioned after Him and His image, that we may be like Him. Now, surely this will not come to pass of our own nature. Yet, this exhortation is not more than needed, because when the Holy Scripture brings us to our Lord Jesus Christ, it does not mean that we should be as blocks of wood, but that we should come and offer ourselves to God so that He may work in us.

Indeed, these two things agree very well: that the power which is in us should come from God, for it is He who moves us unto good, it is He who brings us to it, it is He who gives us both the will and the

ability to perform His will, as we have seen in another text (Philippians 2:13). Yet, God works so in us that, by His gracious favor, the good works that are done are called ours. And, truly, when we are so led by Him, we go.

It is not to be wondered at that God's goodness stretches so far as to make the things ours which are His, and whereof He alone deserves the praise. For we call the bread that we eat our own, though we have it only by title of gift. Even though people labor for it, it could not benefit them without God's free blessing. Thus, whatever is given to us, we call it our own. In the same way, Saint Paul exhorts us to put on the new man—not that we can do it by ourselves, for Jesus Christ must clothe us with His righteousness and make us partakers of the gifts of His Holy Spirit.

And I ask you, what is meant by putting on the new man? I have told you already that it is the utter changing of us in our thoughts, our desires, and (to be brief) in all the parts of our soul. Now, is not such an alteration the special work of God and the gift of His Holy Spirit? Saint Paul, therefore, does not mean that we can do anything by our own power, but yet that every one of us ought to strive to follow wherever He calls us. Moreover, he warns us that all our life is very dangerous until we change and that the newness appears in us.

Now Saint Paul says that the new man is created after God and His image. In this, he confirms the matter I am about to touch upon: that is to say, although we strive to the utmost that we can, we can do nothing unless we are first moved by God's grace. Which of us can be our own maker? We know that honor must be reserved for God alone. But here the case stands upon a new creation. Therefore, it cannot be in man's will, nor in his power.

Saint Paul also resolves that doubt and scruple by saying that the new man is created by God. As if he should say, "My friends, indeed you ought not to abuse the grace that is offered to you by the Gospel, but nevertheless, be assured that even when you have exerted yourselves to dedicate yourselves to God's service, you can do nothing further than what He works in you by His Holy Spirit." Accordingly, he says in another place that we do work out our own salvation (Philippians 2:12), as though we could do something of ourselves. Yet, he adds that it must be in fear and trembling, meaning with the putting away of all presumption, knowing that we must depend upon another. He adds the reason: "For it is God who gives both the will and the ability to perform it, and all of His own free goodness" (Philippians 2:13).

In this manner, then, we must endeavor ourselves. Yet, we must not therefore conceive a vain overconfidence in the meantime, as though we had some resource and were able on our own side to do even the smallest thing without God's grace. Saint Paul exhorts us rather to fear and caution. And why? Because we are as weak as can be, and not only that, but also dead, as good as rotten carcasses in all cases of our salvation, and have not so much as one good thought of our own. Seeing (I say) that we have all at God's hand (James 1:17), and that He must be the one to work it by the power of His Holy Spirit, let us learn to walk in humility.

Moreover, let us not cease to make His grace available, assuring ourselves that His working by His power will always be in such a way that the praise must ever redound to Him alone, and no drop of it remains over for ourselves. You see then what we have to remember upon this speech, where Saint Paul says that the new man is created. Indeed, in this, he shows how we have fallen from our original state and from the place to which we were advanced by God's grace in the

person of our forefather Adam. As if he said, "Adam's fall is to us a spiritual death, whereby we are cut off and cast away from the number of God's creatures."

And not without cause does God so often utter this dreadful saying, "It repented the Lord that He had made man" (Genesis 6:6). For therein, He detests the corruption and sin that are in us. Not that God has any human passions in Him, but to show us that He utterly dislikes us until His image is renewed in us. It is said, "God saw all that He had made, and it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). But when our father Adam once fell and made himself a stranger to the fountain of life, he was immediately stripped stark naked of all goodness. For being separated from God, what could he be but utterly lost and past hope of recovery?

Shall we find either life, righteousness, holiness, soundness, or uprightness outside of God? No. You see then that Adam was, as it were, cut off from the array of creatures; he was not worthy to be reckoned even among the frogs and other vermin of the earth. Brag as much as we like, that is our nature: we bear a greater curse of God than is on all the lice, fleas, and worms of the earth. That is the reason why Saint Paul shows us that God cannot acknowledge us for His children until His image is restored in us, which is done by this new creation.

For just as Adam drew us all down and plunged us with himself into the gulf of death, so are we created anew by God in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. And for that reason, He calls Himself the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25). For we must rise again in Him if we want to live indeed. Which thing cannot be, except we have first been dead, as was declared more fully this morning.

Therefore, we ought always to remember this reason: that we do not presume ourselves to be righteous or to make our lives acceptable before God, but instead, be fully resolved and persuaded that God will take nothing from us in good worth except that which He knows to be His own. For, as I said, without Him, there is nothing but evil. By that means, His image was defaced in us by Adam's sin, and therefore it stands us in hand to be made new again in Jesus Christ.

Now he shows us how that may be done, saying, “in righteousness and holiness.” By the word “righteousness,” he means soundness and uprightness, so that we live with our neighbors without deceit, without malice, and without doing harm, yielding to every man what is his. When such soundness reigns in us, we will show by our deeds that we are fashioned again after God’s image in righteousness.

But it is not enough that men have their rights unless God also has His. For what purpose is it to not be thieves towards men and yet to be traitorous towards God? Or to abstain from stealing away our neighbor’s goods while, at the same time, robbing God of His honor? Therefore, righteousness must be matched with holiness, for the two tables of the law are inseparable. Under the word “holiness,” Saint Paul comprehends all things that belong to the service of God.

The newness of our life, therefore, is this: to walk purely before God, to eschew all corruption and uncleanness, to separate ourselves from all the defilements of the world, and to offer ourselves in sacrifice to God; and, on the other side, to walk soundly and uprightly with our neighbors. The performance of these two things is all that is required for the perfection of a Christian life.

Now, it is certain that God’s law has not taught us halfway what we have to do; God has there shown us a right rule to which nothing may be added or taken away. For in those two points is all our

righteousness contained: namely, that God be honored with all fear and reverence on our part, and that we serve one another without doing harm.

Again, forasmuch as men are pitiably inclined to feigning, and always think it enough to set some fair countenance upon the matter, therefore does Saint Paul add “truth.” As if he said that we may be taken for the holiest people in the world and yet nevertheless be condemned before God if we are not cleansed from all hypocrisy so that God may be our witness and judge that we are not double-minded or have any duplicity within us, but go on in straightforward simplicity before Him.

So then, although our hands are clear from theft, extortion, and all other things that are against charity, if we have lusts lurking within us, we will still be unclean before God. Not without cause, therefore, does Saint Paul add the word “truth,” even though he had already comprehended the whole perfection of our life in the two former points. It is because we would always try to content God with some outward show, according to the vanity and lies with which we are filled.

Therefore, it was necessary to add this: that just as God is a spirit, we also must be faithful and true before Him. For He abhors all doubleness of heart, which the Scripture terms “heart and heart.” If we fall into making partitions and keep some hidden chamber behind, everything that comes from us must be filthy and corrupt, as it springs from an evil and infected fountain. Then, if we desire to have our hearts approved by God, the fountain must first be cleansed, and truth must reign in us.

Now we see, in effect, where we ought to apply all our endeavor as long as we live here below. To boast of being Christians and not to

consider on what condition Jesus Christ is our head and has knit us unto Him is to turn all things upside down, as was said this morning. Therefore, whatever manner we desire to be counted and esteemed among men, the same must we be before God and His angels.

Therefore, we must fight against our own vices until all that is of our own nature is done away with. Not that this can be done in one day, but we must continually move toward it more and more. Further, let us assure ourselves that our Lord Jesus Christ is given to us as a pattern and example, and moreover, it is His office to reform us by the Spirit of God His Father, so that we may walk in newness of life and become God's creatures, and so that all that we have drawn from the corruption of Adam's sin may be completely cleansed away.

Along with this, let us also consider the essence of the things that God allows and which is the rule of good life: namely, first to honor and serve God, and afterward to walk neighborly with one another, endeavoring to do good to those who have need of us and abstaining from doing all manner of evil and harm. This doctrine would be easy enough to understand if we were not utterly perverted by our wicked affections. Indeed, there is not a man who is not a great preacher when it comes to teaching others; but yet, as clear and plainly known as these things are, no man can apply them to his own use. Yet, there will be no excuse for us when we must come to account before the great Judge. Wherefore, let us bear this doctrine well in mind and take good heed to it, seeing that it is so poorly practiced throughout the whole world.

Among the Papists, there is plenty of talk about God's service and living holily, but yet the world sees how those wretched souls stand buzzing about a heap of petty trifles, and for all their over-laboring of themselves, they are never the further forward but rather the further

off from God. And what is the cause of it? Even this: that every man, in his own mind, devises a rule to his own liking; and in the meantime, God, speaking familiarly and without any darkness, is not heard at all, but men give themselves to things that cannot avail them. As for us, although we have the light of the Gospel and can say that the superstitions of Papistry are but trifles, yet we are nevertheless far off from this doctrine.

And if a man were to sift our lives, where is this true holiness? Where is this righteousness? For as for the Gospel, most men take what they like of it and tread God's truth under their feet as often as they please. In short, you will find that those who most brag of their reformation nowadays are unholy and unclean people, yea, and (for the most part) even dogs that bark against God, despise His truth, and rail at His Word unless they let it slip because they think it neither here nor there. That is the holiness of a number who would be counted today as great Christians and pillars of the Church, insomuch that they would make themselves greater than God if they could; yea, and although they are but worms and worm's meat, they do not cease to blaspheme so far as to cast forth their thunderbolts and madness, saying that men shall speak as they will have them, or else they will conquer God for it.

And as for the said righteousness, where shall a man find it? Everyone says there is nothing but deceit, nothing but craft, nothing but forswearing, extortion, outrage, and violence. Everyone complains of his neighbors, and his neighbors complain of him. However the case stands, we see that righteousness is as good as banished out of the world. Therefore, inasmuch as the name of Jesus Christ and of His Gospel is so shamefully unhallowed by those who falsely abuse it, we have so much more need to remember what Saint Paul says here: namely, that God will disclaim us until we bear His

mark and are created anew in Jesus Christ. How? By being truthful. Or (as I have said already), though we were esteemed as angels, yet our hypocrisy will always be loathsome before God if we are not cleansed of it and endeavor with a true and right-meaning affection to employ ourselves in the service of God and in helping our neighbors.

Now, hereupon, he divides this doctrine into several points, applying it to specific exhortations. For first, he says that every man must leave lying and speak the truth to his neighbors, because we are all members of one body. Not without cause does Saint Paul here lay forth things particularly, which he had previously spoken of generally. For we would always shift our hands from the doctrine, that it might vanish away in the air and not come near us.

Not that God's speaking to us in general might not suffice, if we were teachable as we ought to be, to receive instruction at His hand; but because we are so entangled in our vanities, if God says generally that we must be reformed according to His image, and utterly renounce ourselves, it does not touch us at all, but we let it pass. Therefore, He is compelled to decipher it in detail, as if He should make an anatomy of our thoughts and affections, and bring to light the vices we would gladly hoard up in secrecy.

That is the thing which Saint Paul goes about now. He had said that it behooves us to be reformed after the image of God by our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the new man, and the head to whom we must be fashioned. Now, if he had gone no further than this, that doctrine would have been received without opposition, but in the meantime, no man would have been bettered by it as by a lively instruction.

But now, he speaks of whoredom, theft, deceitfulness, drunkenness, hatred, resentment, and the subtle conflicts that arise between

neighbor and neighbor. When things are thus laid forth in particulars, men are more awakened; and although every man shrinks back and invents excuses and devises shifts, whether we like it or not, we must needs feel some pricks of conscience within us. That is the order which Saint Paul keeps here.

Therefore, let us make it clear that it is not enough for us to have been taught our duty in one word, and as it were, at a glance; but God has need to warn us and show us plainly both the vices to which we are subject and inclined by our own nature and also the vices to which the devil draws us by his temptations and wiles. In short, God must be compelled to guide our hands, our feet, our eyes, our ears, and our mouths. He must make us see that we may overreach ourselves in this way and that way, to the end that we may be well-armed on all sides, so that the devil does not find any gap open or be able to breach us.

This is what we have to bear in mind, to the intent that we do not take ourselves to be so able as to think that hearing a matter once is enough for us. For we shall wonder to see how the devil will nevertheless overreach us in many ways. Therefore, let us be well aware that we give good heed to all the warnings given to us because it is not more than what is needed.

And forasmuch as Saint Paul had spoken of truth, he says, "Put away lying, and speak every man the truth." He sets the word "truth" in a different sense here than he did before. For in calling holiness and righteousness truthful, he meant that there ought to be no glossing over or disguising, but rather a right-meaning simplicity, so that when God looks as a witness into our hearts, He may find no double-dealing in us. That was how the word "truth" was taken before.

Now, he speaks of the truth that ought to reign among us when we trade or bargain with one another. Then, we must be faithful and trustworthy in all our business and dealings, and we must use no wiles or deceit. Yet, that is not enough; we must note that this truth, of which Saint Paul speaks, is such a plain dealing that we lay open all that is in our hearts, if need requires, and by no means should we attempt to gain other men's goods by subtlety and craftiness, nor profit ourselves by another man's loss.

On the contrary, under the word "lying," he comprehends not only the lies that are made in speech, such as when a man says that white is black — for example, if one should ask a man the price of a thing, and he would sell for a crown that which is not worth a shilling. Saint Paul does not speak of the lies that are so gross and far out of proportion that even little children can condemn them. Rather, by the name of "lying," he means all manner of counterfeiting and conning, and, to be brief, all the policies and shifts that men employ and in which they glory.

What the world calls wisdom or policy, Saint Paul calls outright lying. And why? Because a man is not considered to be witty nowadays unless he can filch and deceive, I mean, by byways and covert conveyances, which men shall not perceive. But this behavior is worse than picking a chest lock, breaking apart the ironwork to get at the money, or even murdering a man when a thief comes with a naked sword to cut a poor traveler's throat.

Therefore, these crafty murderers, who insist on being counted as honest men, may disguise themselves as much as they wish by their hypocrisy; yet they are called here both deceivers and thieves and murderers. Not that they appear so before men, but God, who sees

deeper than we do, will judge their doings as they truly are. And what shall men gain by excusing themselves? Nothing.

Then, if we mark this matter well, we shall see that, in speaking of lies, Saint Paul condemns the things that men make most of, such as subtlety, cleverness, and the skill to behave oneself in all company. For, as the world says, a man must "hold with the hare and hunt with the hound"; he must beware that he is not overreached and must always prevent being prevented.

The fashion of the world, then, is that every man stands so much on his guard as to have his nets ready to entrap other men and to entangle them a hundred times before they are aware of it. But Saint Paul says we must use such soundness and plain dealing that we must speak truth to one another. And he brings us back to what he had spoken of earlier, to another purpose: namely, that we are all but one body.

Now then, let us come to our own members. If one of my hands were to play tricks and convey all things to itself to the harm of the other, or if my foot were to conspire against my leg, or if my belly could work some sly trick against my stomach, what a thing would that be? Now then, if we are members of our Lord Jesus Christ, is it not a separating of ourselves from His body when we use such fine shifts and sly tricks, even if they are not condemnable before men? No doubt we will protest with our mouths that we are Christians, but whatever we pretend, Jesus Christ will not be misfashioned after our fancy.

Just as He is one, so He wills that we should all be one in His body, with this condition: that each of us serves our neighbors. This cannot be done unless all counterfeiting is first put away, just as we see that the hand simply yields itself to the service of the rest of the body, and

likewise the foot and every other member do their duty. If any one part is in danger, the rest do not withdraw but all employ themselves to help it. Among them, there is no attempt at deceit, but all cling together according to the order of nature.

In the same way, we ought to prove ourselves to be the members of Jesus Christ by such plain dealing. Saint Paul then applies this particular exhortation to what he had spoken of generally: namely, that if we are cleansed from all hypocrisy and deceit before God, we will show it in our whole life. For when we deal with one another, we will use no guile but walk plainly. That is one point.

From this springs another point: that we must not provoke or anger one another. For we see that if someone so much as moves us a little, we immediately become angry, and our passions are so excessive that there is neither reason nor measure with us. And when people are so carried away, they forget themselves to such an extent that nothing can weigh with them, no matter what persuasion is used. Therefore, Saint Paul says that if we are not at peace with one another, we cannot be united into the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, besides that, as much as lies within us, we deface God's image in us by giving such headway to our passions and becoming so heated against one another.

It would seem likely that he meant to take this common saying from the fourth Psalm. Not that he quotes the Psalm to convey its natural sense, but rather to apply it to his own purpose. For we may well take many texts of Scripture and apply them to various things, albeit without altering their meaning, while still maintaining their natural sense. In the same way, to make his saying better received, Saint Paul says, "Be angry, and sin not," as if it had been a common saying, almost taken for a proverb.

Now, David uses a word that properly means to "chafe" or "storm." This was in rebuking those who wrongfully persecuted him because they were hardened in their malice and possessed by such great and venomous rage against him that they made no conscience of oppressing him. Therefore, seeing such willful stubbornness in his enemies, he says to them, "Be angry, and you shall not sin." This means he advises them that the reason they were so carried away with rage against him was that there was neither fear of God nor honesty nor conscience left to hold them back, but that they had become like wild beasts.

That is why he says, "Be angry," meaning, enter a little into questioning and reasoning with yourselves; examine what you are doing, and then you will not sin anymore. If each of you will go into his chamber and think carefully, you shall perceive that, until now, you have been driven by a diabolical rage. Now, this doctrine is necessary for all men because we see the headiness in us, so much so that no sooner do we conceive any notion in our heads than we immediately, without inquiring into God's will or asking for counsel from His mouth, as the Prophet Isaiah exhorts us to do (Isaiah 30:1), take what we have conceived for good and try to subdue everyone to our liking.

Therefore, the reason we overshoot ourselves so much is that we do not enter into the examination of the matter with ourselves to discern between good and evil by giving God His due authority and listening with all reverence and modesty to the things He shows us through His Word. We need to be angry, that is to say, to be grieved with ourselves, to complain about ourselves, and to stop soothing ourselves as we have been wont to do. If we do this, we shall not sin; that is, the great impudence that is so deeply rooted in us will soon be abated, for we shall abhor fighting against God. If our affections

get ahead of us, God will set His foot against them and say, "How now? Will you make war against me unaware?"

Now, hereupon Saint Paul says, "Be ye angry, and sin not." As if he were to say, "My friends, what makes you storm so against one another? For if even a small fault is committed against you, you are immediately in a rage and would rend up heaven and earth to be avenged for the offense, yet in the meantime, you have enough reason to be offended with yourselves. Do not seek to find reasons for anger outside yourselves, for how many ways do you offend God every day? You cease not to provoke Him early and late. Yet, if someone but touches the tip of your finger, you are by and by in a pelting rage. And what is the cause of this but that, as it seems, you have conspired with Satan to torment yourselves so? You persuade yourselves that you shall be well at peace when you have avenged the wrong done to you. But it is a cursed peace when men rest by being avenged on those who have offended them.

The way, then, to assuage all these wicked heats is for every man to think within himself that he surely has enough reason to be grieved with himself, to be angry with himself, and to be avenged on himself. According to this, Saint Paul, in the second letter to the Corinthians, declares what true repentance is, stating that the sorrow we conceive upon recognizing our sins brings with it a grief that does not allow us to be at peace or rest but makes us chafe against ourselves, considering the terribleness of God's wrath that we have provoked against us, while not ceasing to remain of good hope, resting upon God's goodness and mercy.

Therefore, if one comes to the point that they can be angry with themselves when they know they have sinned and do not seek revenge on their enemies but are instead ready to do good to them

and pray for them, that is a good exercise, and every man ought to spend himself in that battle. For surely, these are good and holy passions when a man's anger proceeds from a zeal toward God and a love that he bears toward Him. And if we do this, that is to say, if each of us is grieved at his own vices, certainly, we shall never find leisure to be at enmity with others or to spite our neighbors. If we have a true zeal for God's honor, undoubtedly, we will forget the offenses committed against us and will not be so hasty as to say, "I will maintain my honor or honesty." For we shall have a greater and worthier motive to hold us back: the avenging of the fault that we ourselves have committed against God and whereby we have dishonored Him as much as in us lay, and the forgetting of the offense committed against ourselves.

Thus, you see, in effect, what we have to consider regarding this, where Saint Paul shows us that men must turn their eyes away from the occasions they may conceive to avenge themselves against others. For if a fly but crosses our eyes, we are immediately in spiteful anger, so much so that there needs no more to make us fall out with everyone who does anything that displeases us. So, let us learn to forsake ourselves and think of our own faults so that we may be so displeased with them that it may rid us of our choler, through which we fight against God, and make us angry at the great number of vices to which we are too much given.

That is the thing we have to remember in the first place. As for the second point, we will delay it until next Sunday, at which time it shall, by God's leave, be discoursed at length.

Now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our sins, praying Him to make us perceive them more and more, and to enlighten us so by the doctrine of the Gospel,

that we may see our own sins and shamefulness, be ashamed of ourselves, and also behold the righteousness which has been shown to us in our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us tend thereto with the endeavor to be fashioned after it, so that we may come daily nearer and nearer to it until we fully cleave unto it. And in the meantime, may He bear with our infirmities, granting us the grace to amend them from day to day, in the hope that He will show Himself merciful towards us, provided we play the judges against ourselves in condemning all the vices we perceive to be in us. May it please Him to grant this grace, not only to us but also to all people and nations of the earth. Amen.

The Thirty First Sermon,

Which is the Eleventh Upon the Fourth Chapter

26. Be ye angry, and sin not: Let not the sun go down upon your anger,

27. Neither give place to the devil.

28. Let him that stole, steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands in the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

We saw last Sunday that if every one of us looked well to himself and to his own vices, we would have enough to prevent our chafing and anger from wreaking our wrath upon those who offend us. For we are already so wayward in ourselves that a small thing will put us out of patience. Therefore, the fault that another man commits against us, be it ever so small, will always set us in a rage.

And why is that? Because we take too much time to look upon other men's faults and, in the meantime, forget our own. The remedy, then, which is set down here to keep us from being so soon and so lightly offended at other men's faults, is that each of us should enter into himself and vex and chafe himself there when he sees himself so wretched, as indeed all of us are.

Now, after that Saint Paul has shown that it would be much better and more beneficial for us to be grieved at our own vices than to be offended at every small occasion when others do not behave to our liking, he adds this: "Let not the sun go down upon your anger."

We must not understand by this that Saint Paul meant to acquit those who are quick to anger and quickly appeased, for that is a vice

worthy of blame. Although it is more excusable than harboring displeasure that turns into rancor or hatred, we cannot be so soon pacified without already having offended God with our wrath. For we hear what is said even by the mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ: "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment" (Matthew 5:22). We do not need to have given any blow or done any open wrong that might bring us before a judge; if we have only been offended enough to conceive a grudge, there is no excuse for us.

Therefore, when Saint Paul forbids us from nurturing our anger, he does not fully justify those who are gentle and easily reconciled and who will soon forgive, for they are already blameworthy, as I said before. He proceeds here by degrees, as if he should say, "My friends, if every one of us thought upon his own sins, it is certain that we would be moved to dislike ourselves, for we provoke God's wrath against us. And he who has a lively feeling of his own faults will arm himself against himself with them." We ought to have a zeal for God as if we were His attorneys, and that zeal should compel us to condemn evil wherever we find it.

But anger is always at our elbow; yes, it dwells in us, so we shall never be as perfect as we should wish to be as long as we are in this world. Yet, however the case stands, let us beware that we do not allow ourselves to be possessed by inordinate passions. If we conceive any resentment and go to bed upon it, surely we will be poisoned soon, and the mischief will not be easily perceived.

It is as if a man who already feels himself afflicted with some infectious disease lingers in his misery and by all means possible avoids the physician, running as far away from him as he possibly can if the physician offers to come to him. And afterward, when he

seeks a remedy, it is too late because the disease has settled and grown so strong that medicine can no longer help him. So it is with the man who is angry and continues in it without purging the malice from his heart; it is as if he had an internal and hidden disease that becomes so strong it later becomes incurable.

That is the second degree which Saint Paul sets down here. First, he shows us how we may be faultless before God in respect to anger and wrath: that is, by each of us thinking upon our own faults, condemning them, being sorry for them, and feeling such anguish of mind for them that we are as men half in despair. That is a holy anger, one which God approves of.

Yet, for as much as we are weak, if we commit a fault, at least let us not double it. And though we have offended God, let us not let it cause us to multiply wrath against Him, lest the devil gain possession of us and we cannot afterward abide being brought back again into the right way, but our passions overmaster us and lead us without end or measure. In any case, let us beware of that.

That also is why he says that we give place to the devil when the sun goes down upon our anger. It is true that as soon as we have tripped, the devil has already gained power over us; however, he is bridled in such a way that if we recognize our faults and amend them, God does not allow him to hold us captive as prisoners. But when we are so far gone as to take offense, liking our own testiness, and thereby conceive numerous grudges that fester inwardly more and more, we have given Satan entrance, and he has taken possession of us.

Afterward, it is too late to wish to return, for the mischief is rooted so deeply and has grown so strong that medicine can no longer do any good, as I have already shown. Now we see Saint Paul's meaning. Therefore, let us put this doctrine into practice. The first point is to

examine the evil within us so that we may be angry with ourselves, and each of us becomes a foe to himself, driven by zeal toward God to hate and abhor our own vices. Let that be the first thing on which we focus our study, and then we shall have enough to occupy our chafing and anger.

We shall no longer be so hasty to take offense against those who have wronged us but will rather bear with those who have greatly offended us, because we will have enough business searching out our own imperfections. And, as I said before, we shall more easily bear with others' misdeeds when we perceive that we ourselves are blameworthy in so many ways, not only toward mortal creatures but also toward the living God. For who are we to make such a stir over every wrong done to us, when we seek forgiveness from God every day (as necessity also compels us) for the offenses we have committed against His majesty, through which we have broken His righteousness?

The very means, therefore, to appease all wicked and excessive anger is that each of us be grieved and angry with himself, because he sees himself subject to so many infirmities, or rather so many sins and vices.

For the second point, if we happen to stumble and fall through frailty, so that we are not held back by the fear of God and are guilty before Him, let us beware that we do not harden ourselves in our wrongdoing. As soon as we feel any immoderate stirring within us, let us step in front of it and endeavor to repress it. Let us use force in that regard to subdue our passions that carry us away, causing us to fight against God and our neighbors.

Thus, we must fight courageously to restrain all our anger. Or, if any excess has escaped us, let us come back again, reconsider, and rid it

quickly, knowing that it is like a disease that requires a speedy remedy, or else it will overgrow in such a way that all help will come too late. Let us think upon it.

Now, if Saint Paul had said no more than this: “My friends, let not the sun go down upon your anger, for if rancor does once settle, it will not be easily put away,” it would have been much, and that warning ought to have sufficed us. But the threat he sets down with it, in that he says, “Give no place to the devil,” ought to make the hairs stand up on our heads (Ephesians 4:26-27).

Some indeed have expounded it to be spoken of the enemies of the faith who seek occasion to slander it. But it is easy to see from the words themselves that he intended to warn us of something we ought to be more afraid of and which will scare us worse: that is to say, that the devil gets, as it were, mastery and dominion over us when we feed any grudge or heartburning against our brethren.

Now then, which of us will not quake with fear when we hear of our subjection to Satan, as if we were in his bonds like a prisoner? And yet, for all that, we take no heed of the things that are told us here. For Saint Paul has uttered God’s sentence, which is that if we pursue our anger and heartburning against those who have offended us, it is all one as if we willfully passed an obligation to Satan to be held as thralls under his tyranny.

Therefore, it stands us in hand all the more to consider carefully that if that vice cannot be thoroughly amended at the first onset, we may at least be well aware that it does not so settle in us that we cannot be reconciled again, or that we should pursue our quarrels, or that nothing would be able to weigh with us until we have taken some revenge. Let us take heed, I say, that we do not enter into such bondage of Satan.

And for that reason, it is said that when people fret and chafe in that fashion, of one devil there are made two. And why? Because God is already offended at my neighbor for doing me wrong, and if I also fall to resenting the matter on my part and feel the need to repay him in kind, the devil has won us both. I ought to pity the soul that is already, in a way, led astray and on the high road to perdition. I ought to seek to be reconciled with him again and to heal the sore as much as possible. But if I, too, let the reins loose and cast myself into Satan's slavery through the cursed liberty I take, then he gains the upper hand of both parties.

So then, let us keep this threatening well in mind, whereby the Holy Spirit meant to wake us thoroughly so that each of us might stand on guard, beware of taking offense or bearing a grudge, and avoid afterward conceiving such hatred that may harden us so there will be no more means to appease us.

Now, hereunto Saint Paul adds another warning (as I have declared already), wherein he rebukes the common vices that are contrary to the rule which our Lord gives us, to the intent that we should live as God's children, knowing whereunto we are called. Now, he speaks of the deceits, robberies, and extortions that are committed when every man is too much wedded to himself and has no conscience of other men's harms.

"Let him that stole," says he, "steal no more; but rather let him labor with his hands to do the things that are good and profitable, and wherewith he may succor such as have need" (Ephesians 4:28).

Now, when Saint Paul speaks here of theft, he does not mean such thieves as men punish with whipping or hanging, but all manner of sleights and crafts that are used to get other men's goods by evil practices, such as extortions, briberies, and all other like things.

Although such things may be faced out, or those who are most guilty of them may not be accused before men because they know how to cloak their misdoings, yet does Saint Paul call them all thefts and robberies. And why? Because the prophets and apostles did not speak in the ordinary manner of speech that is used in courts of justice on earth; they had an eye to the judgment seat of God.

For the thing that may be excused, yea, and perhaps well justified before men, shall not fail to be condemned there. For God sees much clearer than mortal creatures. Again, favor or partiality may often sway in legal matters, so that there shall be cloaking, dissembling, and covering, and the judges shall like well enough to have a napkin tied before their eyes, that a man may have some starting hole to escape out at. They may often like well enough of such things, but it is not so with God.

Wherefore, let us mark well that the forbidding of us to steal is not like the publishing of some statute law that belongs to temporal policy, but we are called before the heavenly judge, who discovers the things that are hidden from men and condemns all wicked covetousness as theft, whereby we are moved to seek our own profit too much to the hindrance of our neighbor. To be short, under this word "theft" or "stealing," Saint Paul comprehends all the wicked practices that are used to deceive others with, and also all extortions whereby men are fleeced of their goods and bereft of their substance.

Now, then, we see that there are thieves to be found of all degrees. For there is not a man who is not busy gripping to himself—I mean those who are not reformed by God's spirit. Although a merchant man may be counted of good wealth, yet he will have store of fetches and policies still, and they shall be as nets laid for the simple sort and such as have no experience, who do not perceive them. In like case is

it with handicraftsmen; for they have the skill to counterfeit their works in such a wise that men shall be deceived by them. Again, as touching the price, there is no trusting to them; all is one to them, so long as they may sell their wares, for they think that all is lawful for them. Likewise, do laborers and husbandmen. To be short, there is no state of men wherein there are not infinite faults and extortions to be seen, so that every man would gain and make himself strongest.

If you look upon the rich and upon such as live off their rents, it is yet worse. For they flay off the skins of the inferior people and of such as are unable to resist them. And yet before men (as I said), all of them justify themselves; however, that is because they do not know that God has sounded here his trumpet to summon them before him, nor consider what manner of perfection and pureness must be brought unto him. So much the more, therefore, does it stand us in hand to try not only all our outward deeds but also all our wicked affections whereby we are tempted to enrich ourselves beyond reason and measure.

And Saint Paul says purposely that he who has stolen should steal no more to show that there ought to appear such a change in our life when God has once brought us home to himself by his Gospel, as we may no more resemble the wretched unbelievers who walk in darkness, but consider that our Lord's enlightening of us is with the condition that we should become new creatures.

Herewithal, we see the thing I have touched on already: namely, that Saint Paul does not speak of the common thefts that are condemned and punished before the world, for then it would follow that all had been thieves who had been converted to Christianity. But (as I said before) he uses the word "steal" purposely to make us abhor all craftiness, malice, subtlety, and the catching of other men's goods all

the more. For if it had been said but thus: "Use no more craft to deceive men, neither take ye leave to pull the things to you that are none of your own," he would not have touched them so much to the quick, who flatter themselves and seek to have some cover to cloak their vices withal.

But when he says, "Steal no more," it is to the end that we should think thus with ourselves: Alas, although I would fain excuse myself, and it seems to me that it was not done amiss of me, and men have bleared eyes, yet I must not rest upon that. For in the meantime, my faults shall not fail to be registered before God, and I must be fain to yield an account of all things that have not been done according to uncorrupt equity and right, and I must be taken for a thief before God, notwithstanding that all the world has acquitted me.

But now, let us see how well this doctrine is put in practice. A man shall find that those who are converted to the Gospel take the most liberty to do evil. It would seem that a number have learned nothing else by the Gospel but to busy themselves about petty sleights to entangle other men's goods. For there are those to be seen who used greater simplicity in the time when they were blind wretches and knew nothing of God and of the pure doctrine of salvation, for they had at least some uprightness and plain dealing toward the world.

But they have so profited backward in God's school that they are far craftier than they were before, in making their own advantage, in taking more liberty, and in bearing themselves on the hand that all things are lawful for them. And they are so shameless in facing and bolstering out their doings that they merely make light of it and believe they have been greatly wronged when they are blamed for things that are plainly known to all men and of which even little children may be judges.

So much the more, then, are we to be condemned, seeing that Paul tells us here that although we enriched ourselves by craft and extortion and made no conscience to rake other men's goods to us before we had good teaching, yet at least we should be well advised to walk more uprightly with our neighbors, now that we are enlightened by God's Word. You see then that the thing we have to bear in mind upon this text is that our Lord Jesus Christ's doctrine ought to rule us in such singleness that every one of us may forgo his craftiness and subtleties.

Furthermore, forasmuch as a number excuse themselves, saying, "How shall I do then? For I have no trade to live by unless I may still follow my own manner of dealing," Saint Paul says, "Let them labor." Let him who would make it an excuse that he has no way to provide for himself except by deceit and fraud, let him (says Paul) give himself to laboring with his hands. As if he said that men's dispensing with themselves under the color that they should then fast and endure many miseries and penuries is a trifling matter before God. All those allegations are neither here nor there before God, says Saint Paul. For if anyone is afraid that he shall want, let him not forbear to labor. Mark that for one point.

And here, let us learn to leave these self-soothings, wherewith a number of folks put themselves to sleep, who, when they have said, "What shall I do?" persuade themselves that God's mouth is stopped and that He dares not come near them again. They will need to be so privileged that, to their own seeming, they are quite clear if they can allege for themselves, "How then? Whereof shall I live? What shall I do if I do not follow my accustomed trade?" It seems to us that God is shut out of the gate and that He has no more authority to condemn us when we have once alleged those things for ourselves. But that is folly, says Saint Paul.

We should rather scratch up the earth with our nails than offend God by doing wrong to our neighbors. The thing then to which he sends us back is that when a man has grown rich and has lived a long time at his ease by filching and stealing—that is to say, by petty, fine sleights and conveyances that are against equity and right—let him not be ashamed to lower his pride and to labor for his living. Although he has previously done nothing but sit still and gotten his living by devising mischief, yet let him not be ashamed to labor and to take pains for his sustenance.

To be short, Saint Paul shows us here that all unlawful gains must be left by those who call themselves Christians and wish to be taken as such. And this warning is as needful for us nowadays as ever it was for any. For besides the fact that we must abstain from all subtlety and deceit when God once calls us to be His children and would have us maintain a brotherhood among ourselves, many of us also must give up our trades of living. For what a number of means to live upon are there in the papacy?

But when we come before God, let us always remember this definitive sentence which I have set down: namely, that we consider how the case concerns our not answering before an earthly judge, but before Him who sees all things and before whom nothing can be cloaked. Therefore, let us think well upon it, seeing there are so many means excusable in popery, whereby almost a fourth part of the world is maintained, and yet all of them are not only unavailing but also abominable before God.

First of all, there are priests and monks, and all the rabble of cloisterers. Secondly, there are their hangers-on who live off them and are, as it were, their hired men, who gain something by them and skim off some part of their fat by one means or another. Under this

cover lurks a very long tail that is turned in and out like a maze. Again, there is a great sort to be seen who give themselves wholly to things that are worth nothing. True, it is that in this darkness of theirs, men do not see very well; insomuch that black (as you would say) is turned into white. But yet, however the case stands, there is no excuse for men in this behalf.

Every man must have an eye to this: that as heretofore I have filched and plundered to get my living and have exercised some wicked practice or other, which God condemns by His Word, seeing I have defiled myself by eating the bread which did not come to me lawfully from the hand of God as it should do, according to my asking of my daily bread from Him, but by filching here and there—I must now henceforth change my ways and learn to labor in such wise that I may truly say that the things which I have come to me by God's blessing.

That is the thing we have to remember upon this lesson of Saint Paul's. And it behooves us to put it so much the better in practice, considering that thievery is more rife nowadays in the world than ever it was, and yet, notwithstanding, a number of men still flatter themselves in that behalf because the belly will needs have the upper hand.

"When a man has enough to live on," they say, "and all things necessary besides, it is good reason that he should not exempt himself from God's Word; but that we should starve for hunger, what order were in that? What rigor were it?" Forasmuch then as we are so inclined to seek to be provided for by hook or by crook, without regarding what is lawful or unlawful, let us think the better upon the things that Saint Paul tells us here.

And he proceeds yet one degree further in this change, which he enjoins upon all the faithful. He tells them they must not only abstain from defrauding others and from taking their goods, but also endeavor to help those who are in need. Although it may seem too harsh to us to abstain from all evil, and that instead of living at our ease, as we have been accustomed to do, and of having many comforts, we should be forced to scratch our living out of the earth with our nails (as they say) and labor with great pain and toil, even to the point of living very sparingly—although (I say) this may seem very hard, yet we must go further.

When we have what is needed to provide for ourselves without resorting to wicked practices, we must occasionally spare something of what God gives us through His blessing to relieve the needy. Therefore, let us not look to what we are inclined to do but consider that by our own nature, we are so stubborn and wedded to our own profit that each of us always wants to be well provided for. Since we have so little regard for those who are members of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ as well as ourselves, we must make an effort to do them good, for that is a labor that will lead us to another.

We must, I say, force all our affections, and thereupon employ ourselves earnestly and sincerely, so that we may be able to declare that the bread we eat comes to us from God's hand and that we are sustained by His goodness, just as if it were from a father who divides out to each of his children their portion. Let us be resolved on that point. Moreover, let us not think it enough to abstain from all craftiness, from manipulating others with our schemes, and from taking others' goods, but let us labor to do good with the little we have and to help those who are in need.

Howbeit, Saint Paul adds here yet one more circumstance, which deserves to be well noted: that is, he would have us labor in the thing that is good. And why does he add that? Let us consider how many trades, crafts, or occupations there are in the world that serve for nothing but corruption and to draw in money, as they say. Truly, people are not aware of it. And why? Because everyone is content that those who have the means should be prodigal, so their money may circulate widely. Again, those who (in their own estimation) cannot earn their living otherwise are inventing new devices every day to angle money out of fools' purses and from those given to frivolity. Again, those who have wealth will set themselves up and be proud before the world.

That is why the occupations and trades that serve only for pomp, superfluity, and for what I know not—niceness and allurements, provoking people to lewdness—make people believe that nothing is amiss with them. But Saint Paul, therefore, makes a distinction here. It is not enough when someone says, "Oh, I take pains, I have my occupation, or I have such a trade." That is not enough; one must see whether it is good and profitable for the commonwealth and whether one's neighbors may fare the better by it.

Shouldn't this be the end to which all trades, occupations, and states tend and ought to refer themselves: that everyone aims to employ themselves in something beneficial? For the same reason, we are likened to the members of a body. Now then, as if to say, the hand should employ itself to the delight of some other member, which, nevertheless, should receive harm by it. By that means, the whole body would go to destruction. So then, we must always keep in mind that in whatever calling we live, God must go before us, as if He called us to Him, and we follow the way that He shows us by His Word. Surely, He will never allow any trade or occupation which is

not beneficial and serviceable to the whole commonwealth and redounds also to the profit of all.

Therefore, if someone uses a trade or occupation that serves only to breed offenses, to indulge people in their delicate delights, to utterly ruin them, or to excessively promote pomp, as though people intended, even in spite of nature, to make havoc of the good things God has given us, it is certain that all these things are outside the compass of godly vocations or callings, and that God utterly disallows them. You may well say, "I have toiled in this or that." Yes, but you have served the devil. For just as the devil has his martyrs, so he also has his servants. We see how those given to superstition martyr themselves without end or ceasing and are, as one might say, stark mad upon it and as good as out of their wits.

Often, the Scripture also uses the same comparisons to show how the devil casts people completely out of their bounds when he once possesses them. You see then that many people torment themselves without reason; yes, but yet they are the devil's martyrs. Likewise, there are a great number who have taken much pain in some trade or occupation to get their living, and yet if one looks at what purpose it serves, he shall find it to be nothing but infection and filthiness, and that it serves only to nourish pride and superfluity. To be short, it is an open provocation of God, and a wasting and misspending of the things God has given, with the commandment to use them soberly and steadily.

No wonder, therefore, that Saint Paul has made this distinction. And therefore let every man look diligently to himself, and when fathers are minded to set their children to any trade or occupation, let them not look (as is the common custom) at which may be most gainful. Instead, let them match these two things together: when they have

considered by what trade their son may best earn his living and provide for himself and his household when he comes to be married, let them also consider that he serves his neighbor's needs and that the use of his craft or mystery may redound to the common profit of all.

The thing, then, which fathers must have respect to in setting their children to trades and occupations is not to be preoccupied with how they may most gain, but how they may always be held in order and not swerve one way or another. For when our desires carry us away, and we can no sooner spy a little gain but we are by and by snatching at it, it is as if we shook hands with Satan. Yes, and these things become like baited hooks that he casts for us.

Just as a hungry fish will soon be caught, and the food she reached for costs her dearly, so it fares with these enticements of Satan. When people have no further foresight but say, "Oh, such a man gained well by such a trade, and great profit may be made of it," they step to it at all adventure, without any consideration of whether it is right or wrong. They are choked before they ever come to that consideration. So much the more, therefore, it stands us in good stead to mark well what Saint Paul says here: that when people are desirous to get their living, they must think carefully and not excuse themselves by doing things just because they are customarily done by others and no fault is found with them among men. Rather, they should consider that they have to do with God, and that it is He before whom we must make our account.

Again, let us have a good eye to the thing that is told us here, that is to say, to the succoring of the needy. For Saint Paul intended to warn us in one word, that our Lord, in setting poor folks before us, intends to try what we are, namely, whether there is kindness in us, or

whether we are cruel like wild beasts. This is also something that ought to move us to compassion. For the same reason, when the Scripture speaks of doing alms, it not only uses the word mercy but also says that our bowels ought to be moved when we see our brethren in need.

You see then that the sight of our neighbors' necessities ought to provoke us to liberality and to relieve them. Let us not wait until they cry out for hunger, or until we are forced, or until shame compels us. But let each of us think, does this person have a need? Has God set him before me? Has He made me aware of it? That is enough. For it is as if He has summoned me and sent me His receivers or rent-gatherers to take up His revenues. Just as those who have revenues and rents send their men to demand them and gather them up, so our Lord requires of us that we should pay Him His tributes—that is to say, the homage money that we owe Him, in acknowledgment that the things we possess come from Him and are of His mere free gift.

He does not send sheriffs or sergeants, but the poor, and that should suffice us, for they are His true receivers. This is so that we should not be reluctant to give to them. The reason their necessity is set before our eyes is so that we should be touched with pity and compassion, and thereby be inclined to do good.

So then, let us mark that the summary of the things spoken of here is, first, that we should forsake all manner of trades to live by which are not in agreement with God's Word, assuring ourselves that we will always be considered thieves before Him if we use any wicked trades. And although we have good assurance that our calling is good and lawful, we must use it in such a way that there is no ravening, craft, or deceit in it. Mark that for one point.

Again, let us understand that there is no excuse for us before God; although we may allege famine, poverty, or necessity, all that will not serve to acquit us. We must put our hands to labor, that we may earn our living lawfully and refrain from profiting ourselves by other men's losses. Finally, besides binding up our hands from doing any man wrong and from using any clever tricks and sleights to get other men's goods, let us have regard to do good.

Yes, and let us have special care to succor those in need, yet with the things that God has given us of our own. For these are the offerings and sacrifices we must make unto Him in acknowledgment of His benefits. We know that almsdeeds are called sacrifices. Therefore, when we do them, we must protest with an unfeigned and true heart that we come to do homage to God for the things we hold from Him. If there is any theft in our hands, it is certain that our sacrifices will be unclean, and our almsdeeds will be turned into loathsomeness.

Let every man beware that he does not pill and poll with one hand, only to give of it soon after with the other. Let each of us have both our hands clean. Neither let us have a double heart, but labor with all uprightness to earn our living in such a way that if God sends us any profit by it, we may take it as His free gift. In good truth, Moses also forbids us to attribute any part of our gain to our own running or to the labor of our hands, for God will have us be beholden to Him for all (Deuteronomy 8:17-18).

Therefore, when we do any alms, let it be with this protestation, not only with our mouth but also in heart and deed. Namely, that according as our Lord has shown Himself liberal unto us, bestowed upon us, and given us over and above what we need to serve our own needs, we are willing to do Him homage with it. Let us show indeed that we do not intend to keep to ourselves the things He has given us

but to put them to the use for which He has ordained them—that is to say, to the relieving of those who have need of them.

Now let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us feel them better, so that we may be sorry for them, ask Him for forgiveness, and profit more and more in His fear. Being withdrawn from our fleshly affections, may we continue in His fear and love, with the intent to profit more and more in keeping His holy commandments. And so let us all say, Almighty God, heavenly Father, etc.

The Thirty-Second Sermon, which is the Twelfth upon the Fourth Chapter

29. Let no filthy speech proceed out of your mouths, but only such as is good to edify, as need shall require, that it may give grace to the hearers.

30. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed for the day of redemption.

Saint Paul corrects a vice here that is very dangerous, yet nevertheless so common among men because they do not see at first what harm it brings, and therefore take leave all too easily to do it. For it will be said that to hold pleasant talk, while thinking no harm of anyone, is something that may be tolerated—as if it were possible

to poison our neighbors' minds, and yet, for all that, it should be no harm. It is difficult to persuade men otherwise, even though the Holy Ghost has said it.

I say that when there is any light or lewd talk that tends to give liberty to evil, it is as if words were used to poison men's souls. Now then, it behooves us all the more to mark what is told to us here: for Saint Paul terms it "filthy and lewd talk," which cannot but infect. Men will deny it (as I said before), but experience sufficiently shows—*as it is not without cause said in another place—that evil words corrupt good manners* (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Though we were never so modest, chaste, clean-minded, and given to good, yet if we admit wanton talk, it pierces even to the bottom of the heart, and we are affected by it before we perceive it, insomuch as it utterly mars us. Indeed, if a woman gives ear to messages intended to seduce her, one could well say she is a harlot already, and the matter itself is evident enough.

It is certain, then, that all unchaste and lewd speeches are bawdy tricks, and although those who cast forth such lewd talk do not always do so with that intention, yet, whatever their intent, Satan is the author of it. And, as I said before, if such unchaste and loose talk has full scope, we must be poisoned immediately, and mischief will have its course. Therefore, not without cause does Saint Paul warn us that no unclean speech, or—as I said before—no filthy speech, should proceed out of our mouths.

On the contrary, he sets forth that we have sufficient matter to talk of with one another: namely, to edify, so that men may fare somewhat better by our communication. Even the heathen can say that it does one good to be in such a man's company. And why? Because one shall always hear some good sentence, and never leave without

carrying away something beneficial. It is nature that moves them to say so.

Therefore, let us learn to abhor and shun such plague-like behavior when a man has his tongue so loose to speak words that smell of the pump (as they say), and one holds one side, and another the other, and instead of receiving good, a man feels himself stung by Satan. Indeed, when such words enter into our hearts before we are aware of them, they are stings that Satan gives us secretly and unperceived. Seeing, then, that this is so, can it be said that such a man is worthy to be heard? Should we not rather hate him as a deadly plague?

You see, then, that the first thing we must note is that our Lord has given us tongues to make one another privy to our minds, and this is to the intent that we should use them for the benefit of our neighbors. We ought to employ them wholly for that purpose. The tongue, which is the means by which we express our hearts and minds to one another, ought to guide all the rest of our faculties, having superiority over them (James 3:2).

On the other side, not without cause is the tongue termed by the name of "glory," to show how we ought to employ it and to what use, namely, to the honoring of God. Therefore, if we look carefully at the order of nature, it should be sufficiently imprinted on our hearts that our words should be necessary and directed towards the furtherance of our neighbors' welfare and profit.

The first point, then, that we have to bear in mind is that our Lord will have all parts of us serve in doing good, especially our tongues, so that the purpose of all our talk is to edify. For example, one person may need counsel, another warning, another rebuke, and another may need to be reminded of something or taught because they are utterly ignorant. Again, this extends to all things in this present life.

Indeed, the principal thing we have to focus on is teaching the ignorant and showing them the way of salvation. Besides that, if any person misbehaves and is negligent or slothful, they must be spurred forward by good exhortations. If they are unruly, they should be shamed (as much as lies within us) to bring them back to the service of God. Again, one must comfort those in heaviness and give counsel to those in distress, so they do not fall into despair. In short, we must endeavor to hold back the poor souls that might otherwise go to destruction. And of all benefits, this is the principal one.

Yet, if we see a poor person likely to be deceived, we must give them some warning of it. And when we come to that point, it is certain that we will continually devote ourselves to the benefit and welfare of our neighbors in countless ways, concerning both body and soul.

Now let us see whether we do not have sufficient ground and matter to work these things upon. We cannot take a single step without seeing how one needs to be spurred, another to be rebuked, a third to be comforted, and another to be taught. If we hold our tongues in all this and care neither for the bodies nor the souls of those who are linked to us and with whom we ought to be united as the fingers of a hand, is it not an open despising of God when we ignore the natural use of our tongue in such a way?

Therefore, let us keep from corrupting what we ought to value so highly—the means we have to glorify God by making confession of our faith, by calling upon Him, and also by serving our neighbors in so many ways as I have already shown.

Thus, the first point we must note in this context is the lawful use for which God has ordained our tongues and how they ought to be applied wholly to that end.

Now, if we ought to promote the furtherance of our neighbors' salvation, as well as their temporal benefit and welfare, what a dreadful thing it is if we seduce them by our disorder and utterly quench and put away all fear of God in them. When we serve Satan by our loose talk, laboring to deface all honesty and urging others to live a beastly life, is not such defiling of our tongues an utter perversion of the order of nature?

Let us learn, then, to occupy ourselves with good and necessary talk and to avoid defiling ourselves with wicked communication, which are like Satan's tricks to corrupt those who were well disposed to serve God. Thus, we see that every loose speech that passes in the world is like a spiritual poisoning, corrupting good manners (1 Corinthians 15:33). Although we may not believe it, it is certain that this is sufficiently proven by experience. However, let us not be as fools who will only learn through great harm; rather, let us yield to what the Holy Ghost tells us.

From this, we can also gather that it should not be thought strange that the world is nowadays given to all manner of lewdness. It seems to many that it is no evil at all to engage in jesting and scoffing talk; indeed, people would make a virtue of it and find no fault in it. Likewise, we see a great number of jesters and scoffers whose aim is to remove all shame so that people might give themselves over to shamelessness without restraint. We see this all too often, and therefore it is no wonder that we reap the fruits of that wicked and cursed licentiousness, which is too much tolerated.

We also see from this what ought to be thought of all wanton and lewd songs and of flirtations. If a young maid habitually sings foolish love songs (as is all too common), she will become a whore before she even knows what whoredom is. She will be emboldened and

hardened to all shamelessness, and the devil will gain possession of her before she even knows what chastity means or how horrible it is to give herself over to such lewdness and to break the faith and troth she will have pledged when she comes to marriage.

Before a maid can even discern all this, she will be utterly ruined if she acquaints herself with lewd songs. It is a wonder that this mischief cannot be redressed, which shows that Satan labors in this matter and strains himself to the utmost, knowing that he has a great advantage over us if he can sow his cursed cockle to corrupt our good manners. Surely, if the devil were not at work in this, we might more easily rid ourselves of all these ribaldries and filthiness, which are as deadly plagues, as I have said before.

But it seems impossible. Even if there were harsher punishment for it than there is, both wives and maids would prefer to go to prison and be taken for harlots rather than correct this vice that corrupts the whole world and bridle their cursed tongues, which serve only to infect everything with filthiness. Yet, we shall have less excuse after such warning. As for those who stop their ears and harden their hearts against the Holy Ghost, they will be driven to give an account not only for offending God in so many ways but also for poisoning people's souls, which is much more heinous and horrible than if they had murdered their bodies.

Those who poison even animals are driven out of the world, and they deserve it. And what should be done to those who not only slay the body with their poisons but also assault the soul and continually corrupt all goodness, all fear of God, and all honesty (as I said before) with their lewd talk?

You see, then, that the thing we have to remember in this context is that, inasmuch as God has appointed our tongues for the use we have

heard — that is, for the service of our neighbors and for their benefit both in body and soul — we must diligently employ them for that purpose. Therefore, let us, above all things, keep ourselves from infecting those who are inclined to serve God and from thrusting them out of the way by casting forth such speeches as may cool their goodness, provoke them to evil, and make them more licentious and negligent. For evil speech corrupts good manners in many ways.

There are some wicked individuals who are scorers of God. If they are warned to have any remorse for their actions, they reply, "Oh, God doesn't care much for this." Others do not go to such an extreme, but they will lessen their faults so that they consider them only venial sins. Some will cloak all things, and most others will say, "Tush, we must not be so careful. God will not have us live so seriously, for what kind of life would that be? Soon, it would not even be lawful for us to laugh." Such speech gradually buries all fear of God.

You see, then, that there are many sorts of such people — far more than necessary — who show themselves too often. They are like many reminders that lewd words are poisons to murder men's souls. Therefore, let us be on guard in this matter. First of all (as I said), let every man beware that he speaks chastely and uses only honest speech.

Furthermore, let us shun all those who jest about these matters, despite the fact that, for their mirth's sake, they are welcome to us and sometimes also fare well at our expense. "Oh," we say, "he is a good fellow; he will make everyone merry." Now, if men are eager to have such people to tickle their ears with jests, dalliances, and other such things, let us learn to shut them out of our doors.

For we would not willingly hold up our throats to a dagger when we saw it drawn, nor would we seek someone to murder our bodies. Why, then, do we so eagerly desire to have our souls murdered, which is much worse? Therefore, let us avoid those who do nothing but quench and extinguish the fear of God in us, make us shameless and hard-hearted, and rob us of all honesty and shamefacedness, for fear that God may pay us the wages we deserve for having acquaintance and familiarity with such people.

Let us do our best to ensure that such plagues do not reign among us. "Be not deceived," says Saint Paul, speaking of such scoffers, who serve only to provoke our lusts, to rob us of all remorse of conscience, to diminish the fear of God in us, and to abuse us in such a way that sin may delight us. "Beware," he says, "that none of you be deceived by lying words," for this has been a common issue in all ages (Ephesians 5:6).

Therefore, let us put Saint Paul's counsel into practice. Not only should each of us keep a good watch that he is not caught unawares, but we should also care to keep others from being corrupted in that manner. That is what we must remember here.

And we see what he says, namely, that we are weak enough—indeed, too weak—so steeped in evil that it is horrible to see. Therefore, when we covet to always learn some new lesson of lewdness and are quickened and spurred on by others, is it not as if a drunkard, having already well-stuffed and filled himself to the point of bursting, should still seek to provoke his appetite so that he might drink and ladle in wine anew?

So then, is not every man sufficiently inclined to evil of himself, even if there were no lewd songs or unwholesome talk at all? But when the devil finds any gap open and can draw us further into naughtiness by

his flatteries, so that he can harden us in it, I ask you, do we not give him the upper hand over us, so that we are wholly at his pleasure, that he may drive and draw us wherever he wishes?

Now, hereupon Saint Paul adds, "Grieve not the Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). Here is yet one more declaration, which ought to touch us closely. True, the things that have been spoken ought, with good reason, to be thoroughly remembered. For what a thing it is for us to pervert the order of nature by applying our tongues to the very opposite of what God has appointed—to his honor and the benefit of our neighbors!

And again, to be guilty of infecting others with our filthiness, of perverting those who were inclined to serve God, and of provoking those persons to beastly shamelessness who had some measure of shame and honesty in them! Should this not move us sufficiently if we were not too blockish? But Saint Paul tells us of something that ought to scare us even more: "Grieve not God's Spirit," he says.

And why? "For we are marked with it," he says, "and it dwells in us, sealing the hope of our salvation in our hearts." It is also the seed of life, which we have to warrant our everlasting salvation. Now, it is certain that when we take such liberty to do evil and to speak evil, it is as if we are fighting against God's Spirit as much as in us lies. It is a choking of the light that He has kindled in us and a taking of the bridle in our teeth to do all manner of naughtiness. And that cannot be done without grieving Him.

This is what Saint Paul intended to say here.

However, let us first note that he speaks here after the common manner of the Holy Scripture. For we know there are no passions in

God. It is the property of men to be sorry and grieved; God is unchangeable. Nevertheless, because we cannot conceive of the greatness that is in Him and because His majesty is so infinite that we cannot approach it, He uses that similitude for our rudeness' sake.

Therefore, when it is said that God is provoked to wrath, it is not because there is any moodiness in Him, but to make us hate evil because we fight against God in transgressing His law. It is as if we would provoke Him to anger through our spitefulness. The Scripture does not mean to make God subject to any change when it says that He is angry or sorry, but it directs us to our own doings so that our vices should displease us all the more and we should abhor them.

Here, Saint Paul speaks not only of God's anger but also says that the Holy Ghost is sorrowed or grieved. And why? We are not God's children (as he speaks of in the Epistle to the Romans, Romans 8:9-11) unless His Holy Ghost dwells in us. Are we worthy by nature to be mustered in such an array as to be companions with the angels? We, who are but rottenness and, moreover, cursed in Adam and children of wrath? However, God, by His Holy Spirit, calls us to this inestimable honor and dignity of being His children so that we may call upon Him as our Father and have familiar access to Him (Romans 8:15).

That is done by the Holy Ghost, and for this reason, He is called the Spirit of adoption. For the inheritance of heaven does not belong to us except in respect that we are God's children. We are not so of ourselves and by nature, as I told you. Therefore, it follows that it comes of God's freely bestowed goodness. Now He seals all this in our hearts by His Holy Ghost. That is why it is said that we have a mortal body.

What is meant here is not only our feet, hands, skin, bone, and flesh, but that there is a lump of corruption in us due to the dwelling of sin, which brings nothing but death. Have we lived any time? We return to dust and ashes, and there is no one who does not see himself already besieged by a hundred deaths, considering the diseases and infirmities to which we are subject. Again, age makes us stoop, so that we perceive a long while beforehand how we are summoned to our grave. Seeing then that we perceive such a number of deaths all at once together in our bodies, and a much greater dungeon in our souls, how should we hope that God would take us up into His kingdom?

But Saint Paul says that the Spirit is life. If there is but one grain or one spark of the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ in us, let us assure ourselves that we shall be partakers of His glory. For it is said that He is raised again from the dead and has gotten the upper hand of it by His Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11). After this manner, we are quickened with Him, waiting until we are delivered from all the corruptible nature that surrounds us.

Now, Saint Paul says that we are sealed by the Holy Ghost (Ephesians 1:13-14), as it is said of Him in the first chapter before this, and in other places besides, as in the second to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). This similitude is very fitting. Although God's promises ought to be of sufficient authority and to have full credit with us of themselves, yet, notwithstanding, such is our unbelief that we cannot give credit to them or rest upon them until they are confirmed and warranted to us, so that we may say, "Behold, it is even God Himself who speaks."

But what of that? On one side, we are forepossessed with distrust, and on the other side, we are always doubtful and mistrusting, and

cannot rest upon the things that are told to us in God's name. As a result, His promises are always unavailing until He prints them in our hearts, which He does by His Holy Ghost. Just as a piece of evidence is made authentic by the setting of a seal, so God warrants His promises of our salvation in our hearts by signing and sealing them with His Holy Spirit.

That, then, is the reason why it is so often said that God's Spirit seals the inheritance of our salvation in our hearts. For the same reason, He is also named the earnest, or pledge, in another place (2 Corinthians 1:22). When a bargain is made, although there is no immediate payment seen, if an earnest is given, the bargain is concluded. The buyer cannot later say, "I repent of my bargain and will forsake it," nor can the seller say, "I find myself deceived and therefore will keep my goods." Rather, each is bound—the one to make the payment, and the other to deliver the goods.

Even so, it is said that God's Spirit is the earnest of the life of our souls. Why? Because, as I said, God binds Himself to us in respect of our infirmity, to which we are too much inclined. Indeed, it is not because He owes us anything, but we have so much more reason to magnify His goodness, in that He is so gracious as to bind Himself willingly to us, even though He owes us nothing. He condescends to assure us of it because He sees us so feeble and weak.

Just as when He swears, it is not because He needs to add anything to His simple word on His part, for He Himself is the truth, and what comes from Him should not be doubted. It might seem, therefore, that the oath He makes is superfluous and that He only abuses His own name. No, but He does it because He sees us weak and needing to be held up in many ways, especially because He sees us given to unbelief and, therefore, must remedy it.

So then, whenever God swears, He stoops to us in pity of our wretchedness. The sealing and ratifying of His promises in us by His Holy Spirit is because it is impossible for us to believe Him on our own. We could not be sure of the things He promises us, to call upon Him, and to overcome all the temptations of the world unless He used that means.

Therefore, we have so much more need to remember this text, where Saint Paul says that the Holy Ghost seals in our hearts.

And hereupon, we may gather a good lesson to humble ourselves with: namely, that we shall never yield God the chief honor that He requires at our hands, except He Himself draws us to it and gives us grace to discharge it withal. The thing that He requires above all others is that His Word has all authority over us, and that we yield it such reverence that He may no sooner speak than we shall immediately answer, "Amen," so that there may be a full accord between us.

That is the obedience of faith, which is the chief sacrifice that God requires. But, contrariwise, on our part, there is nothing but replying against God's Word. We are full of lusts, and although we may not seem to make utter resistance against Him or to act like madmen, as many do, we are still given to a number of wicked imaginations.

We see that some are as if they were frantic, especially when a man speaks to them of God; they will have their mouths open to spew out blasphemies and to enter into disputation and debate, showing themselves utterly unwilling to receive any good doctrine. Others do not fall into such fury and outrage, yet they let slip whatever is said to them, and what comes in at one ear goes out again at the other. In any case, neither the one nor the other gives glory to God by receiving His Word with the humility they ought to show.

Therefore, let us acknowledge our own naughtiness and be sorry for it, seeing that we provoke God's displeasure by not yielding Him the honor of believing that He is true and faithful. Indeed, we will not say in open speech that His Word is vain; we will not accuse Him of lying and deceit. Yet, does He not protest that we do Him as much wrong as that comes to if we do not credit His sayings? "How long will this people slander Me," says He, "and rob Me of My honor?" (Numbers 14:11). It is a complaint that He makes there by Moses and in many other places of the Scripture.

Surely, if Saint John's saying is true, that when we believe God, we set to our seals that He is true—that is, we uphold Him to be faithful (John 3:33)—then, contrariwise, if we have not that sure foundation in our faith and God's Word does not win so much at our hands as to make us wholly betake ourselves to it without any gainsaying, it is all one as if we counted God a liar. Although we would hate and abhor to utter any such blasphemy, He still complains that we have done Him the same reproach, and not without cause.

Therefore, we see what frowardness there is in our nature until God remedies it.

Furthermore, when He says that the Holy Ghost seals His promises in our hearts in that fashion, let us understand that this is because He has vouchsafed to choose us. We have already seen that He calls us to Him and enlightens us with the truth of His Gospel according to His choosing of us before we were born, yes, even before the making of the world. Therefore, let us understand that God's Spirit is a special gift, which is not bestowed upon all men indifferently but is reserved as a treasure for His children whom He has chosen.

For that reason, we ought to bear well in mind the aforementioned title: that He is the Spirit of adoption. Also, the unbelief that is

throughout the whole world gives an evident proof of God's goodness, in that it has pleased Him to engrave His Word in our hearts. It is certain that in all such as fight against God, or who are like brute beasts and so careless that His Word does not move them at all, we see what we are by nature and what we would still be if our Lord, for His mercy's sake, had not touched us with His Holy Spirit. Thus, you see what we must bear in mind.

Therefore, whenever the doctrine of our salvation is discussed, let us beware that we do not presume anything upon our own wit and policy. Let us be humble so that our Lord may enlighten us by His Holy Spirit. When we perceive that we have already received such grace, let us not bury it but give the praise to Him who deserves it.

On the contrary, since we feel many perplexities, doubts, and uneasiness, and at times are tossed like a ship ready to topple over and sink to the bottom of the sea, let us consider our own frailty. Even if we have been trained up in God's Word, there will still be no steadfastness in our hearts unless God works it there. Therefore, let us run to the remedy and pray to God to keep the seed that He has sown in us from choking and the assurance of our inheritance from ever wearing out. Although Satan may strive to the utmost to destroy what God has put into us, may it be strengthened in us from day to day, as is needful for us.

And so, you see what we must bear in mind in this, that Saint Paul says we are sealed and marked by God's Spirit.

And now he warns us that it is too heinous a crime to grieve Him, and an intolerable treachery. I have told you already that this similitude does not intend to impute any excessive passion to God's Spirit but to put us to shame and to make the hair stand up upon our heads. Behold (says Saint Paul), God's Spirit has chosen His dwelling

place in us (according as it is said in another place, that not only our souls, but also our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost) and He is glad to be in us, to abide there, and to make it His continual home. Now then, if we fall to spiting Him, as though we minded to chase Him and banish Him from us, is it not too devilish a dealing?

And yet, when we seek allurements of unthriftiness, take leave to corrupt ourselves by lewd and loose talk, and labor to have other naughty means to turn us away from the fear of God and to bring our consciences asleep, it is all one as if we endeavored of set purpose to chase away and banish God's Spirit from us and to say, "We will have no more acquaintance with Him." Must we not need to be most miserable and cursed creatures when we overshoot ourselves so far? That, then, is the thing that Saint Paul had an eye unto.

Therefore, whenever we are tempted to evil, and the devil labors to make us take pleasure in it so that all remorse of conscience may be put away, let us call to mind the things that are spoken here, and say: "How now? You rejoice, and wherein? In the serving of Satan! And on the other side, you let go Him that is your life, the earnest penny of your salvation, and the foundation of the felicity which has been purchased so dearly for you by our Lord Jesus Christ." Let us think advisedly upon this.

Moreover, it is certain that every faithful person ought to feel the thing that is declared here. For if our Lord has touched us and given us the sealing that is spoken of here, it will be a grief to us when we are tempted to evil. And so, the thing that holds us in awe is the Spirit which watches and wards to withstand the enemy. If we go about to kill this benefit, that is to say, this inworking that God gives us, it is all one as if we grieved the Holy Ghost.

This, then, is a most certain experience, and such a one as shows us that the thing which the Holy Ghost has put into us is utterly against all evil, and that there must needs be a battle and strife between them. Insomuch that none of God's children can sin without being immediately stirred up to fear and saying in himself, "Alas, where shall I become? In what plight have I brought myself? What shall I do?" (2 Corinthians 7:10). And that is the sorrow that Saint Paul speaks of, which we must not shun.

But if we nevertheless go on still in evil, it is all one as if we took pleasure in driving and chasing away God's Spirit. The prophet Isaiah says we provoke God's Spirit to bitterness when we refuse the good doctrine that He sets before us (Isaiah 63:10). But Saint Paul goes further here. Indeed, it is a kind of provocation to God's wrath when we do not yield to His doctrine, which is a sure record of the care He has for our salvation and the love He bears us.

But we must come to consider each of us by himself. God has vouchsafed to engrave the belief of His Gospel in my heart so that I might be sure of my salvation. And how does He do that? By vouchsafing to choose me for His house and to dwell in me by His Holy Spirit. Now then, if I blot out this grace, it is as much as if I meant to estrange myself from God willfully. Therefore, let us beware of such extremity and let us hold ourselves in awe.

And with that, let us also note how Saint Paul adds, as his final word, that God's sealing and marking of us by His Holy Ghost is against the day of our redemption. By this, he shows us that if we want to overcome Satan's allurements, the lusts of our flesh, and all the temptations of the world, we must always keep in mind the heavenly life that is promised to us and to which we ought to strive.

Now then, God's Spirit (says Saint Paul) is not given to us to be withdrawn from us again once we have felt His grace and power, but with the intent that the seal and imprint of Him should remain with us even until the day of our redemption — that is, until we are delivered from this transitory life and from all the miseries with which we are besieged. Now, therefore, seeing that God has given us His Holy Spirit to guide and govern us both in life and in death, and with the intent that we should never be deprived and destitute of Him, let us look well to it that He may always keep the possession He has taken in us, and we also may enjoy that inestimable benefit of His continuing with us forever, that He may guide us and hold us always up by a strong hand during the entire course of our life.

The reason, then, why Saint Paul purposefully calls us back to the last day is to make us live soberly, knowing that just as we need to be guided throughout by the power of God's Spirit, if we are deprived of it, estranged from Him, and left destitute of His grace, it is to be feared that we shall fall into a reprobate mind.

Regarding the "day of our redemption," Saint Paul, by that word, understood the happiness which we hope for and which is hidden from us as yet. It is true that we were redeemed in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we do not yet enjoy that benefit. We may well say, "Jesus Christ is our Redeemer," that is to say, He has delivered us and set us free from the bondage and subjection of death and sin wherein we were, by paying our ransom and by making our atonement. You see then that we are redeemed as in respect of the Son of God, for He has performed all that was requisite for our deliverance and salvation, as He Himself avows with His own mouth (John 19:30).

But when we come to ourselves, we do not find this redemption there. And for that reason, as well in this place, as in the eighth chapter to the Romans, Saint Paul says that the last day, when Jesus Christ will appear, is the day of our salvation and deliverance (Romans 8:23). And why? We see what a number of miseries beset us round about — yes, we carry them with us, and they are enclosed in our bodies and in our souls. It behooves us, therefore, to seek a better state than that which we see here (Romans 8:24-25).

And for the same reason, it is said that our salvation lies in hope, and that we hope not for the thing that we see, but that God intends to feed our hope. And whereas He shows not the things to our eyes which He promises, and which it behooves us to wait for at His hand, it is to the end that, although we are forlorn wretches in this world, yet we should not cease to rejoice in Him, knowing that we shall not be disappointed in waiting for the heritage which He has purchased for us.

And so, you see what is meant by the word "redemption," which is set down here. Wherefore, let us learn to be so armed and fenced with God's Spirit to fight against all Satan's temptations, that he may never find us unprepared or out of order. And for that to be done, let us pray to God so to engrave His truth in us by the same Spirit, that we may gain victory by it and overcome all that is against our salvation. And that we, continuing in our vocation that God calls us to, may take courage and be patient until our Lord Jesus Christ (who is our life) appears, that our life and our full happiness may also be manifested in Him at His coming (Colossians 3:4).

And now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to take us to mercy, and not to impute the great number of our sins unto us, whereby we are

blameworthy before Him. Rather, may He bear with our infirmities, and cleanse us of them from day to day, that we may grow and increase in all His gracious gifts, and put far from us all evil that may seduce us and thrust us out of the way. And by this means, may we draw nearer and nearer unto Him, until we are fully knit unto Him at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May it please Him to grant this grace, not only to us, but also to all people and nations of the earth. Amen.

**The Thirty-Third Sermon,
which is the Thirteenth upon the Fourth
Chapter, and the First upon the Fifth
Chapter**

31. Let all bitterness, and hastiness, and wrath, and roaring, and injury be put from you, with all spitefulness.

32. And be ye gentle one to another, and kind-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God through Christ forgave you.

The Fifth Chapter

1. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.

2. And walk in love, even as Christ loved us, and gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice unto God, for a scent of good

savour.

We know that all God's children not only should be peaceable themselves, but also should procure peace to the uttermost of their power and make atonement where there was disagreement and strife, forasmuch as it is the mark that our Lord Jesus Christ has given us. Now if we ought to reconcile those between whom there was any secret grudge, much more ought we to abstain from all stirring of debate.

For what authority or means shall we have to bring together those who are grieved with one another, and to set them at brotherly atonement, or to assuage their choler when they are moved with some over-vehement passion, if we ourselves are full of strife and trouble, and given to crying, roaring, and storming?

So then, not without cause does Saint Paul declare that all bitterness, with testiness, anger, and cursed speaking, ought to be put away from the faithful, even with all spitefulness. For he sets down spitefulness here as the root that yields the fruits which he speaks of. By that word, he means such churlishness as makes every man to be given to himself and to draw alone without regard for others. For it cannot be but that the man who loves himself overmuch must needs disdain his neighbours, and so shake them off, as no gentleness can be gotten at his hand.

Therefore, if we intend to avoid strife and quarrelling, we must begin at this point of putting away churlishness. Considering that God has linked us together, let every man endeavour to maintain peace and friendship, and regard those whom God has so honoured as to make them His children, or at least created after His own image. That is for the first point.

Now, out of this spitefulness springeth bitterness, which is when we are wayward and easy to be moved, and there reigneth such a scornfulness in us as we think all the world to be our underlings, and that other folks are nothing in respect of us. When we are puffed up with such pride, it cannot be but that we must needs be bitter, and by and by be out of patience at the stirring of every straw if it be to our misliking, taking all things in ill part and seeking occasions of unquietness.

Accordingly, we see a great number who are not contented with chafing when any wrong is done to themselves; but although the matter touches them not, they seem to be set as spies to mark if there is anything to check at. Indeed, if a man speaks but one word that mislikes them, they will not in any wise be quieted, but are still finding fault with everything. And however the world goes, they must needs be meddling where they have nothing to do; for they are of so froward a nature that they will be quarrelling for the furthest stranger in the world.

But if the matter concerns themselves, though a man labors never so much to please them, and to do the thing that may content them, yet will they ever mislike of something; and if a man asks them the reason why, there is none other to be found but their own cankered stomach, because they have conceived rancor and are puffed up with pride to esteem their own self-will with disdain of others. We see then that Saint Paul has shown us here the true remedies to hold ourselves in awe, that we may live peaceably and keep ourselves from entering into quarrels and brawls.

A physician will not only bid a man beware of the fever or any other disease, but he will also consider where he is inclined, and see what things may be against him, and thereupon say unto him, "Beware of

such a thing, for surely you cannot but fall into such a sickness or such an inconvenience if you take not heed to yourself."

Now, we would be heedful enough to keep the orders that are prescribed for the health of our bodies, but when it comes to the soul, every one of us is negligent, whereby we show that we make no account of our salvation. That is because we do not consider that, on the one side, the devil labors to seduce us, and we, on the other side, are so frail that we never cease to give ourselves to evil, except our Lord has armed and fenced us with His word. So much the more, therefore, does it stand us in hand to mark the order that is set down here: which is that, to live quietly together and to keep ourselves from contention and strife, first, we must not be blinded with excessive love of ourselves, but rather endeavor to rid away all pride, that we may make account of our neighbors and live meekly with them, for that will restrain us from being so bitter and testy in taking all things in ill part.

Hereupon, Saint Paul tells us that when we are so purged within, both of spitefulness and of bitterness, we must abstain from hastiness, from wrath, and from roaring. For here he sets down the sudden heats of choler through which men overshoot themselves ere they are aware of it and afterward fall into rages that cannot be stayed. For this cause, it behooves us to be mortified, for then it will be easy to allay the heat, yea, and even to quench it. But when we are so inflamed with wrath, all must needs be full of thundering, and there will be no measure to our anger.

You see, then, that the thing in effect which we have to mark here is that, forasmuch as God's children ought to live in peace and concord, they must, to the utmost of their power, bridle all their passions, and consider what comes of wrath and anger—namely, that fire is

kindled, open war proclaimed, many words escape which a man would wish in again, and finally, there springs incurable mischief.

Now then, if we look well where all our moodiness leads us, or rather carries us away—namely, that the devil takes possession of us and holds us in the stocks, and that we have neither reason nor control of ourselves when we are so far out of patience—certainly, we would stand on our guard and not give place to the devil, as has been declared before. However, that we may avoid strife and debate, let us learn to cleanse our hearts of bitterness and testiness. And to bring that to pass, let us learn to esteem well those who are linked unto us, and unto whom also we are bound. Thus, you see in effect how we ought to put this text into use.

And forasmuch as it is a thing as hard to be kept as any, and a thing that greatly hinders us, therefore Saint Paul adds that it behooves us to be mild, gentle, and courteous to one another. Here, he sets down the contraries to the bitterness and spitefulness he spoke of. He brings us back to this principle: that inasmuch as we are men, God has created us after His own image, and that inasmuch as He has called us to the belief of His Gospel, He has thereby marked us anew, and there we behold His image, which ought to move us to the gentleness of which he speaks.

Therefore, let us mark well that we cannot despise the least among us without dishonoring God. For (as I told you before), all men are made after His image. Now, would it be tolerable for an earthly worm to esteem itself so highly and exalt itself so far as to set light by its Maker? Let us make no excuse in this behalf, for all that we can allege will stand us in no stead. And (as I said), seeing that God has so highly honored men as to give them such an excellent nature, it is good reason that we should yield honor and reverence to His majesty

and not tread underfoot those through whom He represents Himself to us.

Again, if a man considers himself well, shall he not see his own nature as it were in a glass, in all his neighbors? Yes, for the greatest personages in the world cannot say that they are made of any other stuff than the rest of Adam's children are. Seeing it is so then, what cause have we to be so proud as to disdain those who are like us and are allied to us by such a kindred as cannot be worn out?

However, there is yet a more peculiar reason as in respect of the faithful. For in them, God has engraved His image anew, which was as good as defaced by Adam's sin. Then, since it is so, let us learn to be gentle and courteous to one another and not be so churlish that no man may have access to us, nor yet so strange and scornful as to separate ourselves from the common array and company of other men. This is what Saint Paul meant by the gentleness or courtesy of which he spoke.

Now, hereupon he adds, "Mercifulness." "Let us," he says, "have compassion one for another." This compassion stretches very far and is, as it were, the wellspring that moves us to gentleness. We will always grant that a mild spirit is a singular virtue and one without which we cannot continue in the world. And how may it be maintained among us? The only means is this compassion, that is to say, the disposition of mind which causes us to think that when we see any despised person, yet he is our neighbor, that is to say, our own flesh and bone.

"Yes, but yet he is despised, neither does he have anything to be esteemed for." Yet, notwithstanding, the miseries that are in him may also fall upon me. Then, if we consider that, surely our hearts will yearn to see the man who is brought to so great a disadvantage

in respect of others; and whether he be weak of body or have some infirmity of mind, it will grieve us and touch us with pity to rue his case. And so, there would be no gentleness in us if it were not for this compassion.

Now then, put the case there is a poor man who is sore diseased or droops and drags his wings upon the ground. Should he be held in scorn for that? No, but contrarywise, if we were not utterly merciless like wild beasts (as the scripture teaches us), surely the very same ought to move our bowels and to incline us to pity, at leastwise if we did our duty.

Again, if there be any impediment of wit or mind (as, for example, some silly soul who has much ado to understand one saying among a hundred, yea, who is not able to discern white from black), if I do not have compassion for him, what hinders me from doing so but my own cruelty, which makes me forget the common kindness whereby God knits us all together? You see then, that if we have any drop of pity to keep us from rejecting those who are allied to us, and also from disdainning those in whom there is any cause for compassion and mercy, we shall not fail to be gentle and courteous towards our neighbors in all cases and at all times.

To be short, like as the miseries which God knows to be in us do move Him to be merciful towards us, so the miseries that are in our neighbors ought to be as spurs to prick us and provoke us to be pitiful to them. Yea, and there is yet more: even their vices, which inflame us to choler and anger, ought to provide us with occasion to pity our neighbors.

I see some man who has done me wrong. Now, is it not the devil that has driven him thereto, and does not the wretched man undo himself, for he provokes God against him? Now then, if there were no

more in me than the common nature whereunto God has knit us all, ought I not to be sorry at heart when I see a soul beguiled by Satan going to destruction? Yes, verily. Therefore, let none of the wrongs done to us carry us away, neither let us be so far provoked as not to pity those who do amiss, namely, because they are blinded by Satan, provoke God's wrath, and fight against their own salvation.

Behold then, the very remedy which we have to hold unto and to keep is that, to be gentle, we must be pitiful and have compassion, as is shown in the foresaid texts. For there is none of us who would not gladly be borne with; and without that, we could not know how to live one day in the world. The most perfect man who is has yet some infirmity, insomuch that if men should deal altogether rigorously with him, he should be disdained, yea, and as good as utterly disgraced and defaced.

Nay further, where is the man to be found who does not have many infirmities in him and who would not fain be greatly borne with (as need requires) and that men should not shake him off, though he have some vices that deserve their withdrawing of themselves from him? Now, if we would so fain be borne with ourselves, ought we not also to pity others? And truly, when we see a man has some blemish, ought we not to think, "I am subject to the same"? Verily, when I have sifted all things thoroughly, I shall find other things in myself that deserve more justly to be condemned, and yet I would fain be borne with, though I were never so much convicted. Therefore, like as we would that other men should pardon us, so let us learn to pity other men, for they are no more angels than we are. That, then, is the thing which Saint Paul meant to bring us to.

And thereupon he concludes that we should forgive one another. For if compassion does not always go before, surely we will not let a pin's

point go without examination and rigorous sifting of it, and without immeasurable displeasure, as experience shows in very deed too much. Therefore, a body should not stir a straw, but we would be out of patience at it. And why? Because there is no pity in us. But if we are touched with mercy, surely we will easily forgive and let many things slip and pass unseen. Moreover, we will not be lightly moved, but there will be a bridle to hold us back, and we will not refuse to admit them always to friendship who have so offended.

That, therefore, is the order which Saint Paul keeps to bring us to charity and to maintain us in it, for it is the whole sum of this lesson. To be God's children, we must love one another and be knit together in good agreement, so that peace may be maintained among us. And how is that possible to be? For every man is too much wedded to himself. Again, their minds are as far differing as may be, and their manners and conditions also differ. To be short, we have infinite causes to put us away and to cut us off from all company.

Surely, if every man lets himself loose, charity shall never take place but be banished far from us. What is to be done then? We must first rid ourselves of all scornfulness and pride (as is said before) and afterward be cleansed from bitterness and frowardness, so that we do not become choleric and testy, but every man bridle himself and subdue his own affections. But this cannot be done except we are gentle and kind-hearted, namely because we are creatures fashioned after the image of God and knit together with an inseparable bond.

Yet, all this would not suffice until we have learned to know our own infirmities, and that every one of us is angry with himself because he sees that he needs to be quickened up, and that there are many vices in himself of the same sort that are in his neighbors, and that,

therefore, we have need of this bond to hold us fast together. This will be done when we are merciful and pitiful.

Now, if common courtesy ought to move us to succor those in necessity, it ought also to be of force to reconcile us. For when our Lord Jesus exhorts us to be merciful, it is not only to the intent that we should relieve the hungry and thirsty with meat and drink or help up a man again who has fallen into decay, or that we should succor every man according to our ability and the party's need; our Lord Jesus does not intend that alone. True, all things are comprehended therein, but He will have us especially show mercy in forgiving the faults that are committed and not be so extreme as to shake off those utterly who are not altogether to be commended or in whom we spy many vices.

Indeed, we ought not to flatter one another, for true friendship will not bear that, because it would only be a foading of us to our own destruction. If a man is a friend to another and suffers him to overcome himself with meat and drink, so as in the end he kills himself, is it to be said that his flattering of him after that manner, and his foading of all his foolish appetites, is friendship? No. So then, if we see a poor man at the point of throwing himself headlong into destruction, we do well to show ourselves to be rather traitors than friends to him if we do not endeavor to pluck him back.

The compassion, therefore, whereunto our Lord Jesus exhorteth us, is not a rocking of us asleep in our infirmities through flattery but a holding of ourselves in measure, and a tempering of our rigor in such wise as oil may always be mingled with our vinegar, as they say. That is in effect the thing whereunto Saint Paul meant to bring us. For although every man do his best to be pitiful, so as he may show no over-great rigor towards his neighbors, yet it is as contrary to our

nature as anything can be. For (as I have said already) this self-love of ours doth so blind us that we make the least escapes in the world to be heinous sins and offenses unpardonable.

By means whereof, if any man angers us, to our seeming, his fault ought not in any wise to be forgiven. So then, mercifulness shall never be found in men unless they fight it out to the uttermost against their own affections. As for single teaching, it will not avail in that behalf. We have this churlishness so deeply rooted in our hearts that if we are told of our duty, it does but half move us. For this cause, Saint Paul sets God's example before us here, who has forgiven us in His only Son. And immediately thereunto, he addeth our Lord Jesus Christ, who spared not Himself for our redemption and salvation.

The thing, then, that can break all hardness in us, the thing that can mortify all our excessive passions, the thing that can reclaim all our cruelty, pull down all our pride and loftiness, and sweeten all our bitterness, is to have an eye to God's behavior toward us.

"Now he hath loved the world so well that he hath given his only Son to death for our sakes" (John 3:16). If we compare ourselves with God, what a distance is there betwixt us? So then, the greatest wrongs that we can possibly imagine to be done unto us are nothing in comparison to the least fault that we commit against God. For a man cannot devise to break God's will ever so little, but the same is an encountering of His sovereign dominion, a violating of His majesty, and an overthrowing of His righteousness, which are things too precious to be abused.

What like thing is to be found in man? Can it be said that if one has misused us, it ought to be esteemed as if a man had infringed God's righteousness? Now then, we have just cause to condemn ourselves

until we serve God as we ought to do. And who does that? We are enemies to Him beforehand, even from our mothers' wombs; and as we grow in age, so grow we continually without ceasing in naughtiness, in all sinfulness, and in all unrighteousness. And yet for all that, God has not forborne to look mercifully upon us, insomuch that the more wretched we were, the more has He uttered His infinite mercy in sending us His only Son.

Now, if we consider this, ought not all pride to be laid down, all bitterness assuaged, all rebelliousness tamed, all spitefulness rid out of our hearts, and all untruth put away? Yes, verily. What is the cause, then, that we are so wayward, and that when heat hath once carried us away, we cease not even to spur forward ourselves, and that we do so easily enter into contention and strife that all the house where we be must ring of us? What is the cause hereof? Even our own unthankfulness, for that we think not upon God's incomprehensible goodness towards us, in that He has not spared His only Son, notwithstanding that we were His deadly enemies, notwithstanding that we were at war with Him, notwithstanding that we were cursed already by nature because of the corruption that is in us.

But yet, notwithstanding all this (as I said afore), it is impossible that we should taste of God's mercy except we be touched with compassion and have our hearts rid clean of that cursed affection of revenge. So then, albeit that Saint Paul has exhorted us to things that are very hard, yea, and utterly repugnant to man's nature, and which cannot be brought to pass except God work in that behalf, yet notwithstanding the declaration that is showed us here ought to prevail so much with us as to make us forget all wrongs. For admit that another man has offended me: what then? Can I try myself righteous and guiltless when I shall come before God? Alas, there are

so many iniquities and transgressions in me that I should be confounded a hundred thousand times.

Should one fault, then, which is committed against me, be unpardonable, and shall a hundred, yea, a whole million which I have committed against God, be nothing? What am I in comparison of that sovereign Majesty? So then, following this warning of Saint Paul's, whenever we are moved to impatience for any displeasure or wrong, so as we have any desire of revenge, let us learn, let us learn, I say, to gather our wits about us and to consider what we are. For first of all, if a man has committed any fault against us, we ourselves do the like or far worse. On the other side, let us consider how God has redeemed us, yea, and especially by that most precious pledge of the bloodshed of His only Son. And have we deserved that?

Again, what cause has moved God to be so merciful toward us? Nothing else but our wretchedness. Now, seeing that He, who is so good and that He, being not of our nature, has nonetheless had compassion on our wretchedness wherein we were plunged: what shall we do? Ought not we to have much more compassion one of another, because we find the things in ourselves which we pardon in our neighbors? God can find no infirmities in Himself, and how then shall He be moved to forgive us? Truly, even because He is the wellspring of all goodness and mercy. But when I see the thing that grieveth me in my neighbor, if I examine myself well, I shall find the like there, or else much more. Should not all these things persuade me to some compassion, if I forgot not myself too much?

The way, then, to make us easily forgive many faults, and to bear with many vices that may mislike us in our neighbors, is to cast our eyes upon the inestimable love which God hath borne us in the person of His Son.

And hereupon we may conclude, as I said before, that if we were not too unthankful, there would be another manner of mildness among us than there is, and we would not so soon fall out for every wrong that is done to us. For ought we not to think early and late, day and night, upon the favor that is granted us in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the day-sun to enlighten us? Should we be so brutish as not to consider that He makes His spiritual light shine upon us, with the purpose to guide us to salvation? And how is that done but by God's mercy?

Again, when we behold the favor that God shows us in maintaining us in this present life: are we worthy to be found at His cost? No, but all comes to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, it would become us, both sleeping and waking, eating and drinking, in rest and in labor, and in all things else, to consider always the mercy that God uses towards us, to bear it in mind, and to make it our continual exercise. And especially must this grace come always before our eyes when we pray unto God.

For what access may we have to talk familiarly with Him, to discharge all our cares and griefs as it were into His lap, yea, and to call Him our Father if we are not called to Him through His freely bestowed goodness in our Lord Jesus Christ, and if He does not forgive us our transgressions? If we do not think of all these things, we are too dull-headed and brutish. And hereby it appears full well that we shall always be disallowed in bragging ourselves to be God's children, His household folk, and faithful children, if we are not willing and glad to forgive. We may well boast of it before men, and we may be held in estimation through a fond opinion; but yet God will disgrace us.

So then, if we are loath to forgive, our unthankfulness betrays itself therein, showing that we do not consider the infinite goodness of our God as He shows it in our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the thing, in effect, whereunto Saint Paul intends to bring us.

Now he adds that we must be followers of God, as well-beloved children. For a man might yet reply, "It is true that God's mercy ought to ravish us all and amaze us, and it is so wonderful a thing that all our affections ought to be fastened upon it. But what for that? Are we able to be like unto God? No, for He is the fountain of all goodness, and we are lewd and untoward. Yea, God has the full perfection of all goodness in Him, and there is not so much as one drop of it in our nature. No marvel then though we come nothing near Him, nor have any resemblance or likeness unto Him."

Such a reply, I say, might men have made if Saint Paul had not added this saying: "Be ye followers of God," that is to say, follow ye Him; let Him be your example or pattern. For although God be the sovereign goodness itself, and that we have not any piece of us which tendeth not to evil, yet it is no sufficient excuse for us that we should therefore be utterly against Him, for that is a token that we belong not at all to Him.

Truly, as in respect that we are but only men, Adam's sin has so alienated us from God that thereout spring malice, spitefulness, pride, excessive passions, and wicked desire of revenging; and it separates us from God, in whom is the fullness of all goodness. Such are we from our mother's womb through Adam's sin, as I said before. But yet, for all that, must we not needs change our kind when it pleases God to reach us His hand, to gather us to Him, and to knit the things again in one which were scattered asunder? Yes.

And that is the cause why Saint Paul says, "as God's dear beloved children." Herein he shows that we shall have our mouths shut unless we answer God in goodness by bearing with one another, according also as our Lord Jesus tells us in Saint Matthew: "Follow your heavenly Father," says He, "which makes His sun to shine both upon the good and bad" (Matthew 5:45). For to say that we are God's children, to call upon Him, to pretend the name of Christians, and yet in the meanwhile to be despisers of God and to make as though we would defy Him by showing that we draw aloof from Him: is it not utterly against kind? Yes.

And therefore let no man deceive himself, but let us consider that we are not only full of hypocrisy but also utterly past shame when we fashion not ourselves like unto God, and yet will needs be held and taken for His children. True it is, that to be so fashioned like unto God, and to resemble Him so fully as one man comes near unto another, is impossible; but yet we must not be out of heart for all that. And soothly we must call to mind how the Scripture says that if we go on toward God, although we be far off from the mark that we aim at, yet does He accept that willingness of ours when we keep our way and endeavor continually to go forward still.

Although we are slow and weak, and although we trip and stumble, yet God imputes none of those faults to us when we are desirous to fashion ourselves like to Him. When we shoot at that mark, although we are far short or wide of it, yet does God take it in good worth, as I said. And that ought to give us courage. For if we were required to fashion ourselves like unto God point by point in all respects, alas, how could it be done? For even the very angels, notwithstanding that there is nothing but holiness in them, and that God's glory shines forth in them, are yet far short of the perfection that is in God.

And what are we, then, who are so corrupted and marred, who have such an abundance of naughtiness, and who are so pulled back and turned away by so many vices and temptations which Satan thrusts in our way? Yet we have this to rejoice in, that our Lord bears with us and accepts all our doings in good part, so long as we keep on toward Him. That is the manner of following Him which is commanded us here. True it is that we must not, in the meantime, fall asleep and say, as many do: "I would fain be like unto God," and then do but wrinkle their mouth at it. But we must consider every day and every hour how poorly we have profited in the true rule of fashioning ourselves like unto God, and thereupon condemn ourselves for it, thinking thus: "I had some good will yesterday; how has it increased since?" (Nothing at all), but rather, to my seeming, it has become colder.

After this manner, we must quicken up ourselves and fight against the things that hinder us, that we may endeavor to go still forward and to come nearer and nearer to our mark, from which we are yet so far off. But, however we fare, yet will not our Lord fail to esteem us always to be like Him and to be true followers of Him, if we willingly and without hypocrisy forgive those who have offended against us, at least after His example, who has given us a pardon that is far greater than all the pardons that can be gotten at our hands. We must bear with the vices and infirmities of our neighbors, as we see that He has borne with us.

For He might justly sink us down to the bottom of hell, and yet He does not forbear to adopt us as His children. Seeing then that He loves us after such a sort, notwithstanding all the unworthiness that is in us, it is good reason that we should resemble Him in so doing. And although we had no better prerogative than our natural birth, yet ought we to know that God has not separated us asunder. Even

the wretched pagans had some understanding hereof. For they said that man's life is to tend unto God and to be fashioned like unto His image, and that the same is also the full perfection of all happiness. And again, they added that we cannot resemble God better in any thing than in using gentleness one toward another, in doing good, and in being pitiful.

So then, let us consider that inasmuch as God has made us His well-beloved children, us, I say, who were His enemies, who had nothing but filthiness in us and were clogged with so many vices that we were worthy to be loathed by Him, and yet He has not withheld His love from us, it is good reason that we should overlook many things that might offend us and hinder our loving of our neighbors and our holding with them.

And now Saint Paul, having spoken of God, adds also the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. "The heavenly Father loved the world so well that He spared not His only Son, but delivered Him to death for us" (John 3:16). And what did Jesus Christ do? He forgot Himself; He regarded not His own person: "He that was the Lord of all glory submitted Himself to all reproach; He that was the life from the beginning made Himself mortal" (Philippians 2:7-8). "He that was the power of God the Father made Himself weak for love of us; He that had all things in His hand became poor to enrich us; He by whom all things are blessed became subject to cursing" (2 Corinthians 8:9; Galatians 3:13).

Seeing then that our Lord Jesus Christ abased Himself after that fashion (as Saint Paul also says in another place, where he sets Him forth as an example for us), and in place of His glory, took upon Him all shame, and in place of His righteousness became sin (not that He offended or had any blemish or spot in Him, but as bearing the

punishment of our sins, in which respect also the Scripture calls Him by the name of sin), and again, in place of life, took death, and condescended to be cursed of God in this world, that we might have blessedness by His means—when we think upon all this, ought not all pride, all presumption, all fierceness, all scornfulness, and all bitterness to be laid away, considering the means by which our Lord Jesus Christ has reconciled us to God His Father?

So then, let us think well upon all those things.

And furthermore, to pull us the more down, and to break the hard-heartedness to which we are too much inclined, Saint Paul says that He offered a sacrifice of good savor unto God His Father. As if he should say, "My friends, had you once well weighed the grace and favor that is purchased for you by our Lord Jesus Christ, you would soon beat back all the wicked affections which make you to harbor ill feelings, and you would fight against them until you had overcome them. Therefore, be kind-hearted in bearing with one another. Seeing it has pleased God to gather us as it were into one flock, and that our Lord Jesus Christ does the duty of a shepherd to lead us together, show yourselves to be as a flock of sheep, and not as ravening wolves."

Since our Lord Jesus disdains us in nothing, insomuch that He has made an offering and sacrifice of His own person unto God His Father, whereby He has wiped out all our sins, let it move us, and captivate all our hearts to glorify God, and to do homage to our Lord Jesus Christ as often as we think upon it. And whereas he says that the sacrifice which was offered by Jesus Christ was of sweet scent or savor, thereby he shows that there is nothing but stench in us.

To what end has He sanctified us? To rid us of our infections and filthiness, which made us stinking and loathsome before God. As

when sacrifices were offered in the material temple, God said they were of good savor unto Him, yet that was in respect of men, who could not come unto God by reason of their sins, for they were infected with them, and therefore God must needs have shunned them. But all was fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the truth of the shadows of the law.

Seeing it is so, let us understand that when it is said that the sacrifice which Jesus Christ offered was of sweet savor before God, it was to put away the remembrance of all our infections, to the intent that when we appear before the face of our God (as we must daily in our prayers and supplications), our sins may not be laid to our charge. So that although we are disfigured like wretched lepers, so that there is nothing but infection in us, yet the same may be no impediment but that God may embrace us as righteous and innocent, to be companions with the angels and fashioned fully according to His image.

And how may that be done? Even because our Lord Jesus Christ will have all our spots wiped away, so that we may come before Him with our heads upright, being well assured that He will always make us find the fruit of His mercy which He has once told us of.

Now, let us kneel down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us feel them more and more, so that it may draw us unto true repentance. Yet, let us not doubt that He bears with us, to the end that we should ask Him for mercy and forgiveness, assuring ourselves that He will hear us if we keep the way that He shows us by His Word and reform ourselves more and more according to His image, so that we may give true proof that, as we call upon Him as our Father, we also desire nothing else but to be His true children.

And so let us all say, "Almighty God, heavenly Father," etc.

The Thirty-fourth Sermon, which is the second upon the Fifth Chapter

3. And as for fornication, and all manner of uncleanness, or covetousness, let them not once be named among you, as becometh saints.

4. Neither ribaldry, nor foolish talk, nor jesting, which are not convenient things: but rather thanksgiving.

5. For this you know, that no whoremonger, or unclean person, or covetous body, which is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Forasmuch as we see our life is subject to many miseries, and as soon as we have escaped one danger, another comes in the neck of it, we ought to take the better heed to ourselves. Then, if a man have a care of his life, he will bethink him how to fence himself both against cold and against heat, and against all other inconveniences. Again, he will take heed that no mischance happens to his house by making fire in it, and as he goes abroad, he is always thinking upon the adversities that are wont to befall men.

But we should begin at the other end: namely, that there are a hundred times more dangers within us than we see without us. For the devil has many wiles to wind us in, and a number of vices do make war against us. Therefore, it stands us on hand to watch, or else when we have overcome one vice, it will be easy for another to steal upon us and to take us unawares. For he that shall have abstained from open force shall be tempted to defraud his neighbor by covert policy. And he that despises the goods of this world shall have some other infirmity in him.

For some are given to whoredom, some to gluttony and superfluity, and others to gaming and play. To be short, besides that every one of us is disposed (naturally) to wickedness and sin, there is not a man who has not an infinite sort of enemies to fight against. For (as I said), we are not only inclined to some one evil by nature, but to so great a number that even they who are most virtuous shall find themselves surprised at all hands.

Therefore, it stands us so much the more on hand to mark the exhortations that are contained here. Saint Paul has told us of many vices already, and shown us the means to encounter them and to put them to flight. Now he adds whoredom on one side, covetousness on the other, and foolish talk that is full of vain babble. We would think it were enough for us to have been warned in one word to walk godlily.

But (as I have touched already), let us consider a little on which side the devil is wont to assault men. For when he has once laid his battery, if he cannot compass his purpose, he begins anew. And when he has given a skirmish on the right side, he comes again to the left, and one while before, and another while behind, and always he finds

some gap open into us. That is one thing which we have to mark upon the exhortations that are made here.

Now let us come to St. Paul's speaking of fornication and all uncleanness. Forasmuch as it is a vice that all men do too easily bear with in themselves, he warns us that it is not enough for every one of us to abstain from actual whoredom. We must also consider that God, in commanding us to be chaste and undefiled, means that we should be well-fenced against all the enticements whereby Satan might beguile us. There are then some kinds of whoredom or whorishness which are not made account of among men, but yet they shall not fail to be condemned before God.

For this cause, St. Paul thought it not enough to tell us that we must be chaste in respect of our bodies, but he adds that all uncleanness or filthiness ought to be far from us. Likewise, he matches covetousness with it. It is true that they are two far different vices, for a whoremonger will commonly be prodigal, and whereas he had been well and thrifty before, he will forget himself, so as he will waste away all. St. Paul's intent was not to make articles of difference between vice and vice, nor was it necessary. Therefore, it was enough for him to show how many sorts the devil might beguile us, if we do not keep good watch, shut the gate against him, prevent him, and discern the dangers wherein we are, to the end that whatever he practices, he may always find us so guarded under the fear of God that he may have no entrance into us.

Moreover, he adds afterward filthiness or uncomeliness. For when men take leave to be wanton, surely all ribaldry will have full scope. For example, if wantonness and other foolish things are permitted, such as dancing and such other things, men will say at first that this may well be borne with, so long as there is nothing worse. But let

men once bear and suffer dancing, masking, mummeries, and such other like filth, and out of doubt, the devil will have a fling at them, and it cannot be stopped but that all will be marred. That is the cause why St. Paul, in forbidding whoredom, also adds all manner of ribaldry or dishonesty, and straightaway therewith foolish talk. For a body would take it to be no great harm if a man should jest and dally with a maid or a wife and prattle about many things. But (as I said) they are all of them allurements of Satan. If it is allowed, it cannot be but that the maid must be made a harlot, though she were the most honest woman in the world. That, in effect, is the thing which we have to bear in mind.

And he thinks it not enough to say that God's children must abstain from covetousness and whoredom, and from the things that come near to them. But, to the intent that we may abhor them all the more, he says, "Let them not be once named among you." It is not without cause that he says so, for (as I have said already, and as shall be declared more fully hereafter) as touching covetousness, it will be thought to be a virtue when a man works and scrapes together on all sides. "Oh, that is a good thrifty fellow," people say, clapping their hands at him and soothing him. Although they count him but a thief, a robber, and a cutthroat, yet if he has goods, everybody will think he does well to maintain himself with those in credit. Look how men are flattered in their covetousness. And again, concerning whoredom, we see that if God's word did not cry out upon that vice continually without ceasing, it would be set at liberty, and every man would dispense with himself so that there would be no more honesty among men.

St. Paul, therefore, perceiving it to be so hard a thing to keep men from these vices, says that not even the very names of them ought to be allowed to have their course, but that they ought to be driven from

among us. Indeed, if there is any plague in a town, every man will keep himself close in his house and be afraid to go abroad where any peril is. To be short, men will be wary enough to keep themselves close, that the disease may not catch them. Yes, and a general commandment also shall be given to keep the streets clean, that the air is not infected by them, and to take away the things that may feed or increase the mischief. But in the meantime, these deadly plagues assail us, and yet, notwithstanding, every man holds on his way still, and it should seem that we would be poisoned with them.

However, this warning should not be unprofitable for us, where St. Paul forbids us to name whoredom. True, this word must still be in use, for St. Paul does not stand upon that ceremony. And indeed, God says expressly in His law, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). He thinks it not enough to forbid whoredom, but to the intent that we should abhor it the more, He shows us what an enormity the breaking of faith between man and wife is. God then names whoredom in that text, and so does St. Paul name it here also, and that is not to contradict one another but to make us understand that we should not talk of it in jest or sport, as men are wont to do, for that is but a further inbrewing of men with that vice so as they might not dislike it anymore.

We see that when there is talking of all ungodliness, and leave is given to use loose speech, every man will give himself to it so that custom will go for law, and men will take whoredom to be lawful. Finally, we have to mark that St. Paul's intent was not to speak of the bare names of whoredom and covetousness. For if a man says to a whoremonger, "What? You play the whoremaster," he will deny it and say, "I did but dally and play the wanton." As much will these wicked ones do who give themselves over to it. But there is neither whoremonger nor harlot who abhors not the name of whoredom.

And why? Because they see it is a filthy thing, and that it is as much as if a man should set them upon a scaffold to be a shame to all the world. St. Paul, therefore, spoke not of the bare name of whoredom. The same is to be said of the name of covetousness. "What talk you of covetousness? It sounds ill-favoredly, and no man will acknowledge that he is tainted with covetousness."

They will rather make such excuses as these: "I have a charge of wife and children, and why is it not lawful for me to seek sustenance for them?" Again, "Should I not have a care for hereafter, that I may set them in some good state?" Covetousness has such a store of excuses that it is colored and varnished with them, and the term has such visors put upon it that it is taken well-nigh for a virtue. But Saint Paul meant not that men should only forbear the bare names which might make the vices themselves abhorred and hated; rather, he would that whoredom should be named as a villainous thing and that men should understand that a whorehunter cuts himself off from the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, banishes himself from the kingdom of heaven, and is cursed before God and His angels.

Those are things that must be known. And again, that a covetous person is an idolater who forsakes God, that he is as a damned soul and a confounder of all right and equity, that he is possessed by the devil and a tormentor to himself. Those are the things which it behooves us to know, and of which we cannot speak too much. But we know the manner of those who are desirous to take all liberty: all their delight is to sharpen their wits to tell merry tales, saying, "I remember such a thing and such a thing that was done in my time." Yes, and they will not hesitate to report what they have heard from their grandfathers, before they themselves were born into the world. And if there was any ribaldry or unthriftiness in their doings, that they will lay open. And to what end? To the end that everybody

should be desirous to inquire of such filthiness. Thus are snares laid to catch us whenever the devil has won so much at our hands.

You see, then, that the things which Saint Paul meant are the pleasant tales that are told to make men merry, with the intent not only that everyone should delight in whoredom and be no more ashamed to give themselves over to all lewdness, but also take it as a lawful thing, so that there may be common talk of it, and it may be made a table talk at all feasts, and an ordinary conversation in the streets and everywhere else. Yes, and we see that such as have any journey or travel—even the poor people—cannot solace themselves in their labor without offending God, by intermingling always some foolish tales. And to what end do they serve? Even to harden men's hearts, so they may think to themselves, "Everyone is at the same point; no wonder though lechery is made so heinous a matter: behold how such a man behaves himself, and such a one also." And when vices can once be made common, then to their thinking, the goal is won on their side.

Now, for that cause, Saint Paul says that they must not once be named among us. And likewise, he says this of covetousness. For everyone takes it for a virtue if he can pillage and poll all his life long and never cease raking in other men's goods by fraud and extortion. Yes, and men delight in following them and say, "Oh, such a man of my acquaintance knew well how to use such a practice and such a trick." True, it is that covetous people will not speak so of those whom they dislike. For they will say, "That villain? He does nothing but catch and scrape on all sides; there is no trust in him; he is cruel and churlish." And to be short, each of them spitefully rails against his fellow. And so, you see how the covetous sort rail one upon another.

But when a covetous person intends to confirm himself in his naughtiness and to harden himself in it and to cover his faults, he will say, "It is fitting that a man should be foresighted; I knew such a one and such a one who advanced by that means. He was a poor fellow and had nothing, but he behaved himself in such a way that he hoarded up well. And how? Marry, he had good policy, and if any man fell into his hands, he left his hair behind him, if not his skin and all." Thus do covetous folks shroud themselves in spoiling men under the pretense of good thriftiness, as they term it, that is to say, under pillaging and polling, and such other like things.

Therefore, we see how needful this exhortation of St. Paul's is, where he says that all vices must be shut out of the doors, and that if any man speaks of them, we must abhor him, and not make a jesting matter of them among us, for fear that we be tainted with them.

And we must also mark what he adds about all wantonness and foolish (or fond) talk. For (as I said before), it is certain that whoredom must needs grow lawful among men when they suffer such provocations and occasions of naughtiness; for it is all one as if a man would willfully give over himself to Satan. Therefore, let us take heed to ourselves, drive the enemy far from us, and be sure that where such lightness and lewdness have full scope, by and by there must needs be a brothel or stews set up—not in some one corner of a city or town, but over all, so that no place shall be clean, as experience shows too much. But yet, men would not be willing to see it so. Every man complains nowadays that there is no more chastity in the world. And is it any wonder?

For there was a time when there was some honesty and soberness to be seen in married women; but now they count it a virtue to be more than mannish, to be brazen-faced and utterly shameless. And why?

Will men say that a woman is chaste if she is not well tried? Oh, no, no. "Come who will," says she; "if these roisters fall to dallying with me, I can tell well enough how to send them away. They shall soon find out to whom they speak, for I know how to answer them." Thus, will a harlot play the chaste wife, as though she were a mirror of all honesty; and yet, in the meantime, she will stand at the barriers like a man of arms, against all comers who will hold talk with her of lewdness and ribaldry.

Now, therefore, let us mark well what Saint Paul tells us here. For women have been suffered a long time to be so immeasurably bold; and besides wanton talk, there are also very garish attires, so that it is very hard to discern whether they be men or women. They must have new deckings and trimmings every day, and every day some new disguised fashion or another. They make themselves like great cartwheels, like peacocks' tails, so that a man cannot pass within three feet of them but he shall feel as if a windmill sail is flapping by him. Again, they have their ribaldry songs mingled with it.

Now, what chastity can there be where it is so driven away and banished by force? On the contrary, the trumpets sound on all sides that everybody should give themselves over to superfluity and garishness, seeking nothing else but to plunge themselves over head and ears in it. So then, let us mark well that when there is such disorder both in gestures, in countenances, in talk, in dancing, and in all like foolishness, vanities, and looseness, it is all one as if man should cut trenches from a river to convey the water to him. For whereas a river runs its ordinary course, if a man cuts the stream off and draws it to the other side, must it not needs have its course that way? Then, if men fall to corrupting the world after that fashion (as indeed it is one of the cunning tricks that the devil has used for a

long time), must not all needs go to havoc and be utterly past recovery? Yes. Therefore, let us mark well what is said to us here.

For when we hear these jesters say, "What, in God's name! Men shall shortly be at the point where they may not laugh and be merry; dancing is forbidden; it shall not be lawful for folks to talk together; a good fellow may not be so bold as to come in company with a man's daughter to talk to her of love matters; if a man does but speak to a wife, though it be but in sport, by and by it shall be turned to a crime; and in the end, what will come of it when there shall be such sternness and severity in the world?" When men speak in that manner, it is all one as if they proclaimed themselves to be the devil's proctors and advocates, to infect and poison the whole world, that there might be nothing but looseness, and that whoredom and ribaldry might reign in such liberty that men might no longer think it to be sin.

That, in effect, is the thing that we have to bear in mind.

Herewithal, Saint Paul says that it becomes well the saints, and that is to show that there ought to be no disputing nor replying, but that vices should be condemned sharply. For whereunto does God call us? To that point must we come. Truly, if any man says, "Men are frail, and alas if they might not be so bold as to cast their eye aside to give a pleasant look, but they should be condemned for it," I say, if man's frailty might be construed so, truly that vice would either be utterly lessened or else made half excusable.

But let us come to our own state. God knows our infirmities, but He will not have us to wallow in them, for He has vouchsafed to dedicate us to His service. Now, let us see if we can make these loose behaviors and all these follies, which are but Satan's allurements (as I said before), to agree with the word "holiness." What is meant by

holiness? It is as much to say that we must be chosen out to offer ourselves unto God, that He may enjoy us and wield us, so that we may be wholly His, and (to be short) be no more tainted and sullied with the filthiness of the world.

If holiness means all this, and that it must be in us or else we shall not be God's children, it is not for us to plead any more in defense of ribaldry, that it might be taken but for a light fault. Saint Paul therefore brings us back to the honor that God does us, as if he should say that if it seems too strange and hard unto us to refrain from the vanities wherein the world delights so much, and wherein men think even their life to consist—inso much that the unbelievers think not themselves to be alive unless they may delight themselves with foolish and wanton dalliance, but rather that they do but linger and pine away—when we are provoked to the like things, we must consider what honor God has done us in vouchsafing to dedicate us to His obedience.

For what are we by nature? What is there in us? Even from our mothers' womb, we bring nothing but disorder; we are cursed, we are steeped in sin, and, to be short, from top to toe, there is not any part in us that is not given to evil. All our members are instruments of sin; neither eyes, nor ears, nor mouth, feet, or hands are exempted. Forasmuch then as we are full of all uncleanness through sin, and yet, for all that, God has now plucked us back from it, is it not reason that we should be dedicated unto Him, seeing He calls us to holiness? And ought not this honorable title to restrain us from taking such unbridled liberty as every one of us could find in our hearts to take in following our own lusts?

To be short, Saint Paul meant to show us here how we may fight against our wicked lusts. For if we follow our own nature, surely

though some man be not inclined to lechery, yet he shall have other vices; yea, we have all vices in us, but that we are restrained by God's bridle, and yet does every man beguile himself on his own behalf. Now, what is to be done? We must not spare ourselves, but rather fight against ourselves. Let us not be dismayed though the Devil be so subtle, and we so tender and so easy to be soon shaken down; but let us consider how God calls us to the contrary. And what is that? To be holy in Him.

The thing therefore that Saint Paul meant to say in the first place is that he arms us by setting before us the state whereunto God has vouchsafed to call us through His goodness, to the intent that every man should gather strength, and not give any way to Satan; but that although we be sore laid at, yet we should not yield him the victory, because God has chosen us unto all cleanness. And after he has drawn us so by gentleness, he does also set down a horrible menace, and which ought to make the hairs stand up upon our heads; and thereby we see how God endeavors to win us to Him by all means.

When he says, "You be saints or holy ones," therein God uses sweetness and gentleness, as if He should say, "My children, bethink yourselves, for I have not created you to live at a venture in this world, but I have therewithal adopted you, to the intent to call you to the heavenly heritage. Now then, seeing I have redeemed you with the blood of my Son, and given you my Spirit to dwell in you, to the end you should be my temples, and I be worshipped there, will you now go and give yourselves to all lewdness again? And instead of being my temples, become sties for swine, and suffer your affections to be as dirt and dung to defile you withal, and fall to wallowing again in the mire, after you have been washed and made clean? If you will be my children, hold you in the plight that I have set you."

After this manner does God proceed with us, to draw us to Him, as though He did (as you would say) half flatter us. And on the other side, because He sees us cold, and that we abuse His patience, and are not touched to the quick with His grace when He utters it, but follow still our own lusts, He threatens us like a father who, perceiving his child to be unruly, and not of so free disposition as to be won at the first, says thus unto him: "Wot you what? Though I have cockered thee and suffered much at thy hand, yet must thou behave thyself otherwise, and play the good child towards me, or else go to the devil. If thou wilt needs continue still in thy naughtiness, get thee to the gallows; for I am not a father that will suffer myself to be so mocked without redressing it." After this manner will a father endeavor to keep his child in his good favor if it be possible; but if he sees that it avails not, he falls to threatening and chiding him, and all to break that stubborn heart of his, if he can.

Even so does God deal with us, and therein we see what care He has of our welfare, as I said before.

Saint Paul, therefore, after he has told us that we are saints, adds that no covetous person, no lecher, nor any unclean man shall enter into the kingdom of God, nor have any part of the heritage that is purchased for us. This threatening, as I said, ought to scare us all, or else we are too blockish. What a thing it is that we should be bereft of God's kingdom!

By the way, we must mark well the words that he uses, for he says that we shall not possess the kingdom of God and of Christ. Not that they are two diverse kingdoms, but to express better how that inheritance belongs unto us—not by birthright, nor yet by our own purchase, but by free gift. The kingdom of God, then, is the heavenly life and our whole happiness. For out of God, what can we have but

all unhappiness? Therefore, if we are banished out of God's kingdom, we must needs be plunged in all misery.

But it is expressly said to be the kingdom of Christ. And why? Because it was purchased for us by His blood and also because we are now restored again to the state from which we had fallen in our father Adam. Again, we know that the inheritance is given to us in our Lord Jesus Christ, to the intent that we, being His members and adopted by God through Him, should also be partakers of that which is peculiar to Him.

In the first to the Hebrews, He is called the heir of all things. And is that to shut us out utterly? No, but because we cannot otherwise be taken for God's children except by being incorporated into the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all belongs. Now then, if we should be rejected by God, if we should be cut off from all the benefits which have been purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ, and that this should come to pass through our own unthankfulness—alas, should we not be too, too blockish?

For the better expressing thereof, Saint Paul uses the word "heritage" or "inheritance." As if he should say, "If you were heirs of God's kingdom from your mothers' womb, consider how great a grief it ought to be to you to be set beside it. But now understand that the kingdom of God is communicated to you by our Lord Jesus Christ, because He has purchased it for you and made you His brethren and fellows. And understand, besides, that it is because God has adopted you freely. Yet you have it not by birthright, nor can you say that it is your own otherwise than by free gift."

Now then, seeing it is a state of inheritance, will you be so lewd as to lose such a benefit when it is offered to you? Shall God invite you so graciously to His glory, shall He offer you all the joy and happiness of

the kingdom of heaven, shall He match you with His own Son, and by that means make you possess all the good things that you can wish, and shall all this be worth nothing to you, but that you will need to hold scorn of it and refuse it? How can Satan so far overmaster you?

We see then how Saint Paul meant to awaken us here earnestly by all means, to the intent that if we cannot be drawn wholly unto God by love, at leastwise yet threatening may do us some good, and move us to yield, that our desires may by that means be bridled, and our lusts not overflow so outrageously. But, seeing that God shows Himself our Judge, we may at leastwise refrain from resisting Him, for that is all one as if we would openly run rushing against Him. Seeing that He, with His own holy mouth, has avowed us to be banished from the kingdom of heaven, if we nonetheless make no account of the things that He tells us, what a dealing is that?

Furthermore, whereas Saint Paul says that neither whoremongers, nor covetous men, nor unclean persons shall enter into the kingdom of God, he does not mean that all who have offended and done amiss are rejected by God. For who can say that he is clear of all the vices that are rehearsed here? Rather, he means those whoremongers, covetous persons, and loose livers who take pleasure in their lusts, are hardened in them, and are so settled in their filthiness that there is no longer any fear of God in them to hold them back.

We hear what he says to the Corinthians: "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" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). And such were some of you; but ye

are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11).

He shows that the faithful also had been stained with similar corruptions. "But ye are washed and made clean," says he, "ye are sanctified by God's Holy Spirit and through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." As if he should say, "By nature, you were miserable and given to all lewdness. The willingness and desire you have now to serve God did not come of yourselves, but by God's drawing you unto Him, that whereas you were once like wild beasts, He has brought you unto His obedience. Whereas you were foul and unclean, He has washed you with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. And whereas you were unholy, He has made you holy by His Holy Spirit. Therefore, do not fall to wallowing and plunging yourselves again into uncleanness."

Thus, the true meaning of those words is, in effect, that the wicked and such as lead a lawless life—those who do not fight against their lusts but delight in wickedness—shall never come into the kingdom of God. For, first of all, if the faithful are not renewed at their birth by the Spirit of God, they are stained with the sins to which humankind is subject; indeed, we see some who are wholly given unto them.

And although our Lord has worked in us by His Holy Spirit, it does not therefore follow that we are so well reformed on the first day that there is no more evil in us. For we must fight a continual battle through repentance all our life long. And repentance would take no place if we did not feel sin dwelling still within us. Therefore, it suffices that sin does not reign in us, as Saint Paul exhorts us in Romans 6: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Romans 6:12).

There, Saint Paul tells those to whom he speaks that if they look upon their former life, they must needs be ashamed because they were so strayed away that they had forgotten God and all virtue and honesty. "You cannot," says he, "remember what you were before you were converted to the belief of the Gospel, but you must needs cast down your eyes with great shame." And yet, notwithstanding, he tells them that sin must not now reign in our mortal bodies, even though it still dwells there.

Indeed, it were to be wished that there were no sin dwelling in us and that we were all like the angels of heaven. But Saint Paul, knowing well that we cannot attain to that so long as we dwell in this world and until we have put off our corruption and been dispatched of this transitory life, wills us yet, at least, that sin should not reign in us. So then, although we are stained with many vices, let us fight against them so that they may not become heinous crimes, as though we rebelled against God, but continue only as infirmities. Let us beseech God to forgive us them completely, acknowledging that we need to obtain mercy daily, accordingly, as it is not without cause that He teaches us to ask forgiveness for our sins.

And so you see how that saying is to be understood.

Now furthermore, Saint Paul adds (as we have seen already to the Galatians) that covetous people are idolaters (Galatians 5:20). Truly, this matter is well worthy to be discoursed on at greater length, and there is nothing spoken of it that cannot be spoken again. However, for as much as in handling the Epistle to the Galatians, I declared there why Saint Paul calls covetous people idolaters, it shall suffice to touch upon the essence of the matter in few words.

As for other vices, they do indeed cause us to forget God. What are the inordinate lusts of our flesh, each one of them, but idols? For

every person is carried away after the things they desire, setting all their heart and mind upon them, and forgetting God. Therefore, it may well be said that all wicked lusts are idols that impeach the majesty of God, provoke us to strive against Him, and even to shake off His yoke and give ourselves over to Satan.

Nevertheless, covetousness is justly called idolatry because it is certain that when a person gives themselves over to it, they set their whole happiness therein. A covetous person is not like a glutton, who feels some remorse and shame for their wrongdoing, nor like a drunkard, a whoremonger, or a blasphemer. For there is still some sense of shame in them. Why? Because they cannot so blind others that people will not speak ill of them for it. Even if the whole world applauded them and knew nothing of their wickedness, yet they themselves would still be forced to feel some guilt.

You see then that all such as offend God in any other way will still be held in check by some fear and have some remnant of discretion left in them to say, "I do amiss." And however much they soothe themselves, fall asleep, or even harden themselves utterly, they shall still feel some pricking within. But the covetous person rejoices in their doings so much that they do not think themselves at fault, neither before God nor man. What is worse, they glory in their wickedness. For when they have fleeced one, robbed another, deceived one, and snared or trapped another, then, when they tally up their account, they say, "Blessed be God that has prospered me so well." You will hear the greatest con artists in the world say, "Thanked be God, I have made a good hand today; I have prospered this month; I have done well this year." And yet, if they search their own hearts thoroughly, they will find that all was but theft, extortion, craft, and deceit. However, the devil has so blinded them that they have no more discretion or conscience to say, "This is evil done."

Because covetous people are at that point, where they have no more fear of God to restrain them, they are termed idolaters. But this is not all the mischief; there is yet a worse point, which is that they set all their happiness in their riches and so forget themselves, thinking that no harm can happen to them, being puffed up with such pride that they thrust God a hundred leagues away, as the proverb says.

Therefore, it is not for nothing that Saint Paul exhorts the rich men of this world "not to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God" (1 Timothy 6:17). He says this purposely because they have such great confidence in their riches that they do not fear God, but rather utterly forget Him. You see then that covetous people abuse their riches by setting their whole heart upon them, which is forbidden in Psalm 62:10: "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them." They revel in them so much that, to their own thinking, they already have their paradise here. Therefore, this cursed disposition and insatiable lust of covetousness, which makes all men both drunk and blind, is justly named idolatry and is likewise the root of all evil. Because the covetous person always seeks their own gain, whether it be by hook or by crook, by murder or by treason, by perjury or by poisoning, or by any other means whatsoever, it is all the same to them, so long as they may achieve their desire.

From this springs so much trouble and contention and so much bloodshed throughout the world that some are poisoned, and others have their throats cut; there is no other cause but this insatiable greed of covetousness. True, ambition, and whoredom, and such other like vices bring about many foul consequences; yet that does not excuse the covetous from being guilty of the same. So then, let us mark well that when Saint Paul speaks of covetousness, he justly says that it so subdues us to Satan that it makes us forget God. It makes us so brutish that we no longer fear God nor have any remorse of

conscience. It puffs us up with such pride that God seems to be nothing to us, and we yield the honor of the living God to our gold, silver, and riches. That is such rank treason that there is good cause for us to abhor it, as we see by what the Holy Ghost speaks of it through the mouth of the Apostle.

Now, let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us feel them with true repentance. Being grieved and heartily sorry for them, may we so sorrow for our offense against Him and for straying from the way of salvation that we seek nothing but to dedicate ourselves wholly unto Him. May He daily cut off whatever corruption is in us and make us forsake the world, understanding this as the end for which we were redeemed and cleansed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the meantime, may He vouchsafe to bear with our infirmities and continually rid us of them more and more until He has taken us out of this world to join us to Himself in all righteousness and holiness. May it please Him to grant this grace, not only to us but also to all people and nations of the earth. Amen.

The Thirty-Fifth Sermon, which is the Third upon the Fifth Chapter

8. For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk ye as children of the light.

9. (For the fruit of the Spirit consisteth in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.)

10. Trying what is acceptable to the Lord.

11. And have not to do with the fruitless works of darkness, but rather even rebuke them.

We know how hard a matter it is to reclaim men from evil customs when they are once hardened unto them. For the mischief does easily take root in us, because we are inclined and almost wholly given to it by nature. Yet, we are not so soon changed when we have continued a long time in doing evil. It happens to us as unto sick folk, whose diseases, having once gathered strength, do so stick to their bones that they can by no means be purged away.

Now, a great number of folk are given to naughtiness and bear with themselves in many vices before they are called of God and touched to the quick with repentance. Therefore, we have need to practice the doctrine that Saint Paul teaches us here: that is to wit, to know that when we have held aloof from God and strayed from the way of salvation, we must not flatter ourselves in it, nor make a buckler and excuse of it, because it has become an ordinary thing with us. For we must not pardon ourselves a whit the more for all that, but rather consider that God has pitied us and that His drawing of us from the evil wherein we were was to the end to change us and to make His power and grace the better known by our life, in that it bears witness that we are no more the men that we were before.

That is the cause why Saint Paul says in this text, "Ye were once darkness, but now hath God enlightened you." As if he should say that we must not respect either what others do or what has befallen in ourselves to hope to be justified and acquitted of our faults by that

means. For when it has once pleased God to reach us His hand and to show us such mercy as to adopt us for His children and to make us heirs of the heavenly life, instead of being forlorn, cursed, and damned as before, that grace ought to prevail greatly in us, to make us become new creatures.

And as for those among whom we live, if God gives them the bridle and lets them alone as men forsaken, let us understand that it was His will to single us out from so miserable a state. Therefore, let them be as looking glasses unto us, to behold what wretchedness it is for men to follow their own lusts. So little then ought the offending and sinning of a multitude to cover our faults, that we ought rather to take warning by them to withdraw ourselves and to hold ourselves as it were fettered up under the fear and obedience of our God, seeing He shows such special favor unto us, whereof the rest who abide still ignorant and unbelieving are deprived.

However, for the better understanding of the whole, let us first note that Saint Paul has shown us here what the state of all men in general is until God has drawn them to Himself. He tells us there is no cause at all why we should soothe ourselves in our virtues, insomuch that this only speech of his, where he says that we are darkness (that is to say, that there is neither light, reason, nor any governance in us, but rather that we have become stark beasts), ought well to make us all cast down our eyes and submit ourselves with humility. Indeed, many may have some show of wisdom and be commended by the world as well-advised men, capable not only of guiding themselves in their whole lives but also of counseling and directing others. Yet, notwithstanding, God avows that, instead of having right wisdom and reason, we are but brute beasts in respect of Him.

Just as this saying warns us to sigh and groan before God, it also provokes us to seek the remedy necessary for the proper ruling of our lives: to suffer God to be our Master and Teacher by His Word (as shall be declared more at length anon) and to pray that His Holy Spirit may work in us so that we may not be led with such overweening as to count ourselves wise in our own conceit and fancy. Thus, in effect, you see what we are to remember upon this point, where Saint Paul reproachfully entitles men, saying they are darkness and that there is nothing but utter brutishness in them. I have already treated this in the last chapter, where Saint Paul showed that men discern nothing and go only toward their destruction until they are reformed.

Now, on the contrary, he says, "Light in the Lord," to show that all the wisdom we have comes from a supernatural grace, as it is termed—that is to say, we do not have it by inheritance, nor can we attribute it to ourselves, but it is altogether of God's working, and we must be linked to our Lord Jesus Christ to partake in such a benefit. For it is not for naught that the Scripture says, "God's Spirit was given unto Him to rest upon Him with full perfection" (Isaiah 11:2).

Therefore, let us learn to distrust ourselves and to know that all we can bring of our own will stand us in no stead but to turn us from the way of salvation, and that we have no wisdom except what is given to us by God's free goodness, to the intent to gather us unto Him and make us members of our Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, who is our true light, as we shall see shortly.

To be brief, it is as if Saint Paul should say that by nature we are only darkness in Adam and that we are enlightened again in our Lord Jesus Christ. Now (as I said before), this is intended so that we should seek no excuse by alleging that we cannot put off our old skin

or utterly forsake the things so printed in us, for those excuses are but trifling and will not stand in account before God. Rather, it is to the intent that we should learn to examine well what we are and what our state is until God has redressed it, and to consider what we have of our own—namely, that we bring nothing but cursedness with us from our mother's womb. Furthermore, we must make the grace God has given us effective so that it is not, as it were, choked by our unthankfulness and malice. We must consider well to what end our Lord has reached out His hand to us and shown Himself so pitiful toward us: namely, that whereas we were plunged in darkness, it was His will to bring us again to light.

And we are called "light in the Lord," not only because we have the Word of His Gospel, which is like a burning torch to guide us, but also because He Himself is like the spiritual Day-Sun and enlightens us inwardly by God's Spirit. For we see by experience that people do not improve merely by having their ears filled with the doctrine of truth; one may take pains to teach them, and yet it shall be but labor lost. Therefore, our Lord must make His Son shine — meaning that just as He has commanded and ordained His Word to be preached to us, He must also give us eyes to enjoy that light.

For though the sun shines ever so brightly in the sky, we would find neither fruit nor profit by it unless we have eyes that are instruments to receive the light that comes from above. So, God must give us spiritual eyesight to understand the things taught to us by His Word. You see, then, that the means by which we become "light in the Lord" is that, on one side, God shows us the way of salvation through the preaching of His Word to us, and, on the other, gives us a new spirit or mind so that we do not remain in the ignorance in which all of us are by nature.

Saint Paul expresses his meaning even better when he adds that we should "walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8). Here, we see that he not only praises and commends God's grace to stir us up to glorify Him for it, as we are bound to do, but also shows the use of it. As if he should say, beware in any way that you do not thrust God's grace underfoot or make it unavailing to you. For His calling of you to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ was with the intent that you should be wholly changed and brought into this light.

If we would have the sun only to stand idly gazing upon it like people out of their wits, what a thing would that be? It would be better for us to have continual night. But the sun must serve us to apply ourselves to the business we have to do, to labor in earning our living, each according to his charge, office, and calling. You see then that we would abuse the sun, which brings us such great benefit, if we did not each occupy ourselves in the things we know to be our duty. Now Saint Paul applies this analogy to the spiritual Day-Sun, that is to say, to the doctrine of the Gospel, saying that it shines, but not for us to engage in idle speculations, but rather so that we should set our hand to the plow, and each of us see where he can and ought to do service, thereby making the light available that is offered to him.

Furthermore, Saint Paul in one place calls us "light," and immediately after, he adds, "children of light." Both of these expressions come to one end. Yet it is not for nothing that he terms us "light," for it serves to express better that God's grace is not only offered to us but also imprinted in us, so that we are, in a sense, newly shaped by it. And this is not only found here but also in the Epistle to the Philippians (Philippians 2:15).

We must first note that this title belongs properly to none but our Lord Jesus Christ, as He Himself says, "I am the light of the world;

he that walks in me shall never stray" (John 8:12). You see, then, that our Lord Jesus Christ is sufficient of Himself alone to give us light, and if we keep ourselves aloof from Him, we shall find nothing but darkness, neither in heaven, nor on earth, nor in any other creature. For if we speak of God's majesty, it is above all the heavens; even the very angels have no light but what they borrow from our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is why Saint John the Baptist is excluded from that honor when he says that he was not the light, but that the dignity belongs peculiarly to the Son of God, who enlightens all men that come into the world (John 1:8-9). Again, the apostles and all such as preach God's truth are also termed light in their degree, when it is said, "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). Not that this belongs properly to them, but because God serves His own purposes through them when He delivers His Word to guide others and show them the way of salvation.

If the person bearing the candle to light others should reel, stumble, or stray here and there, what a thing would that be? Therefore, since God has given us the charge to preach His Word, we are warned to walk in such a way that every person may be edified by our lives. Yet in the meantime, this does not detract at all from the honor of our Lord Jesus Christ. For those who are enlightened by Him must not thrust themselves forward to be equal with Him; He alone must continue as the light, and we enlighten one another, according to Saint Paul's saying in the text I previously cited, where he says to all the faithful, "You are as lamps burning in this world, even by having the word of God" (Philippians 2:15).

The light, then, which Scripture allots both to the teachers and to those who are taught, is that all of us must have God's Word, which

must be as a burning lamp to us, not only to guide ourselves by but also to show the way to all those who otherwise would go astray.

Hereunto, he addeth that we are children of light, to make us understand that our light comes from elsewhere than ourselves and that we borrow it from Him who is the light of the world (John 8:12), as I have mentioned before. According to this, it is said that God is the Father of lights, and so the Scripture names Him. Again, our Lord Jesus Christ is the true light (John 1:9) by which God appeared to us and by which it is His will to enlighten us. Therefore, we are the children of light, meaning we are so enlightened that God's light is in us, namely because we are members of our Lord Jesus Christ (as I said earlier), and we communicate with Him. He guides us by the light of His Gospel and enlightens us also by His Holy Spirit.

Since our Lord works in us by faith, He imparts it to us by measure, as He Himself thinks good, as we have seen in the fourth chapter. However, whatever the case, let us esteem God's grace as it is worthy and deserves and turn it to our benefit so that it is not disappointed through our carelessness but that we may walk — that is to say, consider whereunto God has called us, and every one of us employ and enforce himself thereunto.

Now hereupon, Saint Paul gives a warning that the fruit of this light is goodness, righteousness, and truth. As if he should say that he speaks not here after the common fashion of men but intends to bring us unto God and to show us the purpose of being Christians and the true use of the learning we have by the Gospel. He also shows how the power of the Holy Ghost ought to show itself in us, that is, in the well-ordering of our life.

By these three words — goodness, righteousness, and holiness — he means that we should not do any wrong to anybody but endeavor to

live uprightly and faithfully with our neighbors and also be kind-hearted in having compassion for one another, bearing patiently with one another, and succoring one another as need shall require. Indeed, there are other things requisite in a Christian man's life, but here Saint Paul comprehends all under one kind.

As if he should say, "My friends, God is singularly gracious to us in gathering us unto Him, whereas we were strayed away into destruction; and whereas we were held in thralldom under the tyranny of the prince of the world, which is the devil (John 12:31), He has set us free and made us members of His only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ." Lo, here is an inestimable benefit. And now we must show to what end our Lord has used such great mercy towards us. That, he says, must be known by our life, even by walking with one another in all goodness — that is to say, that we are not cruel as dogs and cats, nor given to guile, craft, and malice to deceive and outmaneuver one another, but go on sincerely and straightforwardly in all things and deal uprightly so that every one of us endeavors to yield to his neighbor what is his due so that no one is wedded to his own profit to the grievance of others.

When our life is once ordered in this manner, then people shall perceive that we bear fruit in the light, and that the light also bears fruit in us — that is to say, that the light which God has given us is not idle, but that just as God has enlightened us, we apply ourselves to do the things He commands and appoints. This is why Saint Paul speaks of the fruit of righteousness, according to my former saying, where I told you that the sun does not give light to the world with the intent that everyone should sit still with his arms folded one within another or that we should be like the fowls that fly in the air, but rather to serve our turn by guiding us in all our doings. That is the fruit and use of the sun.

Therefore, the Gospel is not a fruitless thing; its working must show itself in our life, that is to say, by being righteous, kind-hearted, and faithful. Under these words, Saint Paul has comprised all things belonging to the two tables of the Law. For, as I told you before, charity does not serve to make us forget what belongs to God's service, as though that were a thing of small weight. Instead, it is the manner of the Scripture to send us back to our neighbors when it speaks of serving God. For it is certain that if we love our neighbors as we ought to do and live with them according to God's law, God shall always have His chief right.

Until we are ruled under His awe, every one of us will love himself too much, desire to draw to himself, and glory in himself. To be brief, there will be nothing in us but pride, vainglory, covetousness, cruelty, and all manner of deceit until our Lord has brought us under His yoke, and we have bowed ourselves unto His obedience, to honor Him, serve Him, and bless His holy name. This shall be done when we yield people their due, for that is a true trial and record that we fear God.

And now, to show us how we should live in the world, Saint Paul sets down these three things: namely, Goodness, which is kindness of heart in having pity and compassion upon those in distress, relieving their needs, and bearing patiently with their infirmities. This is what is meant by the word "Goodness." Next is Righteousness, which signifies upright dealing, so that we do not take away any man's goods or seek to advantage ourselves by the hindrance of our neighbors, nor engage in plundering and exploiting, but (to be brief) be content with whatever God gives us without seizing other men's goods or possessions.

Last of all is added Truth, which is contrary to all crafty dealings and to all lewd practices by which we labor to draw other men's goods to us. When we have these three things, it is certain that Charity reigns fully and perfectly in us. These are the things we must remember upon this point. Do we then want to show that our training in the Gospel has not been in vain, and that we have not forsaken the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? Let us live uprightly and fairly among men. Again, let us be kind-hearted, both in bearing one another's infirmities and in succoring them in their need. Finally, let us be faithful — that is to say, let us use no craft or deceit, but let us be truthful, and in whatever dealings we have with others, let them not find us double-minded.

The thing, therefore, in effect, which we have to bear in mind is that God's enlightening of us is so that we should no longer plunge ourselves into darkness, but that when we have once received light from Him, we should endeavor to give light to wretched unbelievers who wander, reel, and stumble and are like to break their necks, for they are like silly beasts. And it is no wonder at all, for they have no light to guide themselves by. True, that will not excuse them, but they will always be guilty before God, for their ignorance is matched with malice. But what shall we on our side have to say for ourselves when we stray so far away, seeing that God has enlightened us by His Word and Holy Spirit, and knit us to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Sun of Righteousness, as I have already declared?

Now hereupon, Saint Paul tells us that we must try and examine what things please God. This reaches further than what he has already said, for it shows us the true rule which, if we follow, we cannot do amiss — namely, to frame ourselves according to God's will (Ephesians 5:10). Truly, we know that the fear of Him is not without cause called true wisdom. For what causes men to overshoot

themselves into all evil, but because they forget God and bury the remembrance of His name and majesty? For those who have God in their minds shall always be restrained as if with a bridle. Although their flesh tempts them to evil, they will resist and consider that as long as they live in this world, they must spend their life in the service of Him who gave it to them.

Then, if our minds are upon God, surely it will arm us and give us strength against all temptations. Saint Paul says here that we must examine well what things please Him, in which he awakens our carelessness. For in the aforesaid despising of God that I spoke of, there are two things. One is that men fall asleep in soothing themselves, not thinking they will ever come to account, and therefore they rest so soundly, as if it were up to us to make good or evil. Afterward, they fall outrageously to flinging themselves at random against God.

Therefore, it is not enough for us not to fight willfully against God, nor to play the wild beasts or the mad bulls that push every way with their horns. That is not enough. We must be watchful in thoroughly inquiring what is lawful for us so that we may discern between the things that God permits and the things He disallows. To be brief, the first thing that Saint Paul shows us here is that our life will never be well-ordered until it is wholly conformable to God's will. Mark that for one point.

Secondly (as I have told you), we must not think that God forgives our carelessness when we (as it were) willfully shut our eyes and are content to go astray without taking any great heed. Instead, it behoves us to stand on our guard and diligently seek what God allows. These are the two points we must note.

Concerning the first point, we see how men have always taken liberty in all ages to follow their own inventions, as they term them. Indeed, it has ever been a common proverb that "the intent judges men," and it is very true in part, but men have misinterpreted and misconstrued it. Under that pretense, every man has imagined that he should be cleared before God and taken for righteous, provided he had no intent to offend. In this manner, the hypocrites think they do well: when they have invented a variety of follies and superstitions, they convince themselves that God ought to take all in good worth because they thought them to be good. But God does not deal according to our imagination.

We see, then, that men have deceived themselves greatly in imagining that it was enough for them to have a "good intent" or "meaning," as they call it. This is why there is nothing but hellish confusion in popery, because they have forsaken God's Word, disregarding what He commands or forbids, and have taken liberty to do some of this and some of that as it suited every man's fancy, all under the pretext that men are to be judged by their intent.

It is true (as I said before) that "the intent judges men" (in some respect). For although we may do the most commendable work that can be devised, we will still be condemned at God's hand if it is not done with the right end in mind. If our honest dealing is only an outward appearance, meant to earn us the reputation of being the most honest men in the world, while all our virtue is but dung and filth within, it is only a show of honesty. Why? Because our intent is wicked and crooked.

But even so (as I said before), we must not heedlessly do whatever our own mind teaches us. Our chief wisdom is to seek God's will, according to which Saint Paul says it is our "reasonable service,"

which God commands us, and in which our obedience will be well accepted (Romans 12:1). But if we insist on doing everything according to our own understanding, God will reject it all; for it is not reasonable — it is but the trash and trickery of Satan.

Therefore, let us take careful note of what is told us here: that is, we must not seek any other distinction between good and evil than by weighing it in God's balance and not in our own, saying, "It seems good to me," or "I think it is good, and I will try it." Let us beware (I say) of bringing such rashness with us, and let us be as little children who are newly weaned from the breast. Let us learn from God and allow ourselves to be guided and governed wholly by Him.

You see then that humility is the beginning of serving God well when we are not puffed up and carried away with self-conceit or so rash as to say, "I think so, I believe so," but instead, think thus: "Is this from God? Has He spoken it in His Word? Even if it seemed to be the best and most excellent thing in the world, I would still refuse it if it is forbidden by God." And that is why it is expressly said, "You shall not do what seems good in your own eyes" (Deuteronomy 12:8). For the same reason, we are forbidden to be wise in our own conceits (Proverbs 3:7).

Only let us assure ourselves that to be taught by God is infallible wisdom. But as soon as we step aside from what He shows us, we become wanderers, even if we were the wisest in outward show and the most esteemed in the world. To be brief, we see how all that men can bring of their own will stand them in no stead but only to condemn them. Why? Because nothing can guide us but God's will alone; it is the only rule whereby we may say, "This is worthless," or "This is good."

Now, seeing that the devil has gone about to deprive us of such a benefit, it behooves us all the more to stand on our guard — that is to say, to be heedful and to apply all our wits thoroughly to the seeking out of God's will. We are careful enough about our temporal profit, for people rarely take anything in hand without forecasting well what may ensue. "Oh," they say, "behold, I shall cast myself into such danger; again, this will serve my turn that way, or else this may hinder or hurt me."

Now then, we are careful enough in seeking the things that belong to this fleeting life, but meanwhile, we step forth at random in serving God. Although we pretend great zeal in seeking the heavenly life, we show thereby that we make no account of it and that all we ever do is but for fashion's sake and as if it were mere task work.

Therefore, let us take note that men shall not be so sorely condemned when their rebellion against God is not willful and intentional, as when they harden themselves in their stubbornness. It is true that men will do some things without looking closely at them, but they must still consider whether God approves of them or not. The thing in which we must be wisest and most discerning is not to make our own profit after the manner of the world, which counts the wiliest people as the wisest, but to gain spiritual discretion — to know what things God allows and to follow the same.

Now hereupon he adds also that we must not have to do with the fruitless works of darkness but rather rebuke them. This is not added without great reason. For although we are well disposed to frame our lives according to God's Word, yet we shall be shouldered from it if we do not learn to resist all temptations.

Truly, even if we saw no vices around us to draw our obedience away from God, we already have such a store of vices within us that we

must have profited greatly in God's school before we can be disposed to submit ourselves in true obedience and say, "Lord, reign over us, and let Your will alone be our rule." But yet, let us suppose that we have come so far as to feel no resistance or opposition in ourselves, that we could subdue all our affections so that they might, in a sense, be orderly. Nevertheless, the devil never ceases to assail us on all sides—sometimes by light skirmishes, other times by undermining us, and at other times by giving alarms and open assaults—so that he will soon overwhelm us unless we are well fortified and God has given us invincible power to withstand all his schemes.

This is why Saint Paul adds that we should not have to do with the unfruitful works of darkness. As if he should say, "My friends, I know well that the difficulty of approaching God in this world will be like a stumbling block, keeping you from doing your duty. And although you know that God ought to have the mastery and that we ought to be under His subjection, nevertheless, when you are in the company of the despisers of God and with unholy persons, it is very hard for you to walk uncorruptly. For as many vices reign, so many infections are there to stain you, and it is very hard for you to escape untainted, just as it is impossible to avoid being pricked when you walk among thorns."

Since there is such an abundance of corruption throughout the whole world that a person can scarcely take a step without stumbling upon some evil or other, it stands to reason that we must have great strength to maintain ourselves unblemished in the service of God, or else we will be utterly turned away from His obedience. But what of it? There is no excuse for us, says Saint Paul. It will not help us to say, "Alas, what shall I do, I who am a poor, frail creature? If God had set me alone by myself, I could serve Him better. But here I am among so many vices that I must do as other men do: some pillage,

some plunder, some are whoremongers, some are drunkards, and some are swearers. Finally, I see so much wickedness that it makes my heart quake. And seeing I am hemmed in with all these things, what can I do in such extremity?"

We may argue all this (say I), but it is in vain. Therefore, let us learn to prepare ourselves in such a way for serving God that we may stand obediently in battle array to resist all temptations. It is true that we shall have much difficulty bringing it to pass, but still, God will be the strongest if we pray for Him to govern us with His Holy Spirit. And that governance serves not only to subdue us to His dominion but also to give us victory against all that Satan practices to overthrow us.

You see then that if we call upon God and put ourselves under His guidance, it is certain that we shall have enough to keep us on our way, notwithstanding that this world is full of wicked stumbling blocks to push us out of the way. The thing we must remember from this passage is that besides the good mind we must have to submit ourselves to God, and besides the humility to accept and receive whatever God commands us and to frame our whole life thereafter, we must also be armed to fight against all the assaults that Satan makes against us. And though we see the whole world set upon wickedness, we must not think that this may serve to diminish our fault before God but consider that it is His will to exercise us in that way.

Yet, if we call upon Him and put our whole trust in the working of His Holy Spirit, surely we shall obtain victory against all that Satan can place in our paths. And so you see how we may overcome all things that hinder our serving of God.

Finally, Saint Paul, still following the similitude he introduced earlier, tells us that we must not have anything to do with the works of darkness. As if he should say, we must be separated from the unbelievers, and that when we live at random, as though God had not worked in us and as though His Word had done us no good at all, it is as much as if we trampled Jesus Christ under our feet, abolished the fruit of His death and passion, and defiled His blood, which is the fountain of all holiness.

Since it is so, let us look to withdraw from darkness and not have anything to do with it in any way. His calling them by the name of "fruitless works" is to show us that when we are so mingled with the unbelievers, worldlings, and despisers of God, we shall receive but a poor reward, which will yield us no fruit at all. What do we gain, then, by taking liberty to do evil under the excuse that most of the world is given to wickedness? Nothing. For all of them must reap the reward of everlasting death if they follow one another in that way.

Now, then, let us look more closely at ourselves. For when men excuse themselves so lightly that they seek nothing else but to keep themselves fast fettered under the subjection of their father Satan and to cast themselves, as it were, into the bottom of hell, alas, is it not a wretched liberty? Saint Paul therefore tells us expressly that we ought so little to involve ourselves with the corruptions of the world that we should instead endeavor to amend those who take such liberty to do evil that they utterly overthrow themselves. Both we and they ought to be so held in obedience to our God that His Word and Holy Spirit may serve us as an invincible power to fight against all assaults.

We must be so armed and furnished with them that they may be to us both a helmet, a breastplate, armor, and a sword, as we shall see

hereafter (Ephesians 6:13-17). Let us beware, then, to walk in this world in such a way that we may serve our God with true constancy and not be turned from Him by any troubles, impediments, hindrances, or obstacles that can be laid in our way.

Now, let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to touch us with such repentance that we may be sorry for them and rid them away more and more, to strengthen us in His fear and in the keeping of His holy commandments. In the meantime, may He bear with our infirmities until we are quite and completely rid of them, and make us to profit from day to day in the doctrine, that is to say, in the remission of our sins, until we come to the perfection of His righteousness and glory.

And so let us all say, Almighty God, heavenly Father...

The Thirty-Sixth Sermon, Which Is the Fourth Upon the Fifth Chapter

11. "Have nothing to do with the fruitless works of darkness, but rather expose them."

12. "For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret."

13. "But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible."

14. "Therefore it says, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'"

We have seen this morning that, although there are many things in the world to turn us away from serving God, we must not therefore swerve as though that might serve as an excuse for us. For there have been stumbling blocks in the world at all times, but the remedy for them is this doctrine: that God's children must stand on guard so they do not corrupt themselves by associating with unbelievers, because God has separated them.

And it is not enough for us not to be drunkards, whoremongers, thieves, or murderers; we must also shun all manner of evil wherever it may be. Indeed, we ought always to begin with ourselves (Matthew 7:3-5), for hypocrites will always see a speck in their neighbor's eye and yet bear a great stone in their own without feeling it. But if we want to be right and sound judges, let each person examine themselves and begin by condemning vice in themselves. Let us consider well whether we ourselves are at fault, so we may first and foremost make our own indictment before God by hating the evil that is in ourselves.

However, we must also show that we love God better than the world, and not maintain ourselves in the favor and friendship of the wicked by indulging them in their faults and flattering them. For this reason, Saint Paul adds that we must instead rebuke those works that bring nothing but utter curse. This serves not only to show the zeal we have for God to be honored but also to draw back souls that are on the path to destruction and bring them back again to the way of salvation.

Here, then, are two reasons that should move us to reprove evil. The first is that it should distress us to see God offended and people provoke His wrath by overthrowing the order He has set. Seeing that God is despised in this way and His Word trampled underfoot, it should grieve us, as the Psalmist says, that we should take upon ourselves the reproaches that are offered to God (Psalm 69:9).

Also, we ought, out of duty, to care for those who are redeemed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we see souls going to damnation, souls that cost God so dearly, and make no reckoning of it, it is to scorn the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. For that reason, Saint Paul tells us that, inasmuch as we are separated from evil so that we should not be companions of those who despise God or be like them in any way, we must, to the utmost of our power, show that we hate their actions, so they may be ashamed of their lewdness and touched with repentance.

If we have once profited so far, it shall be a great gain to have drawn back a wretched soul that was on the way to destruction. Saint James speaks in the same manner, exhorting us to do it, saying: "The thing that you shall gain by it is that you shall save a soul from death" (James 5:20). And even if people are hardened in their sins, it is still of great purpose for us to show the zeal we have for honoring God, and that His Word should not be so hindered, nor the order broken that He has set, without declaring that such things displease us.

If a person wants to be known as a good and faithful subject, they will not allow anyone to speak evil of their prince without standing against them. Likewise, that child will be considered unkind and dishonorable who hears their father wrongfully blamed and defamed and does not defend his honor or integrity.

Now, is not God our sovereign Prince? Yes, and although we are but wretched worms of the earth and vile carrion, yet He does us the honor to adopt us as His children. Now then, if wicked and heathenish folk deface His majesty, darken His righteousness, and even endeavor to strip His dominion from Him, and we remain silent, is that not an excessive and intolerable wickedness?

Therefore, let us mark well what is told to us here, for it is crucial that we pay careful attention to this text. This vice has reigned in the world throughout all ages, namely that as every person becomes more or less desirous to be flattered, they more easily tolerate others—not in the manner we have seen before, where we ought to have compassion for the weak and exercise patience towards them, but quite the opposite. That is to say, we are content to feed evil continually and willingly enter into confederacy together. To ensure that others do not examine our vices too closely but instead leave us to do as we please, we grant everyone else the same liberty for themselves. And that is the cause of all the disorder in the world today.

Again, we are loath to provoke anyone's displeasure against us, insomuch that we would rather betray God, and betray our neighbors both body and soul, than use the liberty that God's Spirit commands us. We see a wretched person behaving wickedly, and we say, "Let him do as he pleases; it makes no matter to us." And why? Because we do not want to displease him. Again, we see others pervert all order of justice and corrupt the entire populace and country, yet we pass it over easily without speaking against it. And why? "I do not want to bring myself into disfavor with a person of authority. Let someone else lead the dance, and I will willingly say, 'Amen' to it. If he were hanged for a while, he would only get what he deserved. But

no thanks to me, in the meantime." Why? "I do not want to put myself in any danger over the matter."

Thus are vices passed over nowadays. Yet, God will not relinquish His right for all that. The sentence on His behalf shall remain inviolable, and according to it, we shall be condemned as full of treason. That is to say, we shall be held as companions of the wicked if we play the blind and deaf when we ought to restrain wickedness by setting ourselves against it. As much as it lies within us, we allow God's honor to be debased, and all honesty to be overthrown, while we say nothing. Therefore, we ought to be more attentive to this warning to rebuke evil and, as I said before, show to the utmost of our power that we disapprove of it, being diligent to resist it if it lies within our power to do so.

If everyone employed themselves in this way, surely we would see another manner of righteousness in the world. What is the cause of God's name being so greatly blasphemed? It is because blasphemies are covered up, and everyone would rather defile themselves with the wickedness of others than incur any disfavor or displeasure. It is the same with drunkenness, lechery, robbery, extortion, and all manner of wanton acts that are committed. But if we had the zeal that Saint Paul commands us here, surely we would be much more courageous and steadfast in rebuking those who do amiss.

On the other hand, we show ourselves to have no love or kindness among us when we allow good people to be trampled underfoot and mistreated, for we ought to reach out a helping hand to them. Again, souls go to destruction, and we do not remedy it, though God has graced us with the opportunity to take His place in saving those things that are in the way of being lost and damned.

Now, Saint Paul, having spoken thus, adds to confirm the same doctrine and to quicken the slothfulness that is in us. The reason why unbelievers take the liberty to do such evil, even things they are ashamed to speak of, is because they can hide themselves from men. And why? Because they have no fear of God, and therefore they consider themselves to be well-hidden.

When a thief perceives nobody near him, he rifles cupboards, breaks open doors, steals, and carries things away. Very well, because he has not yet been convicted before a judge, he imagines he has escaped quite cleanly. If a robber or a murderer gets into some dark corner, he thinks himself well-hidden, and if he finds a person alone, he seizes him, strips him, wounds him, and even cuts his throat if he cannot otherwise subdue him. He thinks himself well-escaped because no one sees him.

It is the same with all other deeds; we are more ashamed of people than afraid of God. Scripture cries out that all our thoughts must come to account and that not only our wicked deeds shall be punished, but also even the things we thought to have been buried. For at the last day, "the books shall be laid open," that is to say, nothing shall be forgotten, except we have obtained this grace that is promised in the Psalms: "Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered" (Psalm 32:1).

That is not done without repentance. But those who are hardened in all evil merely make a mockery of it; so long as they are not put to shame before people, they do not care what God does. They have become so brutish that they cannot wake up to consider what it is to harden their hearts against the sovereign majesty of God. Therefore, when unbelievers and despisers of God find covert and lurking holes

in that way, there is such vile licentiousness among them that one would be ashamed even to think of what they do and say.

But Saint Paul adds that when they are rebuked, the mischief is discovered, and their liberty cut off, because it serves as a bridle to them. Not only because they are blamed before men, but also because they feel themselves to be accountable to the heavenly Judge, and that it is a dreadful thing to fall into His hands. To be brief, Saint Paul meant to show what purpose rebuking can serve when we use it rightly and with a good zeal of charity.

Now, I have told you already that we must not use any hypocrisy, nor justify ourselves by condemning other people. But when each of us has thoroughly examined his own life and hates the vices to which we are subject, and in which we are entangled, let us endeavor to bring ourselves home to God, praying Him to strengthen us by the power of His Holy Spirit so that we may strive to conform ourselves to His will and righteousness. And having done that, let us not flatter those who do wrong but tell them openly the thing that may do them good.

The benefit that will come from this, says Saint Paul, is that God shall not be so grievously offended as we see He is; and moreover, where people were previously shameless, they may be brought to some degree of honesty, and where it seemed they had permission to do all manner of evil, they shall repent and bring others to repentance with them. But much more ought this (that follows) to move us.

For, to say that we should live in this world and enjoy the infinite benefits that God bestows upon us, and meanwhile suffer His authority to be defaced—even when it may seem that people would try to pull Him from His throne by blaspheming His holy name,

provoking Him to anger while we let all slip—must we not be deemed utter villains and traitors?

If we were being supported by someone's generosity, and one should rail against him in his own house, or plot to murder him, or rob him of his goods, or defile his wife, or entice his child to wickedness, and meanwhile, we sat cramming ourselves, eating his bread, drinking his wine, and (to sum up) were fed and maintained at his expense, yet let it all go and say nothing to it—would we not deserve to be stoned and to have all men spit in our faces? Yes, certainly, for the vice of ingratitude will always be condemned, even among men.

Now, if we are so obligated to a mortal man as to maintain his honor and reputation when we are supported by his free generosity, what ought we to do for our God? Are we not in His house as long as we live in this world? Do we have even a drop of water except from His goodness and liberality? Behold, God has a fatherly care for us, and yet, notwithstanding, we allow His name to be blasphemed, His majesty to be stripped and deprived of all reverence, His Word to be torn to pieces, all the order He has commanded to be broken, the Church (which is His wife) to be corrupted and abused, and His children to be enticed to wickedness, while in the meantime, we remain silent.

I would like to know whether such silence does not clearly show that we are not worthy to eat a bit of bread, nor to be counted among the number of earthworms, lice, bedbugs, and other of the vilest and filthiest things of the world? Therefore, let us think carefully upon it, that we shall be found guilty of despising God's majesty, as we see, because we do not rebuke men's vices.

That is a cause why the wicked and heathenish sort become bolder, think the world is running on wheels on their side, and triumph in

their despising of God in such a manner—it comes partly from our silence. And this is what Saint Paul meant to show us here.

It follows, moreover, that the wretched souls whom our Lord Jesus Christ has bought so dearly, that He spared not Himself to save them, do perish and are given into Satan's possession through our sufferance; and in the meantime, we make no account of it at all. Now then, do we not thereby reveal that we have not so much as one drop of charity in us? Yes, and that is the reason why I said that in so doing, we are traitors to God and to our neighbors. For when we have no better zeal towards God's name, nor better care for our neighbors' welfare, does not the world see in every way that we are full of cruelty and unkindness?

By cruelty, I mean towards men, in that we suffer them to perish, even knowing it and looking upon it; and by unkindness towards God, because we do not give Him the honor He deserves when we do not have the courage to show, at the very least, that we dislike that men should so derogate from God's authority and the reverence they owe to Him. Therefore, whenever we are afraid to provoke men's displeasure or to purchase their ill will, let us think upon what is told to us here: namely, that we ought at the very least to fear the Lord, whose we are, and that seeing we are fed at His cost, we must not abide to see such lewdness committed against Him without showing, as much as possible and to the utmost of our power and ability, that we utterly abhor such things.

I say, as far as we can: for sometimes our mouths shall be so shut that we shall be able to do no more but sigh and lament at such utter disorder, when men become like devils let loose, flinging out into furiousness against God, and those who bear the sword seek nothing but to make a confused melee, so that all goodness may be forgotten.

For then (as I said) we have no other remedy but to be sorry for it, according as it is said of Lot, that it grieved his heart to be in Sodom (2 Peter 2:7).

Therefore, let us not forbear, but let every one of us provoke himself to grief and sorrow when we see things so out of order, and let us give record of it as far as it may do good. Again, if there be any hope for us to win those that are so unruly, let us continually attempt to draw them to repentance; yes, let us strain ourselves to it. For many men use this proverb too lightly, that a man must not cast pearls among swine, and they assume that men are swine before they have tried what they are. Though they have been of light behavior, or even loose and lawless, so that the devil has after a sort carried them away, yet we must labor to win them back again, and have good hope of it, according to Saint Paul's saying that charity hopes well for all things (1 Corinthians 13:7).

So then, until such time as men show themselves utterly willful in evil, and that their diseases appear to be utterly incurable, let us endeavor to be good physicians to them, by the admonitions that God shall put into our mouths. And so you see what Saint Paul intended in saying that the unbelievers think themselves to be hidden when they are neither perceived nor rebuked, and that when they are left to themselves, they are, as it were, in the dark, and thereby conceive more boldness to do wickedly.

But we are partly the cause of it, and we cannot wash our hands of it, for God sets us in His place in that respect and gives us His Word, which has authority to condemn evil, and yet notwithstanding, all is suppressed and thrust underfoot. Mark that for one point. But on the contrary, when the wickedest men in the world are rebuked, then they perceive their shame, whereas before they could not discern

white from black. And why? For if a man is in the dark, he sees nothing at all, but staggers and stumbles; and though he is ever so much soiled, yet he does not perceive it.

Therefore, when God's Word is set before men, and we show offenders their faults with such liberty as is required, it is as if we showed them a mirror and said to them, "See what you are; you are as foul and filthy as can be: are you not ashamed to see yourself? Go wash your face." So then, warnings will always win at least this much, though not equally with all people; for, as I said before, many are hardened, so that Satan possesses them, and God has given them up to such a willful stubborn mind that they are past all shame.

Nevertheless, whenever any faithful person does his duty, it will always do some good, and some profit will come of it, insomuch that those who were like wild beasts, or wild bullocks, will return, and a person shall see some honesty in them. Therefore, let us gain that point if it is possible for us, or at least let us strain ourselves to win it. And so you see what we are to gather upon these words of Saint Paul.

Now, as touching the word "rebuke," it signifies properly to discover what was hidden. And he allots this office to preaching, according whereunto he taunts the vainglory that reigned in the Church of Corinth (1 Corinthians 14:19), for their speaking in strange tongues to the intent to be commended, so that people might say of them, "This man is a great scholar; this man can speak all languages." And yet, in the meantime, there was no edifying at all.

Likewise, in these days, in the papacy, the organs are piping on one side, and there is chanting of four parts on the other side, and there is such a store of gewgaws that the simple people are astonished but never a whit edified. But Saint Paul says that when we come together in the name of God, we must endeavor to fare the better by it. And

how may that be? It is (says he) when good men, and such as are already accustomed to fear and serve God, are edified by His word. And not only that, but also if an unbeliever comes in, who was previously a mocker and never had any remorse of conscience, and hears what is uttered in the name of God—that is to say, that we cannot escape God's hand but must come before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, and how dearly Jesus Christ has paid for us, and what a traitorousness it is for us to make the sacrifice of His death and passion unavailing—I say, when an unbeliever hears all this, and that we are exhorted to fear God and stirred up to love Him for the infinite grace which He shows towards us: although he was previously like a brute beast (says Saint Paul), yet shall he enter into himself and be rebuked.

For he uses there the same word which he uses here, the meaning whereof is (1 Corinthians 14:24–25) that whereas his conscience was as good as dead before, and he was in a manner brutish, he is compelled to examine himself and be ashamed, so that he cannot but give glory to God. Not that this befalls all indifferently, but we see that a number of people who had gone astray, forgotten God, and had no regard at all for their own soul's health shall be so touched at one sermon that they appear to be changed for all their life after.

Now, look at what is done in common assembly; the same ought every person to practice by himself. For we are not here with the intent that each person should profit himself only but so that we should also teach one another with mutual instruction. After that manner, we must rebuke offenders, to the end that they may take no more liberty to mock God in that way, nor to shake off His yoke, and to wander into all naughtiness. And that is, in effect, the thing that Saint Paul intended to show us here.

Now, to confirm this doctrine better, he adds yet another reason: "It is the light," says he, "that lays all things open." (Ephesians 5:13). Heretofore he told us that when we are once enlightened by God's Spirit and Gospel, we must be as lamps to give light to the world. For we have the word of life, which serves not only to guide us but also to draw those into the right way who have gone astray. Going forward herewith, he says that it is the nature and property of light to discover. Therefore, when we suffer naughtiness to nestle and grow still deeper in hush-hush, we show that we are neither light nor children of the light, that is to say, that we belong neither to God nor to Jesus Christ.

To be short, Saint Paul means that we cannot give any proof of our Christianity nor of our faith but by hating and abhorring evil as much as possible, so that it may not have its full course and sway. But now let us think upon ourselves again. For (as I said) there is none of us all who is not guilty of fearing men more than God and of winking at others so that they should wink at us and not be inquisitive of our doings. Lo, how we betray one another by our silence.

But there is yet another vice that is worse and further out of square: namely, that besides our dissembling, we also help to feed the evil. And so by that means, whoredom has its full scope because every man and woman plays the pander. When I say, "every one," I mean that most men and women nowadays wink at all manner of lewdness and disorder, and stop their ears at the things they might well hear. Everyone seeks to conceal their fellows' lewdness, men for men, and women for women. They might remedy a great many enormities that are committed, but they would rather go and dirty their gowns and coats with other folks' dung and filthiness than uncover their vices.

To be short, everybody plays the pander in effect by concealing their neighbor's vice to the end that the other should do as much for him. The same applies to all other sins. Yet, notwithstanding (as I said before), God has not spoken this in vain, but we shall one day feel the execution of the sentence which He speaks here by His Apostle, and then it will be too late to regret what we will not acknowledge now.

But let those who fear God learn and remember how it is said here that God's enlightening of us is to the end that each of us should examine himself and not be like blind wretches groping in the dark, stumbling on one side, and running against things on the other, but that we should know the way of salvation. Moreover, we must teach other people also by discovering the evil that lay hidden so that those who have turned their backs upon God and were content to have been in darkness still may understand that they must come to the light, whatever comes of it.

The very way, therefore, for us to show indeed and in earnest that we belong to God and are enlightened by His Holy Spirit and by His Word is to discover things that would otherwise, as it were, lie lurking a long time if we did not draw them forth into the light. True, charity covers a multitude of sins (Proverbs 10:12), and it behooves us to be patient (1 Corinthians 13:7) and to bear with many infirmities. For it is not meet that we should defame one another (James 4:11), as some do, who instead of warning those whom they see offend, fall to spreading rumors, so that the streets and marketplaces are full of them, and they so exaggerate the matter that from small mistakes they make deadly crimes.

Therefore, when Saint Paul bids us to discover men, it is not meant that we should defame one another in that manner, but that the wretched man who had his eyes blindfolded by Satan should be made

to perceive his own misery and naughtiness, so he might be ashamed of it; and that the woman who had given herself over to all unchastity might recover some honesty and return again to the right way by being put to shame through having her faults and vices laid before her.

The manner of discovering is not to backbite one another or to taunt and upbraid each other, nor to play the hypocrites who will strain at a gnat and swallow an ox or a sheep in one bite—that is to say, who will make a conscience of very small and light matters and not see a number of great enormities that they suffer to pass close by their noses without being any bit offended at them. We must not do so, but when we see mischief being fed and increased by our unfaithfulness, let us provide for it. Let every man be compelled to think better upon himself and upon his vices so that he may amend them. This, in effect, is the carefulness which Saint Paul enjoins us here; it is the very means to rid away the plagues that Satan would have maintained by silence and dissimulation.

Therefore, whenever we perceive any impostume lying hidden, let us beware that the matter does not settle so long within that the disease becomes incurable. Let us purge it out of hand, and let admonitions serve as it were for lances, letting of blood, and such other means and helps to take away the rotten matter that might mar and infect the whole body. So you see, in effect, how we ought to put this doctrine into use.

Now, hereupon Saint Paul infers that, therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ, in all the doctrine of the Gospel, speaks to those who have fallen asleep in their sins and to those who are as good as dead, with the intent that they should wake and rise up: and so shall we be enlightened by Him.

Now, we have here to remember first of all, that Jesus Christ does then raise us from the dead when He calls us to the faith and brings us into the hope of salvation. This is to the intent that we should perceive our state the better. For we see how men soothe and glorify themselves. Although there be nothing in them but utter confusion, yet they will need to put out their horns like snails to vaunt themselves, as it were, in despite of God and nature. Now, the Scripture says we are dead. We may well have some resemblance of life before we are converted to the faith of Jesus Christ. However, that life is but death before God.

And that is the cause why it is said in Saint John, "The hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live" (John 5:25), and "whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life" (John 5:24).

Jesus Christ does not speak there of visible death or of the resurrection which we hope for at the latter day. Rather, He shows us how we have already a preparative of the second rising again when God renews us and gives us a spiritual life. For we can do nothing but evil, as has been declared heretofore. Saint Paul also uses the same phrase of speech, namely that we are dead to God. Following the same matter here, he shows us that the whole drift of the Gospel is that we should rise from the dead.

For as long as we are strangers to God, who is the wellspring of life, where are we but in such a dungeon as it would have been better for us never to have been born? But we must wake: for one part of our death is the blockishness wherein we are, according to what I declared before, that we are so corrupted even from our mother's

womb that we can find no savor in well-doing, and we are stark blinded in our wicked lusts, and the devil drives and thrusts us forward in such a way that as long as God gives us the bridle, we can do nothing but grub down to the bottom of hell, to sink ourselves deeper into it.

Now, if we are once come to that point, there is no more soreness (as Saint Paul said before) (Romans 11:25), and there is nothing but such stubbornness that God is nothing to us; neither do we have any more feeling or perception of our sins. That is the cause why he says here that we must wake because we are in a deadly sleep until God stirs us up and makes us perceive what we are, that we may abhor our sins and return unto Him. So then, the entrance of life and salvation is that God visits us with His grace, whereas we were as dead wretches and had nothing in us but utter corruption. Mark that for one point.

Secondly, let us mark that besides the naughtiness which is in us, there is also such great hardness and willfulness that God must be forced to wake us as it were by force so that we may have some feeling of our vices and dislike them. True, this is done chiefly when God calls us and pulls us out of the confusion in which we were. But yet every Christian must continue in this all the time of their life. For we shall never be so thoroughly awake that we do not need God's stirring us up continually.

You shall see some people so heavily asleep that even when their clothes are on and they are up on their feet, they go reeling still, half in a slumber, until they stretch forth themselves and set their hands to some business, and they are so heavy and drowsy that they still slumber even while awake. Even so is it with us. Although our Lord Jesus Christ has done us the grace to draw us back from death and to

quicken us by His Holy Spirit and by His Word, yet we shall still feel ourselves slothful and sluggish, so He must be forced to wake us still.

Therefore, we need to be exhorted every day and to have our ears beaten early and late, as though Jesus Christ cried out shrill and loud to us, “What do you, you wretched souls? What are you looking at?” Even if we heard such warnings without ceasing, we should still not be as thoroughly awake as would be necessary. Now then, we see what Saint Paul meant to declare in this strain: namely that what we feel through God's goodness in ourselves, we should put the same into practice toward our neighbors. Our Lord Jesus Christ has raised us from the dead and wakes us daily from the dead sleep through which we are so drowsy, and that is to the end that we should afterward wake up others who are asleep and endeavor to draw those to life who are as poor dead men.

Furthermore, when he says, “And Jesus Christ will enlighten you,” it is not meant that we can rise up and awake of our own power, and that our Lord Jesus Christ does afterward add His grace. He means nothing of the sort. The effect of his intent is that we shall be enlightened by Jesus Christ.

And in what manner? Not only as though we were in some dark place (says Saint Paul) and had need of a candle as in the nighttime. Even though a man may not see very clearly, if he has but some glimmer of light, whether it be from the moon, stars, or anything else, he will have an aim to say, “Here is such a door or gate, and here is such a path or way.” A man's eyes are not utterly unprofitable when he goes by night, however dark it may be.

But our Lord Jesus Christ enlightens us in a much more wondrous manner. For we are not only in the dark, but also stark blind. The remedy, therefore, which the Son of God brings us by teaching us the

doctrine of the Gospel is that He gives us our sight again. For our eyes were put out by the sin of our first father Adam, who would need to see too clearly. Vaingloriousness carried him away, making him desire to discern between good and evil more than was lawful for him. But instead of having greater light, he became brutish, and we with him, insomuch that all of us continue blind.

Now, therefore, we need to have our eyes restored again and to have God's Spirit serve us instead of eyes. Mark that for one point.

Again, in this world, there is nothing but dull darkness, yea, and that so thick, as we know not how to step one pace without stumbling or straying out of our way. Therefore, it stands us in need to be guided, and that our Lord Jesus Christ shows us the way. This is what Saint Paul declares to us here, and how our Lord Jesus enlightens us: namely, not only that we are dim-sighted and that He helps us and supplies the want that is in us, but also that we are stark blind, yea, dead, and finally even in the pit of hell. Just as when a corpse is laid in the grave, men may well bring candles and torches to it, but it sees never the more for all that.

So then, our Lord Jesus imparts His light to us, not to make us see more clearly than we did before, but to give us our whole eyesight anew again, because we are stark blind. Now then, seeing that Jesus Christ speaks after this manner, and continues day by day in waking us, and in making us see clearer and clearer, ought we not to follow His example, and to hold back our neighbors as much as we can when we see them straying to their destruction? This is the substance of the things shown to us here.

Now, seeing that our Lord Jesus sets Himself forth for an example and pattern, we must be too barbarous and savage if we are not touched by it. And how? The Son of God has not only vouchsafed to

do His office in enlightening us, to show us the way of salvation, and to waken us from the deadly sleep in which we were overwhelmed, but also, when He has enlightened us, He wills us to serve as lamps for others to follow, so that we may show them the way. He will have us (after a sort) to execute one half of His office. Seeing then that the Son of God has done us such honor, if we, for all this, thrust this light underfoot, and neither do good to ourselves nor to other men with it, is it not too heinous a treachery?

Again, if we imagine ourselves to be discharged of our duty when each of us for his own part refrains from doing evil, and in the meantime, let others go to destruction, so that we have neither care nor willingness to remedy the matter when we see the Devil dragging them after him to everlasting death, must we not perceive therein that we do great wrong and injury to God by holding His light choked after that fashion, and in betraying our neighbors by suppressing the benefit which should serve to the everlasting salvation of their souls? You see then that we shall always be blameworthy both before God and man unless we follow the thing that is shown to us here by our Lord Jesus Christ, and bear this doctrine always in our hearts to put it into practice.

Namely, that they who call themselves Christians and will be so regarded must also be like trumpeters to wake those who are asleep, and like guides to direct those who go astray, and to bring them into the right way, who were wandered out before. In this manner, I say, we must all deal and continue doing so until we come to the happy meeting when our Lord Jesus Christ shall call us all to Him, to put us in possession of the inheritance which He has purchased for us.

Now, let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us perceive

them more and more, and in any wise not to suffer us to fall asleep like wretched infidels. But, forasmuch as it is His will that our life should be as one continual day, wherein He gives us not the sun to enlighten us only for a time, so that night should afterward come upon us, but guides and governs us Himself both night and day, may we take such profit thereby, that He does not suffer us to return to darkness again after He has so enlightened us, but keeps us still waking, to go through in the holy calling whereunto He has called us, and to follow the way which He shows us. So, as we may call others to us, to run all together unto Him, as He calls us, until we fully come there.

May it please Him to grant this grace, not only to us but also to all people and nations of the earth. Amen.

The Thirty-Seventh Sermon,

which is the fifth upon the fifth Chapter.

15. Take heed therefore that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise:
16. Redeeming the time, for the days are evil.
17. Wherefore be not unwise, but understanding what is the will of the Lord.
18. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.

The care that we have for our temporal profit will suffice to condemn us before God for the negligence seen in us when we come to the proper ordering of our lives. For we think to escape with the excuse that we did not think of it. But is it a tolerable fault that, when God calls us to Him and sets the heavenly life before us—especially telling us how dearly it was purchased and requiring nothing but that we should yield Him His right, that is to say, that we should glorify Him in true obedience—all this should be nothing to us? Must it not be that we are too gross-headed, too occupied with trivial matters, as you would say, and with things that vanish away, and in the meantime, despise the kingdom of heaven to such an extent as to make no account of God's service and to esteem the salvation of our souls as nothing? Yes, it must be so.

Therefore, Saint Paul exhorts us now to be more alert than we have been accustomed to be. First, he says that in this case, we must stand upon our guard and not imagine that God will acquit us for our foolishness when we are entangled in this world and by that means

think not upon the kingdom of heaven. "Take heed," says he, "that ye walk circumspectly."

It is true that although we look ever so carefully to ourselves, yet we shall not fail to be carried away by our infirmities. We commit many faults, not only through ignorance but also even knowingly, and oftentimes we are not strong enough to withstand temptations as steadfastly as would be required. Nevertheless, if you closely examine why men so easily excuse themselves from many offenses and why they convince themselves that God does not think of them, you will find that it proceeds from negligence.

For if we considered that we walk in the presence of God and His angels, surely it would hold us in a different manner of awe than we are now. That, therefore, is the reason why he expressly requires here great care and circumspection in us, so that no man should give himself over to evil for lack of taking heed.

And to provoke us the more thereto, he adds that we have need to redeem the time because the days are evil. In this, he shows that we cannot devise a way to abuse God's grace so little, but it is a willful losing of the time, which we cannot recover afterward.

Now then, let us gather a brief summary of the things that are contained here, and let us begin at this point: the days are evil, whereby Saint Paul lets us know that we shall find many obstacles to keep us from coming unto God. For we know we are hemmed in with so many corruptions that even those who are best-minded shall stumble on one side, be pulled back on the other, and at times stray quite away.

Now, we need a singular inner strength to fight in such a way as to get the upper hand over all the impediments that Satan casts before

us, to pluck us from our God and to thrust us quite and clean out of the way of salvation. Therefore, it has been true in all ages that, as long as men are always wayward by nature and we are born in sin, Satan holds us as his prisoners. Again, there is not a man among us who does not draw others to naughtiness. Moreover, we scarcely know how to open our eyes, but we shall see one thing or another that may utterly overthrow us, and the devil, through his wiles, applies all to his own work, so that unless we take good heed to his doings, he mars us out of hand.

But the more the world rages and the more that iniquity overflows, the more ought we to mark well this text and the counsel that is given to us here by the Holy Ghost. For surely, nowadays, men have come to the full measure of all enormity, and there is no part of the world where a man may find honest and straightforward dealing. In old times, a man might have found some nations where the people were not so crafty and malicious, nor so excessive in pomp and all kinds of pleasures, nor so deeply steeped in robbery, cruelty, and extortion.

But nowadays, let a man go about anywhere, and he shall find that there is nothing but a horrible flood and confused turmoil of all wickedness. Therefore, if Saint Paul said that the days were evil when there was a hundred times more soundness than there is nowadays, we ought to be all the more vigilant in keeping good watch, according to the increasing evil of the time.

If there is any fear of war, each of us will lower his demeanor and consider that it is not for him to hazard all at once, but that he must reserve some little sprinkling for a pinch, as well of victuals as of other things. Also, if we have any other troubles, each of us will be sufficiently foresighted in that regard.

Let us consider our situation (will we say), for necessity will drive us to it. But now we see well the evil of the days; that is to say, that all is against us. And although we were the most diligent and circumspect in the world, yet we shall not fail to be caught off guard by many things and to find ourselves hindered when we should serve God. Yet, notwithstanding, all this passes and slips away, and we do not mind it at all.

Therefore, let us consider our situation and learn to redeem the time; that is to say, the more occasions there are to provoke us to wickedness and to pull us away from God, the more let each of us exert and strive to do good. For we are accustomed to taking the corruptness of the time as a cloak to cover our sloth and laziness, and so we always convince ourselves that it is lawful for us to play the wastrel among wastrels, as the proverb says.

If a man tells us that we must live fairly and uprightly, how shall I do it, will every man say? A man cannot buy even a penny's worth of apples without some deceit; and how then may I deal in goods or merchandise? Again, if a man tells us that we must live soberly and temperately: yes, (we say) but who does it? If a man speaks to us of patience and meekness, and such other things: is it not apparent (we say) that everyone behaves quite contrary? Shall I be all alone in the world? Lo, how we make vice our shield against God and against all the warnings given to us, as if, because it is common, it ought to serve us for an acquittance or discharge.

But, on the contrary, it is said here that we must take so much more pain to redeem the time. And the more the devil labors to hinder us, and the more means and wiles he has to do it, the more must each of us employ himself manfully and awaken all his wits and understanding, praying God to strengthen us and to give power to

resist him. Thus, you see that our redeeming of the time must not be by making temporal (and worldly) gain, for in that regard we need neither counsel nor encouragement; every man is too much inclined that way by his own nature, and our desires are so fiery that they will not allow us to be slothful in that case.

But since we see the devil goes about to trouble us, that we should not spend our lives in serving God, let us redeem the time in that respect. And in what manner? In that he speaks of redeeming (ransoming or buying again), he presupposes that we must forgo and lose the thing we were desirous to have kept. For when we are to redeem a thing that was gone out of our hands, or to buy a thing that we need, or to negotiate for a thing that another man withholds from us, in those cases we forgo some piece of our profit.

If another man has laid hold of a thing that was for my benefit, I must give him a piece of money to get it out of his hand again. Even so, it is said that we must redeem the time. And in what manner? Not always with gold and silver, but by forsaking our own desires. It is true that sometimes gold and silver must be spent on it. For if worldly riches turn us away or pull us back from following wherever God calls us, we must redeem the time; that is to say, all that we perceive to be harmful and offensive in that way must be thrust underfoot.

However, there are many other means besides. For some are so ensnared in their ambition that this world has altogether captivated them, and they take no taste of everlasting life, no matter what is preached to them. Others are given to deceit, and others to extortion. According to how each man sees the devil able to win over him and make him lose his time by consuming it in wicked things, so let him

redeem it; that is to say, let him reform himself and forsake both himself and all the temptations by which he might be entangled.

You see then, that the thing we must take note of in this passage is that, considering the corruptness that is nowadays throughout the world, and the great number of outrageous vices, and how all things are quite out of order, and (to be short) that even the most righteous men are somewhat infected with the vices and disorders that are everywhere: instead of seeking vain excuses by alleging that we are weak and unable to overcome the great number of impediments offered to us, we must redeem the time.

Now the only way to do it is to understand that Satan's efforts to thrust us down are not a sufficient excuse for us before God. For if we resort to Him, He will give us armor and weapons to hold out in the battle until we have gained the victory. However, let it not grieve us to set aside the things we liked and to hold our wicked affections as it were imprisoned. Then it will be easy for us to follow what Saint Paul says here, which is to be watchful and heedful, that we walk wisely, even as wise people and not as fools.

We have already seen before that if we profit in God's school as we ought to do, we shall have a sure rule and cannot be deceived or misled. For God knows what we need, and He has not failed to show us anything. Therefore, Saint Paul presupposes that although we are blind wretches, although we are overwhelmed with the darkness of this world, and although the devil has many subtle tricks and wiles to trap us, yet if we are good students of God and allow ourselves to be guided by Him and His Word, we shall have sufficient wisdom. We shall not be able to say that we have sinned unknowingly, for God is wise enough to guide our entire life, at least if we listen to all that He

says and yield ourselves to be easily taught. If it is so, then we may surely be wise, as Saint Paul requires.

Indeed, he explains himself immediately after by saying that we must not be unwise, but well-advised, and understanding what the will of God is. He shows here what kind of wisdom he means. It is not as the world speaks of it. For the world says a man is very wise when he is cunning enough to deceive, skilled in protecting himself from his enemies, and able to maintain himself by his craftiness and policy. Or else, the wisdom of the world is to plan well for one's profit, whether it be by fair means or foul. For there is no talk of the fear of God, no talk of equity, and much less of honesty and straightforward dealing, because he who will be wise according to the world must wear two faces under one hood; he must be malicious, full of lies.

As for the one who walks in truth, he shall be counted as a simpleton, for he makes himself a target for everyone to prey upon. He who will not turn either to the right hand or to the left shall likewise be called a fool. You see then that the wisdom of the world cannot be without wickedness and an evil conscience. But Saint Paul, following the teachings of Scripture, namely that "the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord" (Proverbs 9:10), and that "the fear of the Lord is the perfection of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10), tells us that when we are skillful in understanding God's will, then we are wise.

His intent, then, is to condemn all the schemes, tricks, and cunning that people use and in which they immerse themselves and boast. He shows that all such things are loathsome before God. What kind of wisdom, then, shall there be in us? Enough, if we know what the will of God is. Yes, but in the meantime, how shall we behave ourselves toward the world? God will bless our simplicity so that we do not fall into the snares of the wicked. For we hear our Lord Jesus telling His

disciples to "be wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). God, therefore, will not allow us to be destroyed by the wicked, even though we live simply and plainly and have none of the worldly schemes to resist them.

Let us only commit ourselves to the care of our God, and He will give us enough wisdom. However, the chief matter is not to have skill to maintain ourselves in this world and to prevent people from wronging or injuring us. We must begin higher: that is, by ruling our life in such a way that God may approve of it, and we show ourselves to understand the purpose for which He has set us in this world, and to what end He has created and redeemed us—that we should come to the inheritance of heaven. That is the way for us to be truly wise.

Again, although this doctrine seems strange to those who are immersed in the world and utterly ignorant of their calling, yet, if we look closely at it, we shall see that it is rightly said, "There is no wisdom but the fear of God." For what do all those who seek to advance themselves through covetousness, ambition, and other devices actually do? It is certain they provoke God's wrath against themselves: and often, they receive the reward they deserve, for they spin ropes for themselves and for their children. Whereas they hoped to enrich themselves, to maintain themselves in great dignity, and to leave an everlasting name in their houses here, God curses all their attempts. The more they hoard, and the higher they climb, the more horrible is their fall and confusion, so that the goods they have accumulated turn to their undoing, at least in the eyes of the world.

But suppose their prosperity holds always at one level; yet, do we not know that our happiness does not consist in this transitory life, which is of no continuance, but is like a shadow that vanishes out of hand? What shall we then think of the person who, being created in

God's image, redeemed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and adopted to be a companion with the angels, nevertheless plays the beast willfully, forgetting what he is and even the price of his salvation?

If a person, created to inherit everlasting life, is content with three or four days of pleasure here below and cares for nothing else, must it not be that Satan has bewitched him, deprived him of all understanding and reason, and finally made him like a brute beast? For if a man's son forsakes his father's house and the sustenance prepared for him there, and goes roaming around to have a few days of pleasure, whether it be in debauchery or any other wickedness, and afterward becomes a beggar with not a morsel of bread to eat, will not the world say that such a child is utterly blind and worse than mad?

Now, let us compare this to the inheritance prepared for us in heaven, which was purchased so dearly for us. Let us see wherein it excels over our wicked and cursed desires. Let us see where those people are headed who turn away from God and what their end is likely to be when they stray away from the source of life and all joy. So then, had we any settled understanding, surely we would no longer think it strange that true wisdom for humanity is to live in the fear of God. For that is the thing in which all our welfare consists, as it is said in the Psalms. Therefore, it stands us so much more to take heed to this lesson where Saint Paul tells us that we shall ever be strangers from all well-being so long as we do not seek to obey God.

Besides the things previously mentioned, we have also to note that (as I said before) there is no other rule than framing our life according to God's commandment. Would we then have God approve of us and be pleased with us? Let us not rest upon our own intents,

nor let any of us be too inclined to stand in our own conceit, saying, "This seems good to me; it must be so, for I approve of it." Let us beware of such over-boldness and instead offer ourselves to our God, assuring ourselves that we cannot go wrong in obeying Him, since our whole wisdom lies in inquiring about His will.

Now, can we say that our Lord has hidden anything from us that was beneficial for us to know? No, for He declares that He will show us the way of life, *"so long as we are not stubborn but bow down our heads with one accord to be subject to His Word"* (Psalm 25:12). The same was declared long before in the Law, *"which was nevertheless but dark in comparison to the Gospel"* (Hebrews 10:1), for there we have the full and perfect sight.

Therefore, let us not excuse ourselves by claiming to be unlearned or that we are the most ignorant people in the world, thinking we can escape accountability by saying, "I am no theologian; I never went to school." For God has stooped in such a way that all of us, from the greatest to the least, may be taught familiarly by His Word, provided there is no resistance or contradiction in us, and that we allow ourselves to be guided and governed by His will.

And His will is manifest to us, as He declares by His prophet Isaiah: *"I have not spoken to you in secret,"* says He, *"I have not said in vain, 'Seek me.' Whosoever seeks me, I will be at hand with him, and show him familiarly whatsoever is for his welfare"* (Isaiah 45:19). To be brief, Saint Paul presupposes here (as he says to the Colossians), *"that when the Gospel is preached to us, there we shall find a faultless wisdom, by means of which we shall have a very certain way"* (Colossians 1:9). Therefore, let us beware that we do not stray from it one way or another.

It is true that not all men will be as well enlightened as would be required, but where can that be attributed but to our own fault and negligence? And again, although many simple souls do not attain the knowledge that might lead and direct them perfectly to serving God according to their heart's desire, nevertheless, all who submit themselves humbly to God's Word, receive it, give themselves to it, and bear such reverence towards it as they ought to do, will surely have a good guiding star to lead them to the heritage of heaven, even if they drag their feet and are not as well-advised as one would wish.

For this reason, Saint Paul rebukes all those who are ungrateful and stubborn, to whom the Gospel is preached, if they are not sure what God's will is, for it shows them as much as is needed for their salvation. It is true that God will not make us soar above the clouds, nor feed our curiosity, as many desire, who want speculations, and are eager to hear new things and would like a change of speech every day to tickle their ears. But God will not cater to our fancies to that extent. He will teach us the things that are necessary for bringing us to Him. And what more could we want? That, therefore, is what we have to remember upon this saying of Saint Paul's.

Now then, let no man think it strange that the wretched world has so run astray, that every man sneaks away alone by himself, and there is nothing but confusion everywhere, as we see, for example, among the poor Papists, who stir themselves out of all measure and yet fail so much in coming unto God that they go further from Him through their misguided and brutish zeal. And why? Because they care nothing for God's will. Instead, every man follows his own fancy, and all of them excuse themselves under the pretense of good intent. By that means, the world has been perverted; by that means, all things have been put out of order; and by that means, all certainty has been taken away, because instead of God's will, which ought to be so

apparent that every man might bow down his neck to it and receive the yoke that is laid upon him, men have taken leave and liberty to do what they thought good of themselves.

Forasmuch then as God's will has been so despised, and men have been so devilishly bold and overweening as to behave themselves after their own inclination, it has brought all things to confusion, and the disorder of it is still so great that it ought to make us shudder to think upon it. So much the more, therefore, does it stand us in good stead to hold ourselves very soberly in awe, by submitting ourselves to God and His pure word, and not to wander one way or the other, seeing that all our wisdom consists therein. This is what we ought to remember further, in Saint Paul's setting down of God's only will for the full rule of all things. But we cannot frame ourselves accordingly unless we take leave of all our capricious desires and of all that seems good in our own eyes and allow God to reign over us, and to have such mastery among us that we neither add anything to His pure word nor take anything from it.

Saint Paul could well have said simply that we must walk as people who are well advised. But he also adds on the contrary that we should not be fools and unwise, to show that it is but mockery when men say, "I am hindered by other people. I do not have the means to study, so that I might do good at it," or "I am a poor simple soul or a servant, or a craftsman." Therefore, to cut off this sort of excuse, Saint Paul tells us that although those who think themselves to be the wisest are but fools, yet God will remedy those who allow themselves to be governed by His word.

However, let us note (as I said before) that it is not for men to elevate themselves or to be so proud as to think that they can govern themselves as they ought to do. For the beginning of our wisdom is to

be fools in our own eyes, “*Let him who thinks he is wise in this age become a fool so that he may become wise*” (1 Corinthians 3:18). But on the one side, there is presumptuousness, so that very few can humble themselves in such a way as not to be still pulled back and hindered by their own opinions. And, on the other side, some are so careless that although they have their ears daily filled with God's word, yet they continue dull for all that can be done.

So much the more does it behoove us to heed well the warning given us here: which is, to be well taught in God's school, we must not bring any part of our own reason, nor must we think our own devices good, but we must be fools in ourselves—that is to say, void of our own reason—and we must give place and open way to God's word, so that we accept without any resistance whatsoever is spoken by His mouth.

Hereupon, Saint Paul comes back again to certain particular and special exhortations, as he had begun to do before, and first he says that the faithful ought to keep themselves well from being drunken with wine, “*wherein there is excess*” (Ephesians 5:18). As if he should say that we must have such restraint of ourselves in our eating and drinking, and so use the good things that God has ordained for our sustenance, as to take a moderate portion of them, and not make ourselves like brute beasts.

Now, that we may profit well by this doctrine, we must first consider to what end our Lord has appointed food and all other things for our sustenance. What then is the lawful use of wine, water, bread, and all other victuals? Truly, to feed ourselves with them according to the need of our infirmity, and to sustain us in life so that we may do homage to Him from whom we hold our life, and by whom it is maintained, yielding Him thanks for His fatherly liberality. Secondly,

to keep ourselves occupied, every man according to his degree, and according to the ability that is given him.

Thus, you see that the lawful use of meat and drink is to sustain us—not that we might be like blocks of wood, but that every one of us might occupy himself in using the things that God has ordained, to the benefit of his neighbor and to earn his own living honestly, and especially above all things, to acknowledge the benefits that God, out of His infinite goodness, bestows upon us, that He may be glorified in all things, as it is said in another place. Now then, we see that meat and drink ought to serve to lead us to God. *“Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God”* (1 Corinthians 10:31).

For is it reasonable that when God shall have reached out His hand to pour upon us the benefits that we receive from Him, He should nonetheless go unrecognized, and we still feed ourselves at His expense and yet forget Him? Would not that be too foul and detestable a beastliness? Therefore, although meat and drink are helps to our weakness, yet we ought to refer all to God. Indeed, it may seem at first sight that we are hindered from doing good, as well by eating and drinking as also by sleeping. It is very true, and thereby God shows what we are.

But, on the other hand, we must also come to the recompense of it, that forasmuch as the time is, in a way, lost while we take our repast because we cannot apply ourselves to the service of our neighbors during that time, our slowness in that regard may as it were spur us to resort to God, by considering what His goodness is toward us, according to the proof that He sets before our eyes. Thus you see (as I said) that although our eating and drinking do hinder us in worldly

matters, yet on the other side, they ought to give us occasion to be more cheerful in seeking God.

But now let us see what excess works. If a man crams himself so full that he becomes unwieldy, there is a change in his nature, and it is all one as if he were at defiance with God, with nature, and with all order. For (as I have said already) meat and drink are ordained to strengthen us so that we may apply ourselves to the things which God commands and our vocation requires. Now, therefore, when a man is so pampered that he can do no more, first, he has defiled the sustenance that God gave him; and secondly, he changes himself into a beast and, as much as he can, defaces the image of God. Moreover, God is forgotten. Is not this monstrous unkindness, as though a man would mingle heaven and earth together?

But this is not yet all. Saint Paul adds here the outcome of all enormity when he says that in drunkenness and all riot there is looseness—that is to say, men overshoot themselves, putting away all shame, forgetting all honesty, and becoming wild beasts. We see that one of the properties of drunkenness is to drive men either into whoredom or into some other lewdness and to cast them into so sound a sleep that they perceive nothing at all: let a man mock them, let him spit in their faces—they feel nothing of it. Again, whatever comes to their tongues' end, out it goes, be it right or wrong, and they will as soon blaspheme God as speak unjustly of men, for there is no discretion at all in them.

Now, when men are thus carried away, and whereas God had printed His image in them to make them reasonable creatures, and given them an excellent state above all other living beings, they fall to playing the beasts after that fashion and become like asses and dogs. Must it not be understood that drunkenness is one of the most

detestable things that can be? So then, Saint Paul meant to show us here in one word that, although there were no true fear of God in us to restrain us, nor we so well advised and discreet as to consider the true and lawful use of the benefits that God has granted us, yet we should refrain for shame of the world, forasmuch as we see that a drunken man is as confusion to all order, and there is nothing to be seen in him but a lump of all lewdness, insomuch that God's image is defaced, all reason quenched, and all things put out of order in him.

Therefore, since we see that drunkenness is matched with such extremities, ought we not to abhor it? And although Saint Paul has given here but a short glance at the enormities that happen through drunkenness, yet we must consider that in the same he has also generally comprehended all the rest. The thing then that we have to remember upon this point is that we must be sober and have control of ourselves in our eating and drinking, and that although there be abundance before us, yet we must be so discreet in taking our repast that our meats and drinks do not encumber us.

Even the very heathen men saw that—and no wonder—for it is a knowledge that cannot be wiped out, that we must eat and drink to live, and not live to eat and drink. And again, that we must take our repast to strengthen us and to make us able to do our duty, and not to make us unwieldy. For it is certain that bread, wine, and meats are not ordained to cast men down, but forasmuch as men should otherwise decay from famine, *“Our Lord renews them and gives them their strength,”* according to this saying of the Psalms: *“Wine gladdens man's heart, and bread strengthens it”* (Psalm 104:15). And so, you see what we have to remember in the first place.

And secondly, let us consider that when God allows men to overshoot themselves into all lewdness, so as they are utterly without control of

themselves, without honesty, without shame, and every man sees them to be as brute beasts, while they themselves perceive nothing but are, as it were, cast up at random to all shamefulness: it is a rightful punishment laid upon them by God for abusing His liberality and for glutting themselves without any measure. Lo, here is the payment that this unhallowing of God's benefits deserves when we cannot use them according to His ordinance and the rule that He has set by His Word and imprinted in our hearts.

For though we had never heard one word, neither of the Law nor of the Gospel, yet we are sufficiently taught, even by beholding the order of nature, which the very heathen men considered. And here we have to remember that the mischief is doubled when men step aside and give themselves over (from evil to evil) by degrees, and therefore much less ought it to serve to lessen their fault, as we see (a number would have it to do), who, when they cannot deny that they have done amiss, fall to this shift for their last refuge, saying, "Oh, you may see, I was overtaken with the wine; my wits were intoxicated after I had once drunk." Behold, I pray you, how they that cannot start aside one way or another would fain have their drunkenness serve to acquit them before God.

But so little can that stand us in any stead, that, contrariwise, we shall be so much the more guilty. And indeed, if laws were well ordered, a drunken man should have double punishment when he has committed any offense through his unsoberness. And why so? For he was already worthy of punishment for unhallowing the benefits which God had dedicated to our use, that they might move us to resort unto Him. Whereas God gave them in witness of His fatherly goodness, the party used them after that fashion, and what treachery is that? Drunkards, then, deserve one punishment for that.

Again, forasmuch as they are drawn to evil-doing afar off, as though they had confederated themselves with Satan, they ought to be punished again, for that they will needs excuse and cloak themselves. For although the laws of men do not always have that consideration, or that men do not observe what ought to be observed, yet, notwithstanding, they that give themselves over after that sort, and let themselves loose into all lewdness through their unsoberness, shall be driven to answer before God for defiling the things which God had sanctified to His service, and wherein He had put a mark of His goodness, to the intent to draw us unto Him by the same.

Then, if all be perverted in our eating and drinking, must we not yield an account before God for our abusing of the benefits that He had bestowed upon us contrary to His intent, as though we were minded to provoke Him willfully to anger? Seeing then that drunkenness makes men so beastly as to forget themselves in such wise that God's image is defaced in them, and they become like dogs, swine, and asses; seeing we see ourselves so disfigured (say I), yes, and worthy to be rejected of God as horrible monsters, and that we do also lay open our own shame and dishonesty before men: ought not every one of us at least to bethink himself advisedly, and to bridle our lusts in such sort when God gives us meat and drink that we do not fall into excess? Yes, and so you see, in effect, what we have to remember upon this point.

And if we cannot be so perfect as were requisite, let us sigh for our faults and, in any wise, beware that we play not the beasts in eating and drinking, that God may be so honored of us as He ought to be, not only by our doing of homage to Him for our life but also by taking continual occasion by our meats to be provoked to resort unto Him. And let us understand that He gives us even now some taste of His love, to the end that in waiting for the full enjoyment thereof, we

may learn to forsake the world and serve Him with a more willing mind, knowing that He is not only our master and has all superiority and dominion over us but also our Father and is desirous to win us by His goodness.

Now, let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us so to feel them, that we may truly repent of them, and always resort unto Him to ask Him for forgiveness of them in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that He bear with us until He has drawn us quite and clean away from all the corruptions of the world and of our flesh, and that we be so reformed as we may seek nothing but by all means to come to the perfect righteousness whereunto He exhorts us. And let us all say, Almighty God, heavenly Father.

**The Thirty-Eighth Sermon,
which is the sixth upon the fifth Chapter.**

18. And be not drunken with wine, wherein is looseness; but be ye filled with the Spirit.
19. Speaking among yourselves in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.
20. Giving thanks always to God the Father for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

21. Being subject one to another in the fear of God.

We have seen this morning how God is offended when men abuse the benefits which He would have to be applied to such ends as He shows by His Word; and therefore that all excess and drunkenness ought to be shunned by the faithful, because they know that God shows Himself a Father towards them by nourishing them in this world. However, this is not as when they shall have come to the heavenly heritage, but by having at least some taste of His goodness; for they are continually confirmed in the hope given to them by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, if instead of being drawn upward, men become so brutish as to lose all reason and manhood, it is a complete perversion of the order of nature; it is as if they are defying God for His own benefits. But yet, when drunkenness draws a long tail after it, and men flush forth into all lewdness, so as they are past all shame—and yet their shamefulness may make others loathe and abhor it—the mischief is increased so much the more. Therefore, to keep us in sobriety and orderly conversation, Saint Paul says we must keep ourselves from being so overcome and vanquished by wine.

And now, on the contrary part, he addeth that we must rather be filled with the Spirit. For they that burst themselves with eating and drinking, and keep no measure till they can no more, do well show that they have no feeling of the kingdom of God, nor have ever tasted what the heavenly life is. This remedy, therefore, is right convenient to correct all the excesses and superfluities that reign among heathenish men and such as never conceived any inkling of God's grace and spiritual benefits.

Like as if a man who were empty should devour and swallow up all without chewing, it would be rather an overloading of his stomach

than a taking of sustenance and repast. And therefore, if another man saw that vice in him, he would restrain him. Even so it is with all such as have inordinate lusts: it is a token that they are too empty. And of what? Of faith, of the fear of God, and of the joy which is in the Holy Ghost. They know not a whit of God's goodness and favor towards them, nor of the grace which He shows us in our Lord Jesus Christ. For had we once our bellies full of such victuals, surely we would not play the wolves in ravening, but we would keep measure.

That then is the cause why Saint Paul says that we must be filled with the Holy Ghost. As if he should say, the despisers of God and such as have no other religion but to live at ease here and to have all their delights and pleasures, are excessively full beyond all reason and measure. And that is a defiling of God's benefits and a despising of the order of nature, as I said before.

Now then, if you are so eager to know what God is and what it is to profit in His Word, come your ways to devour it, as they do who have eaten no meat for two days before. Be not afraid of eating too much of that food, for it will never burst our souls. Therefore, let us readily fill ourselves with the gifts of God's Spirit and with His spiritual benefits, whereby He feeds us in the hope of the heavenly life; for in so doing we cannot do amiss. But we cannot give in to our lusts in taking food for the body without immediately following some evil and offense.

The matter which we have, in effect, to remember upon this strain is that all they who glut themselves after that fashion, and cannot satisfy themselves but by playing the beasts, show well that they have not so much as one drop of faith, nor of the fear of God, nor of religion in them, but that their belly overrules them, and they are so subjugated thereto as to their peculiar and principal idol. Now,

seeing it is so, let us learn to long after the food of our souls. And forasmuch as it is liberally offered us from day to day, insomuch that it is God's whole desire that we should have all that suffices for our salvation, let us sharpen our appetites to take such repast, and then we shall be sure that our other meats shall not allure us to such gluttony that we shall become as insatiable gulfs, but we shall be contented with having that which is meet for us and sufficient for our necessity, at leastwise to our behoof.

Furthermore, this similitude which Saint Paul uses must not be thought strange when he says that we must drink our fill of God's Spirit. For we know that the Prophet Isaiah says that God's Spirit is likened to water, and to milk, and to wine, whereby we are invited to come unto God, to take our repast, and to have whatsoever is needful for us. "Come on," says he, "and take at your pleasure both milk, wine, and water, without money or money's worth" (Isaiah 55:1).

Hereby, therefore, God declares unto us that we shall have an abundance of all spiritual benefits and sufficient to content us to the full, if so be that we will but open our mouths (as it is said in the Psalms), and not be so forepossessed of our own inordinate lusts as we cannot find in our hearts to seek the principal (Psalm 81:10). That is the further meaning of the similitude that Saint Paul uses here.

Now, forasmuch as this doctrine is so ill put in use everywhere, we ought to think the better of it. If a man considers how great emptiness there is in those that profess Christianity, he shall find that they can scarcely say three words to yield confession of their faith. For had they any in their hearts, surely their mouths would utter it, according to this saying: "We believe with the heart unto righteousness, and confess with the mouth unto salvation" (Romans 10:10).

However, if we are desirous to be filled, we need not be counseled to go seek the things that we need; we need but only to receive the food that is offered us and set before us. Yea, and this serves well to upbraid us with our lewdness, in that we vouchsafe not to go unto God though He calls us, nor to make account of that which He offers us. We will not forget to eat and to drink for the refreshing of our bodies, and yet that will not content us either; for we could find in our hearts to cobble up (as ye would say) the whole world. Yet, notwithstanding, even the soberest are willing to have their ordinary repast. The other sort do cram in meat and drink four or five times a day, and in the meantime, the wretched souls of them are hungry still.

Therefore, we must bear in mind that the warning which Saint Paul gives us here tells us that to be sober and well-ruled, and to use measurably the benefits that God bestows upon us, the soul must not be forgotten. We must feed upon the spiritual gifts, to lead us to the heavenly life, and to maintain us in the hope thereof until the full possession and fruition thereof be given us at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hereupon, Saint Paul adds that we should talk together in songs and hymns, and also that the same should be done with the heart, because the tongue would but unhallow God's Word if the mind matches not with the speech. Now, whereas he says that we must talk together in hymns, praises, and songs, it is to correct all fond talk to which we are too much given. For we see that all of us have, as it were, itching ears: there is none of us who is not well pleased to hear trifling babble. He who has received in on one side is ready to deliver out on the other side, and so the day passes away in things of nothing; or else our talk shall be wanton and loose, meet to infect good manners, and God shall be offended with it.

You see then that the thing to which men are too much inclined is that, to please one another, they banish all talk that may edify and discuss petty trifles to provoke laughter, as they say. Now, Saint Paul, perceiving this vice to be too common in the world, shows us here the remedy for it, that is to wit, that we should talk to one another in songs and hymns—that is to say, that men might hear the praises of God at our mouths. He pursues still the similitude that he had used heretofore. For drunkards are not contented to become beasts themselves, but they also draw others. And riot always has this inconvenience with it, that men encourage one another to drinking, saying: "Come on, let us eat and drink," in the same manner that the Prophet Isaiah speaks of (Isaiah 22:13).

Forasmuch then as rioters, after they have well stuffed themselves, would have that same vice range abroad everywhere, Saint Paul says, on the contrary part, that when we have taken our repast of the gifts of God's Spirit, the same must not serve for ourselves only but also to give refection and food to others who have need. The true feasting, therefore, which we ought to make to one another to cheer ourselves well, is that he who has profited in God's Word should endeavor to deal some part and portion of it to his neighbors according to his own measure.

Now, he mentions here songs, psalms, and hymns, which differ nothing at all one from another; and therefore, I need not to busy myself in setting forth any curious distinction of them. For all comes to this end, that all our mirth should ever tend to the glorifying of God. And surely, we should take pleasure enough in the minding of God's grace if we were not withheld by our own maliciousness.

And it is a wonder to see how desirous every man is that God should show Himself liberal and loving towards him. We would gladly enjoy

His benefits, and yet in the meantime, we put the remembrance of them underfoot and labor (as much as in us is) even to bury them. To our thinking, the time is lost that is spent in acknowledging how many ways we are bound unto God, and yet, notwithstanding, it is the very thing in which we ought to occupy ourselves. It is the thing wherein our life ought to be chiefly employed.

And truly, if men were well advised, there is no mirth comparable to this, nor any meet to be matched with it, namely, with the acknowledging of how many ways God has witnessed His goodness and love towards us. For (as I said) it serves to further us in the hope of the heavenly life. Undoubtedly, none of the things that we receive at God's hand have any true savor unless we come to put our trust in Him, can call upon His name, flee to Him for refuge, and yield Him His due and deserved praise.

Therefore, let us mark well what is said here, namely, that when we talk one with another, we must always magnify God's name. True, we cannot attain such perfection in this life, but we must still talk much of the needs to which we are subject, of the dealings we have with one another, and of various things besides. Yet, for all that, the principal point must not be left alone and cast behind our backs: that is, we must not fail to acknowledge the benefits by which we are bound unto God, and thereby be provoked to praise Him, so that each of us not only does his duty in secret but also draws one another to it by mutual example. That, therefore, is the essence of what we are to remember in this passage.

Now, by the way, Saint Paul makes us understand that we must sing unto God in spirit, so that we do not imagine we can discharge ourselves, as many hypocrites do, who magnify God only with their tongues while their hearts remain full of coldness within. Here,

therefore, he sets down two things which ought not to be put asunder. The one is that we should sing unto God, and the other is that we should talk with our neighbors. The whole foundation of our matter, then, is that the benefits God has bestowed upon us should be commended, and that the remembrance of them should provoke us to love Him, serve Him, and wholly give ourselves to Him—to seek Him and to know that to cleave unto Him is our full happiness. That is the foundation of the matter that Saint Paul sets down here.

First of all, we must (says he) sing unto God, and that cannot be done but with the heart. For we know that God accepts nothing which is not agreeable to His own nature. Therefore, if we will sing so that He may approve of it and accept our songs, we must do so with a heartfelt affection. For if there is any pretense in our doings, such that we make a great show before men, while being stingy in our hearts and having no zeal at all, and all is done merely for appearance's sake, surely we unhallow God's name in so doing. And for this reason, He says by His prophet Isaiah, "These people draw near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me" (Isaiah 29:13).

Therefore, let us mark well how it is said here that to sing God's praises, the heart must go before and, as you would say, make a thundering within. For that is the chief melody that can be, and therein we agree with the angels of heaven. If the mouth speaks alone, surely it is but flat mockery. Although men may approve of us for it, yet God refuses our payment with such coin, that is to say, with foolishness and things of no value.

Notwithstanding, when we have been zealous in praising God, and He can well be our judge and witness that we lay open our hearts before Him, then we must also do our duty toward our neighbors so

that every man may be encouraged and drawn forward by our example. Here we see, first of all, how little account is made of God nowadays. For all the countenance that men make of singing His praises is but a howling and yelling. It is one of the grossest abuses in papistry, that they think God ought to hold Himself well pleased when they have barked at their parchment, as they say. But in so doing, the Holy Scripture is unhallowed, torn to pieces, yea, and utterly falsified.

However the case stands, there is neither advisement, wit, nor understanding in their doings; for it is enough with them that the throat has yelled it out aloud. Yea, and even among us too, it is certain that such as pretend to set forth God's praises commonly seek nothing but to glorify themselves by it and keep back the principal thing, making it seem as if they are paying God some portion of their arrearages.

Again, let us consider how cold and slender this exercise of talking to one another in songs, hymns, and praises of God is among us. Hardly can one word be wrung out of us that may edify. Lewd talk can by no means be banished from us: all the world shall hear us sing unchaste and ribald songs, and such things cannot be plucked out of men's minds. But then ought this matter to be raised out of the Holy Scripture. However the case stands, if men pardon themselves, they shall answer for it before God, according to the sentence that Saint Paul pronounces here by the authority of God and by the power of His Holy Spirit.

And by the way, let us mark that his touching on three words here together, which import all one thing, is not for nothing. It is to show that we shall have enough with which to entertain one another if we acknowledge the sundry benefits that God has bestowed upon us, as

becomes us. If variety delights men, let us consider how many ways God lays forth the treasures of His goodness towards us. Look at how many there are of them, and so many songs there are. If we had a hundred melodies to delight us in all the things that we occupy ourselves about, it would be nothing in comparison to the inestimable diversity of benefits we receive at God's hand.

Saint Paul, therefore, has here corrected our unthankfulness by adding these diverse words to show that it must needs be that we are too dull if we are not moved when our Lord stirs us up in so many ways, seeing we cannot set our minds unto anything but that His benefits must needs come into our sight.

For the same cause, he also adds, "**Yielding always thanks.**" As if he said that, if we were well advised, the continual repeating of God's praises and the harping upon them should never grieve us nor weary us. And why? Seeing that God continues His benefiting of us, is it not reasonable that there should be an answerableness on our part, to hold out in doing Him honor for His good turns?

Does any one day pass wherein we do not receive at the least a hundred good turns at God's hand? Now, is it meet that we should think that when we have thanked Him twice or thrice for the great number of benefits which we receive from Him all our life long, we have leisure to occupy ourselves otherwise ever after? When our Lord renews and refreshes the remembrance of His goodness, is it not meet that we should be moved by it? Therefore, it behooves us always to mark well this saying, whereby Saint Paul declares that we are too unmindful of God if we are not provoked to acknowledge His benefits from year to year, from month to month, from day to day, and from hour to hour, and to yield Him the sacrifice that He requires of us, which is that we should protest ourselves to be wholly

at His will, to be beholden to Him for all good things, and that it is impossible for us to perform the hundredth part of our duty.

As we hear how David says, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord" (Psalm 116:12-13). And in the fortieth Psalm, he says expressly that the order which God keeps in governing us is so wonderful a thing that it passes the hairs of our heads in number, insomuch that we must needs be amazed at it.

Therefore, seeing we cannot come near the infinite goodness of God, though we endeavor to apply all our wits thereto, at least let us aim towards it. And just as we see that God is never weary of showing Himself liberal towards us, but flows continually like a fountain—yea, even by so many streams as are able to satisfy us in all things—let us also show continually, without ceasing, how much we are bound and beholden to so good and kind-hearted a Father.

And he adds yet further, that we must thank God for all things. Hereby he shows us that men are too blockish, in that they do not consider how many ways God allures and spurs them, notwithstanding the slothfulness that is in them. As if he should say, "My friends, considering how much we are bound unto God, both in respect of our bodies and in respect of our souls, can we comprehend it?" No, it is not possible, for we have too small and narrow a wit. And when we have, after a sort, comprehended God's benefits, yet have we not tongue to express anything near how much we are bound unto Him.

So then, why is it that we are so cold, that as soon as we have spoken but one word, we think it is enough, and that we are discharged until another time, and return to it again as slowly as may be? Wherefrom comes such slackness? Even from our shutting of our eyes. Although

God shows us by all means that it becomes us to be occupied in blessing His holy name, yet we will not see it one whit.

Again, as touching the body, we bear ourselves in mind that our goods come to us either by our own cunning, or by good fortune, or by favor of the world; as for God, He is always left alone, and as for His goodness, we think not on it. Now then, when we intend to do our duty in yielding God His due praise, which is the chief sacrifice that He requires (as I said before), let us have regard to consider better what we are,* 1.10 and what our state is, and how we are subject to so many necessities, as God must be fain to succor us in infinite ways.

And when we have considered our wretchedness, both in body and soul, and on the contrary part also considered how God provides for all and suffers us not to have any penury without relief at His hand, surely we shall have wherewith to continue the praising of His holy name without ceasing. And Saint Paul will have us not only to thank God for the benefits which we feel apparently, but also, although He afflicts us and handles us diverse times otherwise than we would, yet will he have us to praise Him still, after the example of Job,* 1.11 who (as we see) not only thanked God when he had his children at his table and they made merry in feasting one another, but also when he was bereft of his issue and left desolate in his house, when all his goods were taken away, partly by robbers and partly by lightning that fell from heaven, and when he was so miserable, as it seemed that lice should eat him up. He ceased not to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

So then, Saint Paul shows us that even in our sorrows, and when we receive chastisements that are rough and bitter to us, yet let us not grudge against God, but rather persevere in praising His name, as he

exhorts us in another place, where he says that in praying to Him, we must always praise Him.* 1.12 Although we have not the things that we crave,* 1.13 and in our petitions, we show ourselves to lack this and that, and are pinched with grief and care, yet thanksgiving must still be mingled with our prayers.

There are a great number who pray unto God, but yet they do but provoke God's wrath because they intermingle their grudgings and repinings, gnashing their teeth at Him. They will indeed say, "My God, help me." But which is that God? If they could pluck Him out of heaven, they would do it with all their heart, to the end He might have no more power over them. You see then, that a number, thinking to pray unto God, do but provoke Him to wrath because their requests are full of pride, spitefulness, and defiance.

And therefore Saint Paul tells us to the Philippians,* 1.14 that all our petitions and requests must be matched with thanksgiving, to show that we patiently abide to be governed by the hand of God. Likewise, in this text, he says that we must thank God for all things, not only when we are in prosperity, and all things fall out as we would wish, so that God gives us our heart's desire, and we live in delight and pleasure: that is not the only fit time and season to yield praise unto God. But although He scourges us, yet must we acknowledge that He procures our salvation and welfare by that means.

Let us see then if we have not cause to bless God in all our adversities. Yes, for first, whatsoever befalls us, He bears with us, insomuch that if He should touch us but with one of His fingers in good earnest, we should be overwhelmed at the first blow. Seeing then, that we hold out, it is a token that He spares us: and have we not cause to thank Him for it? Again, when He turns His chastisings to our benefit, for that He purges us by that means, to further us

continually toward the kingdom of heaven, and to lift us up because we are too much tied to the world, to the end we should be gathered together, to come to the full perfection that is prepared for us in heaven. When we see all this, have we not cause to praise our God, notwithstanding that we are full of grief, care, fear, and doubts?

Yes, certainly, but our own unthankfulness hinders it. So much the more does it behoove us to mark well what St. Paul tells us here, namely that we have cause to praise God without end or ceasing. And if our mouths are sometimes stopped with grief, so that we seem to be barred from praising God and cannot apply ourselves freely thereto, let us understand that God never shows Himself so rough and rigorous towards us that He does not assuage the bitterness in our afflictions to draw us to Him, so that we might thank Him and glorify Him for it.

For as much as we receive no grace except through our Lord Jesus Christ, who also turns the corrections to our welfare, which we should suffer as punishments for our sins, therefore it is said that we should yield thanks to our God and Father, namely by our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, he sets down on the one side God the Father and afterward shows how God is our Father in all respects: that is to say, by means of the Mediator, through whom we are reconciled unto Him, and He has so put away all our sins that whatever things we endure in this world are all furtherances of our salvation, as is said of them in the Epistle to the Romans (Romans 8:28).

Here we have to mark first of all that without faith we cannot praise God as we ought to, insomuch that whatever praises we sing with our mouths, all is but feigning and hypocrisy unless we are thoroughly persuaded that God is our Father. And mark here what is meant by faith. It is not as the Papists suppose it, namely to believe that there

is a God in heaven and, in the meanwhile, to know nothing of His will. But St. Paul tells us we must be thoroughly resolved that God accepts us as His children, or else we shall never be able to praise Him with a pure and free affection.

And how may that be done, except by being grounded upon the free adoption whereby He takes us to Himself for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake? For is it by inheritance, or by any worthiness of ours, that God is our Father and we His children? Alas, no! But quite the contrary, we are called the children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3), and God must needs disown us because there is nothing but sin and wickedness in us. Until we come to our Lord Jesus Christ, it is certain that we cannot be sure of God's favor or that He will accept our service. Therefore, St. Paul, having said that we must yield thanks unto God in and for all things because He is our Father, rightly adds that this is done by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us understand, then, that all who are afraid of God's majesty, and cannot trust Him, nor rest upon the promises of His favor to call upon Him as their Father, can never praise Him. Indeed, they may well use some ceremonies, but all shall be but lies. Therefore, whenever we will pray unto God and give Him praise and thanks, faith must lead the way. Mark that for one point.

However, (as I said before) it is impossible for us to be grounded in any certainty of faith to take God for our Father until we know that we are made one in our Lord Jesus Christ and that, for as much as we are members of His body, we are also partakers of the benefits that He has purchased. His death and passion are our righteousness, His holiness our cleansing from all our own defilements, and the sacrifice which He has offered sets us clear, drawing us out of the

damnation wherein we were and finally setting us free from the bondage of sin and purchasing us full righteousness.

For as much as we have all these things in our Lord Jesus Christ, we ought also to give thanks unto God by His means. And that is the reason why the Papists cannot frame even one request that God allows. Yea, and indeed, they are as good as dumb. For though one may hear hymns and canticles enough (as they term them) among them, yet God cannot be praised at their hands. Although they wind up all things with the saying, "By our Lord Jesus Christ," yet they do not believe that God is merciful to them, nor are they worthy of it, because they disclaim our Lord Jesus Christ and so entangle Him with patrons and advocates of their own making that He cannot be discerned from others, insomuch that they coop Him up in a corner or set Him behind in the rearward, while in the meantime they are hunting after the merits and intercessions of saints. That is their trust, the root of their devilish presumption, namely that they can make amends for their sins and redeem themselves.

But as for us, when we are told that we must thank God in all things, it is to the end that we should always abase ourselves. And for that cause, I say that faith opens us the way both to pray unto God and also to give Him thanks for the benefits we have received at His hand.

Now hereupon Saint Paul adds that we must be subject one to another in the fear of Christ, or in the fear of God, for either will fit the text well enough. In saying that we must be subject, he shows that just as God will have His children exercise themselves in His praises, so also He will not have them be unprofitable here below but to serve one another's turn. For inasmuch as we are not able to do either good or harm to God, He is content that we do but praise His

name. For even if we employ all our ability, what is there in us that can enrich or benefit God? He gives us all things and needs nothing Himself.

Therefore, it is an inestimable goodness that He releases us from all that we owe Him, provided we declare ourselves so greatly beholden and bound to Him that we cannot discharge our obligation. If we come with all humility and confess the bond in which we stand bound to God, this is the payment He requires of us, and for His own part, He seeks no more. Yet He will have us be serviceable one to another and not seek our private profit in such a way as to forget that we are knit together in a mutual bond of charity. That is the thing He intends to bring us to now in this text.

At first glance, a man might think it strange that we ought to be subject one to another. For it does not seem fitting that the father should be subject to his children, the husband to his wife, or the magistrate to the people whom he governs. Nor that even those who are equal in degree should be subject to one another. But if we look carefully upon all things, we shall find that Saint Paul has not without cause placed all Christians under this subjection.

Why? The magistrates, who are advanced in authority and glory above other men, are nonetheless bound to those whom they govern. They are not ordained as rulers for their own sakes but for the sake of the commonwealth. For God's ordaining of principalities, kingdoms, and states was not to the end that some should have preeminence above others but because it is for our benefit to have some bridle to hold us in obedience under laws, to have some power and authority over us, and to stand in fear and awe of magistrates because we cannot do without such a remedy. Seeing then that God

has set magistrates in such a state, it is certain that they are therefore subject to those whom they ought to serve by reigning over them.

The same must be said of fathers. It is true that the father ought to be honored by his children. Yet, for as much as it is an honorable title, it will cost them dearly if they do not govern their households discreetly. And in that governance, there is also subjection. Likewise, it is between the husband and the wife. For is it not a subjection that the husband bears with the frailty of his wife and has the discretion to forbear harshness towards her, holding her as his companion, and taking upon him a part of her burden, both in sickness and in health? Is not that subjection? Yes. Not without cause, then, does Saint Paul pronounce here generally that all who would prove themselves faithful must be subject one to another, namely every man in his state and degree.

Let those who are highly advanced consider well that God's advancement of them is so that they should the more willingly submit themselves to bear the pains and cares that belong to their office. And let those who are inferiors understand that they ought much rather to humble themselves and to bear the yoke that is laid upon their necks. And let those who are equals and fellows (unless they will needs be like wild beasts and are loath to maintain any courtesy among them) nonetheless consider that every man ought to bear with his neighbors. And is not this subjection? We cannot live one with another without forbearance. Now surely, all forbearance implies bondage; therefore, we must serve for necessity's sake.

According to which, it is said in another place that we must owe nothing but what charity binds us to (Romans 13:8). Herein we see what arrogance it is when anyone says, "What do I owe to you?" It is true that men may well upbraid one another that they owe no duty to

them, but they must go further. And that is the reason why Saint Paul sets down the fear of our Lord Jesus Christ, or of God. As if he should say, "If we were here without a God, and every man wanted to get alone by himself, we might well hold scorn for one another and say, 'I care not for you.'" Truly, it would still be a great and intolerable folly to say, "I care not for you." For the richest man that can be devised does nevertheless stand in need of a hundred people's help, yea, of all men's help.

Then it is a great arrogance to thrust away our neighbors after that fashion under the pretext that they can neither benefit us nor harm us. And it is apparent that we are too blind in so doing. But suppose we might say, "I care not for you; I owe you nothing," yet we must come to God, who is our head. For when He put us into this world, He linked us together and would have us serve one another in charity. And we know there is no other bond of perfection but charity, and charity brings with it a bond.

So then, although I owe a man nothing in respect of himself, yet I owe him something in respect of God. And that is the thing to which Saint Paul brings us back. As if he should say, "Consider with yourselves that you were not created and put into the world but with the condition that you should serve every man his neighbor. Otherwise, if you shrink away from one another, it is as if you would cut asunder the sinews of the body to the intent it should fall to pieces, yea, and that our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our head, might have no more to do with us."

They then that will play the wild beasts and cannot find it in their hearts to stoop to any subjection to their neighbors must go live in the wild woods, for they are not worthy to live among men. For we see how God has knit us together and thereby separated us from the

brute beasts, yet nonetheless bound us one to another. Now if we will needs shake off this yoke, is it not a plain indication that we think ourselves beholden for nothing to our Lord Jesus Christ, that we are loath to be ruled by His hand or to submit ourselves to the order under which He has put us and which He would have kept without breaking?

So then, forasmuch as each of us is so wedded to himself that we cannot submit ourselves one to another, let us bear in mind what Saint Paul has set down for us here. For it is the very sauce that will make us find taste in this doctrine, that is to say, that if we fear God and can find it in our hearts to submit ourselves quietly to His will, it must not grieve us, nor must we think it irksome and strange, that each of us should serve those whom he is bound to serve, and by that means so maintain his degree that we may all link together under our head Jesus Christ and attain to the heavenly glory which He has purchased for us.

Now let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us so to feel them that it may draw us to true repentance and make us profit in it from day to day, and to examine our miseries in such a way that we may be moved to call upon our God for remedy, that He may cleanse us and defend us from them until He has brought us to the perfection of righteousness, which we ought to labor for, and from which we are yet far off. And in the meantime, may He so bear with us that we may not cease to have the privilege of calling upon Him as His children, and also have reason to thank Him through our Lord Jesus Christ, because He has by His Holy Spirit sealed the adoption in our hearts, whereby He holds us fast to Him, and that we may so persevere in faith and hope as we may ever persist in acknowledging the manifold benefits which He adds one upon another, and learn to receive them

so at His hand that they may be made holy unto us, both by faith and thanksgiving.

May it please Him to grant this grace, not only to us but also to all people and nations of the earth. Amen.

The Thirty-Ninth Sermon, which is the Seventh upon the Fifth Chapter

22. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to our Lord.

23. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church, and likewise is he the savior of the body.

24. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so also let wives be subject to their husbands in all things.

25. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it.

26. To sanctify it, cleansing it in the washing of water through the word.

We have seen heretofore how every one of us is subject to his neighbors and that we cannot otherwise live one with another than by doing some duty as of subjection. And forasmuch as that mislikes us, because every one of us covets to be above his fellows, and we set

so much store by that loftiness, that it is hard for us to stoop: we have seen also that if we fear God, we must not think it strange that we should submit ourselves to our neighbors, for God created us with that condition.

You see then in general, that charity does so bind us one to another, that we ought not to disdain this man, nor to loathe that man, or to count the third man unworthy to have any service done unto him. For in respect of God, we must either bow down our neck, or else our stubbornness will turn to our downfall.

And now Saint Paul goes further and shows that there are certain degrees among men. For although the foresaid rule stands generally — that is to say, that every one of us must endeavor to perform his duty—yet, there is also a greater subjection particularly of the son to the father, of the wife to her husband, and of subordinates to their superiors, than there is indifferently among all men.

I have told you before, that there is a brotherhood even between the furthest strangers on the earth because they are all of one common nature, and every man must needs acknowledge himself indebted to another. However, when God has knit folks together in a stricter and holier bond, every man must look more closely to himself. For when a wife is matched to her husband, she is given to him as a help, and she is a part of his body.

Also, there is a special subjection, so that although the husband is superior in authority, that is no hindrance to his being bound to his wife, for she is his companion both to live and die with him. Likewise, it is with children towards their fathers, and with fathers towards their children, each one in his own role and calling; as subordinates towards their princes and superiors, and servants towards their masters.

You see then that the thing we have to treat of now is that we must generally live in charity with one another, endeavoring to discharge the duty that God binds us to according to our ability. And furthermore, we must not despise the order that God has set among us but rather be provoked so much the more to do our duty, knowing that if we refuse that condition, we make war against God.

And now let us come to marriage, which is not a thing ordained by men. We know that God is the author of it and that it is solemnized in His name, and the Scripture says it is a holy covenant, and therefore it is called divine. Now then, if a wife is stubborn and froward and cannot find in her heart to bear the yoke, although she does wrong to her husband, yet she does more wrong to God. And why? Because it is His will that that bond should be inviolable, and behold, a mortal creature will need to break it and pluck it asunder. We see then that in so doing, she bends herself against God.

On the other side, when the man will need to rule after his own liking and fancy and despise his wife or use her cruelly and tyrannically, he shows himself to despise God and to defy Him openly. For he ought to know to what end he was created, what the state of wedlock is, and what law God has set in it. The thing, therefore, to which Saint Paul calls us is that in all states we should have regard for God. For as long as our eyes rest upon those with whom we are conversant, surely we shall always find excuses enough, and too many, to exempt ourselves from all law.

The husband may allege, "I have a spiteful and stubborn wife," or else, "She is proud and coy," or has a wicked mind of her own, or else is talkative. Again, another perhaps is a drunkard, another an idle housewife, and another of some other lewd disposition. To be short,

there is not one man who may not have some color if he does not keep the faithfulness and honesty of marriage as becomes him.

The wife also, for her part, shall not be unprovided. For now and then her husband may happen to be testy and riotous, and have small regard for what God has called them to. Some are ill husbands and hunters of taverns (and ale houses), or else play the unthrift in gaming and light behavior. Some are whoremongers, some gluttons, and some drunkards. And so every woman might pretend some excuse to exempt herself from her duty.

But when we come to God, we must be fain to cast our heads in our bosom, for it will not profit us to stand checking against Him. Although the men misbehave themselves on the one side and the women on the other, yet will God not have the marriage broken or dissolved thereby, saving the divorce (I mean) which our Lord Jesus declares. But the other vices that are in a husband must not impeach the wife's subjection and obedience unto him. Again, though the wife be not found to be as she ought to be, yet the husband may not shake her off and rid his hands of her, whatever shift he alleges; but God's ordinance must always stand firm, and the bond which we have by His word must be inviolable. This is the thing that we have to remember upon that sentence.

The world sees how ill this lesson is put into practice, but we must consider that the root of the mischief is that in marriage few or none have an eye unto God. Indeed, God's name shall run roundly enough, and even the wickedest could find in their hearts that He should bless them and make them prosper; but that in their marrying, they put themselves into His hand and guiding, and call upon Him unfaintedly: that is no part of their meaning. Some seek wealth and gain, and others seek pleasure and voluptuousness. In like case is it

with the women. And no marvel though the end be out of all order when the beginning was so out of square. For God must needs be avenged on His part when He is so lightly esteemed and despised.

Therefore, let us learn to mark well this lesson of Saint Paul, that just as marriage was ordained of God, so those who are to enter into it must betake themselves wholly unto Him, and make Him their refuge, knowing that it is He who binds the man and the wife to one another, and who knits them together, and therefore that either of them look to their own duty.

Whereas he says concerning wives that they owe subjection to their husbands, we have to mark that this subjection is double. For man was already the head of the woman even before the sin and fall of Eve and Adam (1 Timothy 2:13-14). Saint Paul, alleging the same reason to show that it is not meet that the wife should reign in equal degree with her husband, says that the man came not of the woman, but the woman of the man, and that she is but a piece of his body. For God could have created Eve from the earth as well as He did Adam, but He would not. Rather, He matched the man and the woman together with such condition, that the man, knowing his wife to be as his own substance and flesh, should be induced thereby to love her (as we shall see again hereafter), and that the wife, knowing herself to have no other being but of the man, should bear her subjection patiently and with a willing mind. For if the hand, being a member of the body, should refuse to stand in its own place, and would need to settle itself upon the crown of the head, what a thing would that be? So then, if we look back to the creation of man and woman, the husband on his side ought to be induced to love and cherish his wife as himself, and the wife, seeing she was taken out of the substance of the man, ought to submit herself quietly unto him as to her head.

But there is also another bond (1 Timothy 2:14) which doubles still the subjection of the wife: for we know that she was beguiled. Women, therefore, must remember that in being subject to their husbands, they receive the hire of Eve's sin, and they must consider that if marriage had continued sound and uncorrupt, there would have been nothing but joy for both man and wife. For know that things were blessed by God, and there was not anything that should not have turned to gladness and felicity.

But now, although God's blessings shine forth everywhere, both above and beneath, yet there are always tokens of cursing imprinted in them, so that we cannot behold either heaven or earth, or any other creature, without perceiving that God has become a stranger to us because our father Adam fell from that noble and excellent state to which he was created before. This is to be seen everywhere in all things, and especially in marriage. For women ought to feel the fruit of their sins, and men feel enough of it for their part. For surely if Eve and Adam had continued in the righteousness that God had given them, the whole state of this earthly life would have been as a Paradise, and marriage would have been so beautified that man and wife, being matched together, would have lived in such accord as we see the angels of heaven do, among whom there is nothing but peace and brotherly love. And even so, it would have been with us.

Therefore, as now, when a man has a curst and shrewd wife whom he cannot manage by any means, he must consider with himself: "Lo, here are the fruits of original sin and the corruption that is in myself." And the wife also, on her side, must think: "Good reason it is that I should receive the payment that comes of my disobedience towards God, for that I did not hold myself in His awe."

Thus much concerning the word "subjection," which is set down here.

Now, Saint Paul, in saying, "As to the Lord," does not mean to make men equal with God, or with our Lord Jesus Christ, for that would be too great an oversight. Instead, he shows that the fear and reverence which a woman ought to bear unto God, and the subjection which she owes to her husband, are two things that cannot be put asunder. Just as when he exhorted us before to link together in mutual subjection, he added this saying, "in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:21).

And why? For if we pretend to honor God and obey Him, and in the meantime reject and despise our neighbors, so that every one of us is wedded to himself and wants to be exempt from all law and rule, it is gross hypocrisy. Also, if a wife pretends to have great devotion and seems to be thoroughly seasoned with the fear of God, but at home is like a fiend, with nothing but scolding, brawling, wrangling, and such other things, she shows herself not to have one spark of the fear of God. This is because she so holds her husband, who is her head and, as it were, God's lieutenant in that regard, in scorn.

Therefore, let us note that Saint Paul has not set down this similitude to match husbands (who are mortal creatures, mere worms of the earth) in equal degree with Jesus Christ, but to show briefly that, since our Lord Jesus has authority over marriage, men must have regard to Him. Every person must submit himself patiently because no one can refuse his part without despising Him who wants wedlock maintained with mutual duty, so that the man loves his wife and the wife is subject to her husband. That is the essence of the matter that we have to remember upon this point.

Now then, let wives look well to their duties and understand that when they contend with their husbands, it is as if they would reject God because He has not created them otherwise than with the condition and intent that they should be subject to their husbands. True, they will be so proud and stately as to say, "Should my husband have my head under his girdle?" Yes, but the wife who does so shows that she is unwilling that God should have any authority over her and would rather put God's law under her foot.

However, since there is no other choice, women must needs stoop and understand that the ruin and confusion of all mankind came through their side and that through them we are all forlorn, accursed, and banished from the kingdom of heaven. When women, I say, understand that all this came from Eve and of womankind (as Saint Paul tells us in another place), there is no other way for them but to stoop and to bear patiently the subjection that God has laid upon them, which is nothing else but a warning to them to keep themselves lowly and mild (1 Timothy 2:14-15).

But if they lift up themselves against their husbands and cannot find it in their hearts to be ruled by them, it is like setting their seal to the sin of Adam and Eve and the disobedience they committed, declaring that they are not willing that God should heal that wound again, even though it be deadly. Now, when they make war against the grace of God in such a manner, what can come of it but utter confusion?

But the wives who are foolish in mind will not think of that. Yet, it is registered before God, and they must yield an account of it to their utter confusion. Therefore, let us look that we heed this warning better, to the end that every man may glorify God in his own house.

Also, let the husbands think upon their duty. For although (to speak properly) they are not subject to their wives, because their wives have

no authority over them, yet they are advanced to that honor of superiority with certain conditions: namely, that they should not be cruel towards their wives, nor think all things granted and lawful which they desire, but that their authority should rather be a companionship than a kingship. For doubtless, the husband is not his wife's head to oppress her or to make no account of her. Instead, he should understand that the authority he has binds him even more to her.

For seeing he is the head, he ought to have discretion and skill in how to guide his wife and his household. And what is the way to bring that to pass, but to use gentleness and mildness, and to bear discreetly with the frailty which he knows to be in his wife, according as Saint Peter exhorts us (1 Peter 3:7)? You see then that husbands must so require obedience from their wives as they themselves must do their own duty, and consider that they shall not be borne with before God if they give their wives cause to lift themselves up against them.

For it is certain that if the husband deals discreetly and uprightly, the wife shall submit to him, and our Lord will so dispose her heart that the house shall be quietly guided. But the first and chief point is that God be called upon. For though a man uses all the means that can be, yet if he trusts in his own wit, he shall but lose his time. And why? Because God will laugh his presumption to scorn. But if husbands consider that God holds people's hearts in His hand and bends them as He pleases, and therefore pray for grace and power to win their wives so that they may agree with them and humble themselves to them, then they shall perceive that God works in that behalf.

But most commonly, it is seen that men deal roughly with their wives and think to win them by playing the tyrant, so as they stick not to

bruise their bodies, sometimes even to the point where the blood follows. These are hangmen and tormentors who would so martyr their wives, and yet, they will allege the superiority that God has given them. That superiority is not diabolical, nor does it serve to make men like brute beasts, but to maintain good order and government.

But the women, on their side, do, for the most part, harden themselves, and when they are to marry, they never think upon the things that God shows and teaches them by His word. Hardly shall a man find one among a hundred who prays to God when she is upon the point of marriage. No doubt, but they hear it well enough said that the husband must be the head. And (they themselves will say), "Very well, it is true that if I have a husband, he must be above me, for so is the fashion of the world, and I must abide it." But in the meantime, there shall be such overweening, or rather devilish stoutness in them, that they could find it in their hearts to pluck God out of His seat. They would gladly have this matter that we read now erased from the Scripture to avoid being subject to it.

Yes, and they make a confederacy among themselves in that case, saying: "Tush, I warrant thee, I will hold my own, and if my husband plays the churl with me, he shall well perceive that I do not care for it. I will hold him at bay so long that when he sees he does but lose his labor, he shall be forced to give over his game and to let me alone." After this manner, I say, do women begin to enter into housewifery, so that a man shall scarcely find one among a hundred who is not of that mind and who has not fully determined upon it.

Also, the husband, on his side, thinks thus: "Tush, let me alone, I will manage her well enough." As if he were God, who has told us that there is another manner of discretion to be used in this regard. For

the way for men to win their wives is not to approach them with harshness and to play the madman with them or to use tyranny over them. None of that will help. Yet, men think themselves so wise in their own conceit that they shall scare their wives with a grim look. To be brief, they debate the matter, and in the meantime, they rob God, as though He had reserved nothing for Himself by which to teach us to turn to Him, to pray for Him to soften their hearts, and to bow them to obedience and mildness.

Therefore, it behooves us to remember the lesson so much the better, which is shown to us here. For the same cause, Saint Paul applies the example of our Lord Jesus Christ to both sides. He tells the women that it is for their benefit to be subject to their husbands. And why? Let us consider the spiritual state of the Church. How miserable would our state be if we were separated from our Lord Jesus Christ? We would be bereft of all hope of life and of all God's benefits. And although we enjoyed many gifts in this world, yet they would all turn to our displeasure if we were not members of our Lord Jesus Christ. To be brief, without the Son of God, there is nothing but scattering here beneath. For He was sent to gather together all things that were scattered before, insomuch that all our happiness, joy, and rest is to have Jesus Christ reigning over us and ruling us.

Now then, there must be a correspondence in marriage, and the women must understand that, since wedlock is like an image of the spiritual union between us and the Son of God, it is for their benefit to be under their husbands and to yield them obedience. It shall be much more for their profit than if they were at liberty to govern themselves and do what they like, without any restraint or control. True, it is that they cannot conceive it, but who shall be found wiser in the end? God or women? If they insist that it would be better for them to be in no subjection at all to their husbands, whereas God has

ordained otherwise, even for their welfare, and has declared and given sentence that it is so, do they think they can get the upper hand in arguing against God?

You see then that Jesus Christ is set down as the Savior of the body, so that wives should know that God has provided better for their necessities than they are aware of. When they have thought deeply and debated within themselves, and gathered all the reasons that are possible, yet it is certain that they do not know what is truly for their own profit as well as God does, who has placed them in subjection to their husbands, even for their own welfare, to the intent that they should be maintained, which otherwise could not be.

Again, on the other side, Saint Paul appeals to our Lord Jesus Christ to the husbands, to the intent that they should not abuse the authority that is granted to them, nor break the friendship that ought to be maintained in wedlock by being overly harsh, as they are often inclined to be. The example he sets before them in our Lord Jesus Christ, by asking how He has loved His Church, is, first and foremost, that He gave Himself for it, and that He did not spare Himself when He took on human flesh. Indeed, all power and dominion were given unto Him, so that all knees must bow before Him, as Saint Paul himself says, and all of us, both great and small, must do Him homage (Philippians 2:10). But yet, what has He done for His Church? Did He desire to reign in such a way as to exercise tyranny over us? No, but on the contrary, He humbled Himself, and whereas He had sovereign dominion over the angels of heaven, He became subject to the Law (Galatians 4:4) and was called a servant, yes, and He was utterly emptied for our sakes.

Now, when we see that God bears such inestimable love for us in our Lord Jesus Christ, that He has placed Himself in the person of a

husband and graciously allowed that we should be as a wife unto Him, I say, when we see that, should we now, who are but worms of the earth and of no account, refuse to follow the example of the Son of God, who disregarded His heavenly glory and majesty in order to abase Himself in such a way for our sakes?

So then, this should be enough to humble the hearts of both parties if there is not such beastly wickedness, or rather stark devilishness, in both husbands and wives. For considering that our Lord Jesus Christ so humbled Himself for the love that He bore us, who are but carrion and worth nothing, and also has told us that there is nothing better than for the wives to be subject to their husbands and the husbands to bear with their wives, if that does not move them, it is a sign that they are too beastly high-minded, or rather that there is neither wit nor reason in them. For were there but one drop, surely what Saint Paul tells us ought to correct all things that might hinder us from doing our duties, on both sides.

And were this well regarded, doubtless there would be much more quietness in their homes than there is, and husband and wife would not be like cats and dogs, snapping and biting at each other. But the very mischief is that there seems to be no fear of God among them. For should not men call to mind, both evening and morning, the grace shown unto us by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ? And when everyone had thought well on it and set their minds to it, the married men ought also to think particularly with themselves, "To what end has God shown Himself so loving, so kind, and so merciful towards me? Seeing that He has advanced me to such dignity, is it not good reason that I should fashion myself to be like unto Him?"

Now, He would have me behave myself toward my wife as Jesus Christ has behaved Himself toward me. Is this not enough to break

the hardest of hearts, even those as hard as stone, or as steel? Yes, surely. Likewise, if the women on their side were mindful of their redemption and salvation, then should their hard hearts need to be softened, and they would not harden themselves anymore to such stubbornness as they do, but they would submit themselves to the yoke of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they might be partakers of the benefit which He has purchased for them by His death and passion.

We see then that when the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is preached to us impartially, most people gain nothing by it, for they forsake it in all their life.

And by the way, we have to mark further that, although husbands may be froward, and wives unwilling to be ruled, yea, and utterly incorrigible, yet that is no release to either of them from doing their duty. For example: it may be that if a husband had a gentle and tractable wife (as I mentioned before), he on his side could bear with her, and there would be a marvelous good liking and life between them. But perhaps one man will say he has a drunkard or a glutton for a wife, another that his wife is given to garishness and too much finery, so that all she can scrape together is too little to trim and deck herself with. Another may say his wife is an idle housewife and will do nothing.

Well, these things may have some color before men; and (as I said before) if the matter concerned only the parties themselves, each of them might have a defense at hand to cast off all yoke. But the husband must think in that case, "I have an ill-disposed woman, or a fool, or one who has neither manners nor good behavior, nor any care at all for her household. But how do I behave myself, not only in these worldly affairs, but also toward God?" Now, when the husband has thought over these things well and thoroughly examined his own

faults, he will hold his peace and patiently bear with his wife's faults until God gives her the grace to amend them.

In the meantime, however things may go, let him not cease to play the good husband, applying himself to his wife to win her unto God. For he is not set in a degree of superiority, except for the benefit and welfare of his yoke-fellow. And since this is an inviolable law, the same reasoning must also persuade the women.

If a woman has a drunkard, a frequenter of taverns and tippling houses, a gambler, a spendthrift, a rioter, or a churl who is never at peace with her, so that, do what she can to obey and please him, she can never have any peace or goodwill from him, let her consider: "Alas, this is God's scourge upon me, for I have not been as I ought to be in obeying my God and submitting myself to His will. How have I applied myself to serve and honor Him? How have I discharged the charge that He has committed to me?"

Let the wife think upon these things, and then let her conclude that, however she fares, it is not for mortal creatures to break the bond in which God will have us bound, for that would be striving against Him. Therefore, she must submit herself to him who is her head, and although he may be terrible, it still becomes her to be subject to her God, who has her husband's heart in His hand and can alter it when He pleases. She must not provoke him to win her with blows from a cudgel, for in so doing, God would be displeased with both him and her.

So then, the faults of the wife cannot discharge the husband from keeping unbroken the law which God has ordained, that is, living together in one accord. Likewise, the vices of the husband shall not excuse the wife from yielding submission and obedience in all things on God's behalf, as is stated here.

Now, Saint Paul, to confirm this exhortation better, declares how our Lord Jesus Christ is the Savior of the body: namely, because he gave himself for the Church to sanctify it, or to make it holy. Indeed, the whole doctrine hereof cannot be dispatched as of now. Yet, notwithstanding, we have to mark that here Saint Paul shows more at large the thing he had mentioned in one word before: which is, that both the husband and wife may bridle their wicked affections, and that when they are tempted to go astray, or to fall out with one another, the very means to calm all wicked passions is to have an eye to the pledge of the spiritual union between our Lord Jesus Christ and us, whereof we will speak more fully hereafter.

First of all, it is said that we must consider that our Lord Jesus Christ gave himself for us, wherein he begins with our redemption. Therefore, we must mark that word for now, waiting until after dinner to discuss the rest: for under that word it is shown to us first that our Lord Jesus Christ was (in a sense) heedless of himself and did not regard his own person when he went about our salvation. True, it is that he was given to us by God, who (as it is said in John 3:16) loved the world so well that he spared not his only Son but gave him to death for our sakes. Yet, notwithstanding, our Lord Jesus Christ also did give himself. *"No man taketh my life from me,"* saith he, *"but I lay it down."* (John 10:18). For it was requisite that the sacrifice he offered for the remission of our sins should be willing.

You see then that Jesus Christ gave himself to death, and if we demand the cause, surely it was first to fulfill the will and everlasting determination of God his Father. Nevertheless, just as God the Father intended the salvation of mankind, so Jesus Christ showed how dear we were to him, and how precious our souls are in his sight, since he vouchsafed to give himself in that fashion.

Now then, on the one side, the husbands must consider well here what they owe to their wives: that is, that they should be as dear to them as their own lives, at the least. And though they do so, they shall not come to the perfection of our Lord Jesus Christ, but follow him a great way behind. And the wives also, on their side, must bear well in mind that, since it is God's will that in wedlock there should be a figure of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, they err too far if they do not submit themselves where God calls them to it.

And by the way, let us also know that Saint Paul meant to magnify God's goodness toward us and the love that Jesus Christ bears for us in saying that he gave himself for us. Therefore, let us acknowledge that it came of the free mercy of God his Father, and also that our Lord Jesus Christ respected nothing but our miseries when he showed himself so merciful to succor us. If we mind these things, on the one side, we shall be moved to our duty without gainsaying, and on the other side, inflamed to glorify our God and acknowledge, both with our mouths and by our whole life, how much we are beholden to him, seeing he has poured out the treasures of his mercy upon us, insomuch that he has not only discharged us of the condemnation wherein we were and drawn us out of death, but has also vouchsafed to give us his well-beloved Son as a pledge of his love. Jesus Christ has taken upon him the office to be the surety and ransom for us, to the end, to set us clear before God, that the devil also might not have anything against us, notwithstanding that he is our adversary, and we are subject unto him until we are set free from that bondage by means of the said Redeemer.

Now let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us so to know them, that we may ask Him for forgiveness of them, and reform ourselves more and more by amending them. Let us so profit in the

doctrine of salvation that our lives may always be fashioned after His law, according to the measure of the grace which we have received from Him.

And so let us all say, Almighty God, Heavenly Father, etc.

**The Fortieth Sermon,
which is the eighth upon the fifth
Chapter.**

25. Ye husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it.
26. To sanctify it, cleansing it in the washing of water through the Word.
27. To make it to Himself a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle, or anything else, but that it might be holy and unblamable.

We have seen this morning how large a matter of glorifying the infinite goodness of our God we have, if we consider by what means He has drawn us from death and taken us for His children, notwithstanding that we were cursed before in Adam. And now Saint Paul sets forth how we are made partakers of the grace that is purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ: namely, by being washed

and cleansed from our spots, to the end to be dedicated to His service in all holiness.

He also adds the washing of water, because Baptism is a visible figure and record unto us, according to our rudeness and infirmity, to make us the better to perceive the grace of our God, which passes all understanding of man.

Now, first of all, there is the word sanctify, which implies that we should be separated from the world to be knit unto the Son of God. And this doctrine is such that we can never know it enough. For (as I have said before) we must always compare the state wherein God finds us with the state whereto He calls us. For from our mothers' wombs we are nothing but utter wretchedness; we are cursed and detestable before God. Therefore, He draws us out of the dungeon of death: from there does He gather us up to Himself. And by the word sanctify, Saint Paul means the change which ought, as it were, to ravish and astonish us, as often as we consider what we were, and what we should still be if God did not pity us.

But let us come to the meaning that I spoke of. He says that our Lord Jesus Christ has washed us. No doubt, but this is to be referred to His death and passion. For how could we appear before God as it were with our countenances upright, but that our sins are done away by the sacrifice that was offered to set us at one with God? Until we are washed and scoured clean by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are fouler before God than any leper: we are full of all manner of filth and infection; and, to be short, all that we can bring shall but provoke God's wrath, and the virtues that men esteem greatest shall be but loathsomeness. Therefore, we must embrace the sacrifice whereby our Lord Jesus Christ has reconciled us to God His Father,

and His blood must flow down upon our souls to cleanse us from our filthiness and spots.

Nevertheless, it is not without cause that Saint Paul sets us down baptism here—not that we are made clean by that, nor was it his meaning to turn us aside from the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. But forasmuch as we are dull and gross and do not understand spiritual benefits as well as were requisite, therefore Saint Paul, conforming himself to our rudeness and infirmity, has shown us here our washing by a visible sign.

That we may better profit ourselves by this manner of speech, let us consider to what end baptism was ordained and whereunto it serves. When our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to be baptized in His name, did He mean to turn away our faith from His bloodshed? Did He mean that baptism should take the place of His death and passion, to perform the office of our salvation? No, surely. For baptism is but an income and an appendant to the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ; and if it did not direct us thither, certainly it would be but a trifling ceremony. The same is to be said of the Lord's Supper. When we come to partake of the bread and wine, which are the pledges of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, although in that supper we are truly fed with the meat and drink mentioned in the sixth of Saint John (that is to wit, that our Lord Jesus Christ makes us partakers of the truth of His own substance, to the end that His life should be common unto us), yet notwithstanding, if the supper were separated from the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, it would be a thing of nothing.

And indeed we see also what the promise contains: "This is my body," says He, "which is given for you" (Luke 22:19). True, it shows well what our ordinary food is; but therewithal, He sends us also to

His death and passion. For had He not made satisfaction for our sins and shed His blood to wash away our spots, what would it avail us now to have baptism and His supper ministered and given unto us? We see then, that to use baptism well, and according to the institution of the Son of God, we must not set our minds upon the corruptible and transitory element. For what is the water?

If it stands but one day, it will corrupt; and how then can it cleanse our souls forever and give us a purity that shall continue after death, though we ourselves turn to rottenness? If this power cannot be in the water, we must of necessity repair to the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. And indeed the water also is a figure of His blood and of His Holy Spirit. Then let us mark that our Lord Jesus did then wash us when He shed His blood whereby He cleansed us. That is the means whereby we may resort unto God with full trust that we shall be received as righteous and perfect, because He lays not our sins to our charge. Mark that for one point.

Now (as Saint Peter says in his first Epistle), we are washed with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the Holy Ghost. We see then that we have the substance and truth of our salvation in the person of the Son of God. Moreover, we have to note also that He communicates Himself unto us and thereby puts us in possession and fruition of all His goods through the power of the Holy Ghost.

How is it, then, that Saint Paul has made no mention here of the blood that cleanses us and of the working of the Holy Ghost? It seems that he has forgotten the chief thing and busies himself about a matter that is very small. I have told you already that he did not mean to abridge anything that belonged to the Son of God, that we should not seek the whole fullness of our salvation in Him alone and settle our faith solely upon Him; neither did he mean to dispossess

the Holy Ghost of His office. Rather, he had respect for our infirmity. And that is the reason why he sets down the sign by which the thing that (of itself) is too high and too far hidden from our understanding is set before our eyes. That is the essence of what we are to bear in mind.

From this declaration, we may receive a very profitable lesson in general: that is to say, the true and lawful use of sacraments is to lead us directly to our Lord Jesus Christ; otherwise, we make them but idols. Therefore, in popery, baptism is but a charm, because they think there is no salvation except by the water. I will pass over the things they have added of their own devising, for they have corrupted and marred the very institution of Jesus Christ by mingling baptism with the superstitions that are known. But let us suppose they used nothing else but pure water; yet, it is a devilish opinion that baptism is able of itself to save us. For by that means, our Lord Jesus Christ is as good as thrust away, so as they make no account of Him. They stand gazing upon the visible sign and are, as it were, utterly bewitched by it. The same applies to all the rest of their ceremonies.

So much the more, therefore, does it stand us in hand to bear this lesson in mind: that to apply the sacraments to their right use, and to such use as God allows and ordains, they must guide us to our Lord Jesus Christ. Just as in baptism, we see but the water, but thereby we must be lifted up higher to the blood of the Son of God, assuring ourselves that it is not the water that makes us clean, but that it is only a warrant of the washing that was obtained for us when our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified for us.

In the Supper, we have bread and wine. Now, to hold ourselves to that which is set before our eyes would be to withdraw ourselves from Jesus Christ. Therefore, our faith must be lifted up and

conveyed to Him in whom all the parts of our salvation are enclosed. Forasmuch then as we have the whole perfection and fullness of all good things in the only Son of God, it is to Him that we must look up and labor to attain when the sacraments are set before us, for that is their very office. Otherwise, we pervert all, and it is, as it were, a profaning of the thing that God has hallowed for our benefit if our Lord Jesus Christ is separated from the visible signs.

We have also to note that we do not communicate with Jesus Christ but by the grace of the Holy Ghost. Yet, notwithstanding, let us not scorn the helps that our Lord has ordained for us, because He knew them to be necessary for our infirmities. Why are we not taught simply that if we run to our Lord Jesus Christ, in Him we shall find our washing and cleansing? It seems that this ought to suffice us and that the water of baptism is but a veil to keep us from coming unto Jesus Christ.

Yes, but let us consider a little what our own rudeness is. If we had the minds of angels, we would no longer need this outward baptism than the angels do. But as we are earthly, and it is hard for us to attain unto God and the secrets of His heavenly kingdom, it is for our benefit to be helped in this manner. It is a wonderfully gracious goodness of God that He stoops to our infirmity and supplies it with suitable and convenient remedies. Thus, baptism does not hinder us from coming to the Son of God (so long as we are able to apply it to our benefit) or keep our faith from aiming at Him; rather, without it, we would remain here and waver continually as if floating in water. But when we see how water is cast upon the child's head, we ought to remember the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and consider that just as water washes away the filth of the body, so the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is the very cleansing of our souls.

Now, as for the inworking of the Holy Ghost, we know it is likened to water because He makes us partakers of the benefits purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ. Again, because by His grace and working, we are renewed, die to the world, and all our own corruption is put away, that we should come to the newness of life, which is obtained for us by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. All this must we behold in baptism.

Likewise, the Supper must serve us as a ladder to climb up to our Lord Jesus Christ and be thoroughly confirmed that He dwells in us and that we are made one with Him so that He quickens us as the branches of a tree, which take their strength from the root, and as the body of man, which draws its strength from the head. The thing we must mark upon this point is that the sacraments do not turn us away from the trust we ought to put wholly in our Lord Jesus Christ, nor cause us to stray aside, but that being persuaded by them that Jesus Christ suffices, we find all our contentment and rest in Him, to the end also that all the honor which belongs to Him is given unto Him. For it is not for us to deprive Him of that which His Heavenly Father has given Him. Let that serve for one point.

That is also why Saint Paul says, “having cleansed it.” Then he ascribes the dignity of cleansing us to our Lord Jesus Christ. It is true that if He had not been appointed to be the Mediator, He could not have done it, for it is a work altogether belonging to God. But since He was sent to that end and had that office committed unto Him, therefore we are washed by Him. Indeed, it is not only in His human nature that we are washed by His blood, but we must also bear in mind how the Apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews says, “He suffered in spirit” (Hebrews 9:14). How in spirit? That is to say, His death must not be considered as if a mere man died, but we must understand that He is in such wise the Son of God manifested in the

flesh as He has shown His everlasting power. And although there appeared nothing but curse in His death, yet ought we to understand that He worked in that respect with a wonderful power that surpasses all our understanding and all that we can conceive.

You see, then, that Saint Paul has well confirmed what I told you: that is to say, all our faith is but a wavering and vanishing opinion until it is so grounded in our Lord Jesus Christ that it rests wholly there and neither swerves nor staggers one way or another. For as soon as we go about adding one thing or another to our Lord Jesus Christ, surely He shakes us off as unworthy to have any part or portion of His benefits. Therefore, we must leave Him that which is His own: that is, that He alone cleanses us, according also to His mere grace, that we have all righteousness before God.

And Saint Paul's speaking of baptism (as I said before) is to the end that we, considering our own ability, should bend ourselves to confirm our faith by these means which are beneficial for us. For he that rejects baptism as superfluous does well to reveal that he knows not himself. Insomuch that when we have well examined what is in us, it is certain that even the perfectest shall find themselves inclined to unbelief and to many doubts, as you would marvel. They shall see themselves feeble and weak, and subject to infinite temptations. So then, it must needs be that a man is too much blinded by pride when he thinks that baptism can serve him in no stead.

Considering, therefore, what need we have to draw near to God by certain degrees, let us make account of baptism and the holy Supper, and let them always be means to guide us to Jesus Christ.

Again, it is not without cause that Saint Paul matches the word and the washing of water together. For (as I have touched on before), to be so drawn away by visible things that instead of looking up aloft,

we are held down below, is too common a vice, and so deeply rooted in us that it is very hard to be plucked up. God, pitying man's weakness, has at all times (as you would say) come down to them; not by changing His place (for His being is infinite, and His majesty fills both heaven and earth), but by making Himself familiar unto them, as if He were conversant with them (Isaiah 66:1).

And for that cause did He term His temple His house, His dwelling place, and His rest, and said that He dwelt between the Cherubim; however, that was not to harden the people in their superstitions. To what end then? He meant to draw them to Him by little and little, who were unable to come to Him at the first dash. For where are the wings that we should fly above the clouds withal? But our faith must fly up above the heavens. So then, God meant to relieve men's infirmities by ceremonies, sacraments, and such other things.

But the vice, on the contrary part, has shown itself too much; that is to wit, that men have taken occasion to hold themselves down and to entangle themselves in ceremonies; and whereas they should have lifted them up, they have abused them by turning them to the clean contrary. And that is the cause also why the prophets were continually occupied in rebuking the Jews, for they thought that God had dwelt in the material temple.

“How now?” (says Isaiah) “Has not the Lord made all these things? Has He not created both the stones and the wood? And will you shut Him up within them? Does He not fill all the heavens? And the earth is not able to contain Him. And yet, notwithstanding, you would lock Him up in some cabin of your own building” (Isaiah 66:1-2).

Whereby he shows that it is too gross a folly for men to snare themselves in visible figures, ceremonies, and sacraments, and to dwell upon them, whereas they should be led unto God. Now,

forasmuch as this has reigned in all ages, Saint Paul, to redress it, says that we have our washing warranted in baptism under the figure of water. Yes, but yet we must have an eye to the word, says he.

For if there were no teaching to show us that we find the things in our Lord Jesus Christ which are represented to us in baptism, and that it is in His person that we have the full performance and assurance of them, certainly baptism would turn us away from God, and it would be better to have none at all. For it would be an evil thing if we should be withdrawn from the Son of God to give ourselves to the corruptible world.

Therefore, let us beware that we do not separate the sacraments from the word at any time. And hereby we see what Christianity there is in a number of people. For all is well with them if they are baptized; neither do they consider that having the sign without the promise added to it is but a deceitful and unprofitable thing. To what purpose does a seal serve when it is set only to a piece of leather, or to bare parchment, paper, or cloth? Surely, it serves no purpose, for it ought to confirm and ratify some evidence, whether it be of a gift or otherwise.

So it is with the sacraments when they are not matched with the word. A man shall see a seal there, but to no purpose, for he shall see no benefit come of it. And surely, those who continue still doting in their ignorance because they were baptized as soon as they came into the world, show therein too lewd an unthankfulness; for they falsify God's truth as much as they can. If a man should counterfeit a seal, it would be felony, even if it were in a case of five shillings. But those who are so drowned in their ignorance that they cannot abide to be drawn out of it are falsifiers and forgers in a matter more valuable than all the world. For here the case concerns the ratifying of the

things that have been purchased for us by the death and passion of the Son of God, as has been declared already.

Furthermore, let us mark also that Saint Paul speaks of the word that is full of instruction and edifies our faith. For the pronouncing of some words is not enough. If a man should say, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," and think that the virtue and power of baptism were enclosed in those words, it would be an abuse, and truly it could not serve us but for a charm and enchantment.

But the word is the promise whereby our Lord Jesus Christ has told us that He is verily given to us to be our righteousness, to the end that all our sins should be covered and buried in His obedience, and all our spots washed away by His cleanness. Therefore, when we once have this promise and know what things are brought to us by the only Son of God, then is the water matched with the word. And we ought so much the more to note this, because we see how Saint Paul says in another place to Timothy that not even our meat and drink can be sanctified but by the word (1 Timothy 4:5).

True it is that bread, wine, water, and all other things are pure in respect of their creation by God; however, we cannot use them without turning them to uncleanness, and without committing felony against God. But by His word, says he, whereby all things are made holy unto us. And how is that? By teaching us that God shows Himself to be our Father, having a care for us to maintain and feed us; and also by telling us that all these things are given to us to the intent that by using His liberality, first, we should be provoked to serve and honor Him, and to be ravished in love of Him; and secondly, be confirmed in the hope of the heritage that is promised to us. For seeing He makes us feel His goodness beforehand in this

world, it is certain that when we come to the glory whereunto He calls us, we shall then have our fill of the good things, whereof there is but some little taste shown to us as yet. You see then that all the benefits which we receive for the body are made holy by the word. And what shall be done then in things concerning the everlasting salvation of our souls? Is it not much more reasonable that they should be sanctified by the same word?

Now then, to be short, we see that the Papists are destitute of the power of the sacraments through their own misbelief, because they have robbed our Lord Jesus Christ of His power and virtue and conveyed over His prerogative unto corruption and dead things. Therefore, God has so blinded them through His rightful vengeance that they think themselves to have the sacraments still, but yet without the word. For example, indeed in baptizing, they mumble enough, and they make their conjurations and charms, and all in an unknown language; but yet their speaking is rather to the devil than to the godfathers and godmothers that are there to answer for the teaching of the child and for the common instruction of the whole Church.

To be short, in Popish baptism there is not the word, and therefore (as much as in them lies) they have abolished baptism. Yet, notwithstanding, God has not suffered the remembrance of His goodness to be utterly put away, like as in the time of the Law, although the priests were idolaters, and had preached false doctrine, and had imbrued the simple people with many errors and false opinions. Yet notwithstanding, circumcision was not changed in the times of Hezekiah and Josiah, when things were redressed, and God's service set in its right state. And why? Because it had been ordained of God, and it was not lawful to have taken the sign of His

covenant utterly away. But it behooved them to forsake all the income that had been put to by Satan's policy.

Even so, say I now, that in the Papacy there is not the word of God, as in respect of those that pretend to minister the sacraments. And yet we do not refuse to receive the thing that is witnessed unto us in baptism, though we were infected with much filthiness. But we must renounce the cream that was administered unto us, and all the other wicked trash, and retain the pure institution of our Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, let us understand that our baptism, as we received it then, would have been unavailing; nay, rather, it would have been a cursed treachery if we had gone no further than so. And why? For we would have been perverted, and we would have falsified the ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In like case is it with the Supper. In truth, there is no supper remaining nowadays in Popery. For that which they call God's Table is a flat mockery and reproach to the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, because it is knit in an inseparable bond with the Mass, and we know that the Mass is an utter renouncing of the sacrifice that was made by the Son of God. However, although they used some convenient resemblance to the institution of our Lord Jesus Christ, yet for all that, they do not have the Word.

For they mumble between their teeth in their consecrating (as they term it) of the spiritual sacrament, which they have perverted. How do they use it? They prattle over the bread and blow upon it to change it into the body of Jesus Christ, at least to their seeming. Also, they chatter over the Chalice and bear themselves on hand that all is changed there, and that they have made such an alteration as though they were able to create a new world. For it is much more to make a piece of bread become the Son of God than to have created a

whole world. But Satan has so bewitched the Papists that they believe they do all that.

And by what power? Not by God's Word. However (as I said), the Word that Saint Paul treats of here is not a bare sound, but a teaching that edifies our faith, so that we receive the promise that is made to us there and apply it to our use, to the end that in Baptism the water may serve as a warrant of our spiritual washing. Also, when we receive the bread and the wine in the Supper, it is an infallible pledge unto us that we are nourished with the very substance of the Son of God, so that his flesh is our meat, and his blood our drink. You see then that the Word is required.

As touching the huge and confused heap of things that the Papists have in all their ceremonies, and especially as touching their five sacraments, which they have forged and devised out of their own heads: there is no Word of God at all in them. For what promise have they for their anointing, as they term it? No doubt, they can devise enough of it; but where shall a man find any whit of it in the Scripture? In the same plight are all the rest.

As for marriage, it shall be treated of at another time, because Saint Paul makes mention of it later on. However the world goes, we see that the Papists have falsified the sacraments, and they can now receive no profit by them because they have put asunder the things which God had knit together. So much the more, therefore, does it stand us in hand to remember the thing that Saint Paul tells us here: that is to say, that we be well washed in Baptism, accordingly as Ananias says to Saint Paul, "Wash away your sins." And how? By Baptism (Acts 22:16). Even to show that the washing of us with the water which we see is not a vain or deceivable figure, but that Jesus

Christ does indeed accomplish the thing that is shown before our faces.

Therefore, we must bear that well in mind. Yet, the Word is requisite withal, without which all that men can set forth concerning ceremonies is but abuse and deceit, though it be countenanced with the name of God a hundred thousand times.

Furthermore, Saint Paul adds that our Lord Jesus Christ's washing and cleansing of us is to set us as excellent and singularly beautiful before His own face. For the understanding hereof, let us note that we are washed not only through the forgiveness of our sins, when they come not to account before God, but also when we are renewed by the Holy Ghost to fight against all the temptations of the world and to mortify the vices of our flesh and all the froward affections to which we are too much wedded.

You see then that it is a double grace that we receive from our Lord Jesus. That is to say, because He has satisfied for us and discharged us of our debts, we come before God as righteous. For our sins are not laid to our charge, but we are reconciled freely, at least as in respect of ourselves, though it is by the ransom that Jesus Christ has offered. Yet, it is not meant that God will have us left alone still in our uncleanness, but that He also intends to draw us to Himself by His Holy Spirit.

Therefore, it follows of necessity that the foresaid washing should be matched with regeneration. And that is the cause why Saint Paul affirms that Jesus Christ has washed us, to the end that we should excel in beauty, yea, and be unblamable also before Him. Now, whereas he sets us forth to be honorable or glorious (for so does the word which he uses import), he has an eye back to the things which he treated of before, concerning men and their wives. For now he

goes forward in treating of the spiritual wedlock that is between the Son of God and us, of which he will speak yet more at length hereafter.

Therefore, just as a man will love his wife when she is to his liking, so Saint Paul tells us in this text that the Son of God will like well of us if we wear the badges that He gives us: that is to say, first, if upon the knowledge of our own wretchedness, we humble ourselves to seek the pardon that He has purchased for us, to the end that being acquitted at God's hand, we may call upon Him with full trust. That is one point. Also, that we are renewed by His power, so that we do not follow our worldly lusts or give liberty to our wicked affections, but rather fight against ourselves and labor to put away more and more the things that we have of ourselves, that God may reign and live in us, and we be governed by His Holy Spirit, so that our life may be nothing else but a yielding of obedience to His holy will.

You see then what beauty will make us acceptable to the Son of God: namely, not the beauty that is adorned with corruptible deckings, but the beauty which comes by being cleansed of all our stains through faith and by being so sanctified by the Holy Ghost that we may live continually as new creatures. That, in effect, is the thing that we have to bear in mind.

For where it is said that Jesus Christ is given to us to be our redemption, Saint Paul declares therewithal how it is done, namely, because (says he) He is given to us to be our wisdom, righteousness, and holiness (1 Corinthians 1:30). And why to be our wisdom? That all our wits might rest upon Him, and not wander from Him one way or another. Again, He is given to us to be our righteousness, to the intent that there should not be any spot or wrinkle in us when we should appear before the face of our God, but that the blood of Jesus

Christ should be sufficient incorruptness for us. Also, He is given to us for our sanctification or holiness, to the intent that we should be renewed by His Holy Spirit. And whosoever separates these things one from another intends to rend Jesus Christ in pieces, as much as lies in him.

Now then, would we be partakers of the spiritual washing, whereof Saint Paul treats here? Let us ensure that we are holy and that we walk in pure conversation before God. Not that it can be done by our own power or cunning, but all is attributed here to Jesus Christ, and Saint Paul shows that it is His office to make us so excellent. For it is certain that when men will need to come to it with presumptuousness, they may well enforce themselves, but yet they shall be never the nearer; but as for us, we must only suffer our Lord Jesus Christ to work in us by His Holy Spirit. And by that means, we shall be passing beautiful, that He may have delight in us.

And for the same cause also, he says that He may present unto Himself a beautiful and glorious Church. In saying so, he declares that all the outward show and glittering appearance that we can have toward the world is but smoke, and that we must have a purity of heart. He could have said, "Our Lord Jesus has cleansed His Church, to the intent it should be pure and righteous," but he intended to express that our purity or cleanliness is not to please the sight of the world, that we may be praised and commended here below, as hypocrites are, whom men gape and gaze at from a great distance, clapping their hands at them, and esteeming them holier than the angels. Rather, it is much better for a man not to be so precise, but to walk plainly, and if there be imperfections in him, to let them be known, and yet to hold on his full pace still, having the fear of God unfailingly in him all the while.

Wherefore, following this instruction of Saint Paul, let us learn to set ourselves in the presence of the Son of God; and when it comes to the ordering of our life, let us look to Him, knowing that either we must be approved there, or else we gain nothing by being exalted and commended here beneath. Though men may have a marvelous opinion of us, all (I say) shall be but mere vanity and falsehood until we have ruled and framed our life in such a way as if we walked before the face of the Son of God, albeit that in very deed nothing can be hidden from Him. This is what we have to remember further.

Now, when Saint Paul says, “to the end that the Church should be without spot or wrinkle, and unrebukable in holiness,” he does not mean that this is accomplished and performed in us already, nor that it can be as long as we are encompassed with this body. For it is like a prison and bondage, and we drag our shackles after us continually while we are here beneath. And although we have profited well in the fear of God, yet must we always say with Saint Paul that we are held in a miserable bondage and cannot serve God but in part, as it were (Romans 7:24).

However, Saint Paul also meant to show simply whereunto we are called, to the intent we should hasten thitherward all the time of our life. Now then, what is the end of our redemption? Wherefore are we reconciled to God? Wherefore are we made clean by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ? Wherefore also are we sanctified and regenerated? It is to the intent that we might, in the end, be unblamable before God. And what in this world? There will always be much to be blamed and found fault with; but let us be contented that our sins shall not be laid to our charge.

This is well worth noting because there was a group of malicious and lewd people in old times who surmised an angelic perfection in their

minds, as though men might attain to a full and perfect righteousness in this world. That was an abolishing of the covenant that God has made with us, wherein consists our salvation. For therein are two inseparable points: the forgiveness of sins and the new birth, as it is said in Ezekiel 37 and Jeremiah 13, and in effect, everywhere. These things, then, cannot be put asunder, namely, that God does so receive and adopt us that we need still to have our sins forgiven until we are rid quite and clean of all earthly corruption; and again, that we must go forward daily in newness of life.

But there are yet still those incarnate devils who would abolish the remission of sins, insomuch that they dare slander us by saying that we hold men still to their Apsie when we make them believe that they must needs be sinners still. Nevertheless, it is certain that whosoever will be a Christian must needs be a sinner. This is strange at first sight, but yet it is moved so by the Holy Ghost (1 John 1:8). It is Saint John who speaks it, but the doctrine is God's. "If we say," says he, "that we have no sin, we make God a liar, and His truth is not in us." Then, if we imagine ourselves to be so holy that we have no more sin in us, shall God be a liar for our fancies' sake?

Also, if we will be Christians, ought we not to be Christ's disciples? And if we are desirous to learn in His school, is not the manner of praying unto God His Father the principal point which He teaches us (Matthew 6:9)? And what does He show us there?

Forgive us our offenses. We beseech God daily to forgive us the great multitude of our sins. Now, if any man intends to erase this petition of asking forgiveness for our faults, that same person forsakes the school of Jesus Christ. Let us understand, then, that in this world we cannot be without spot or wrinkle, but we must be cleansed little by little, and the vices to which we are prone must be corrected

gradually until we come to the perfection that is spoken of in the first chapter.

To be short, as long as we are in this world, since we have so many sins and vices in us, let us be careful in praying to God to show Himself always merciful towards us and in bearing with us by forgiving our misdeeds. Yet, at the same time, let us take heart to fight against all our vices, to yield ourselves obedient to our God, and to use force and determination to subdue all our passions and lusts until we have gained the upper hand over evil, even though we cease not to commit it. Although sin dwells in us, yet let it not reign in us.

Thus, you see how we must continue daily in this exercise of presenting ourselves before God with all humility, beseeching Him to pardon our offenses, and yet still strive to make progress in the renewal that is spoken of here until we are wholly fashioned like unto the righteousness and glory of our God.

Now, let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us feel them more and more, that we may be sorry for them, and so strive to follow His service, that we may show by our deeds, all our life long, that He has not redeemed us in vain from the tyranny of Satan and set us at liberty, even to serve Him with a free will and to give ourselves wholly to the glorifying of His holy name.

And let us beseech Him also to grant us the grace to so taste the benefits which He bestows upon us, that they may provoke us more and more to glorify Him, and that it may be our continual exercise and study to sing and preach His praises always, to acknowledge how greatly we are bound and indebted to Him. By this means, our Lord Jesus may so reign over us that we may be linked to Him in an

inseparable bond until we come to the kingdom that He has bought so dearly for us.

May it please Him to grant this grace not only to us but also to all people. Amen.

The Forty-First Sermon, which is the Ninth upon the Fifth Chapter.

28. Men ought so to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself.

29. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but rather he nourishes and cherishes it, as the Lord also does the Church.

30. For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

Seeing that the Holy Scripture exhorts us to be kind-hearted, meek, and patient towards one another, and sets us down the example of God, who is reconciled to us in the person of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and shows us also that Jesus Christ spared not Himself but demonstrated the love that He bore us, and the care He had for our salvation in that He gave Himself to such a hard and bitter death, it must needs be that our hearts are harder than steel if they are not

softened by it. And yet, notwithstanding, all these exhortations cannot suffice us, due to our willfulness and corruption.

God, therefore, to put us to greater shame, sends us back to the order of nature, as if it were said that although we had never heard any word of God's mouth nor had any teaching by Holy Scripture, yet each of us ought to enter into himself and consider his own state, for that will be enough to hold us convicted without any other witness.

And that the heathen men could tell us full well, who, having neither belief in God nor any religion, could nonetheless say that the wild beasts do not make war one against another. For one wolf does not eat another; the bears and lions that live abroad in the wild woods have a certain instinct that holds them in order, so they do not hurt one another. And yet they have no discretion as is among men, but they have, as it were, a natural instinct that drives them to love one another, so that each of them lives quietly with his fellow.

Now then, must it not needs be that men are altogether out of order and despise God and nature, seeing they live like dogs and cats, as they say, and every man is like a wolf or a fox to his neighbor, so that there is nothing but craftiness and malice or else utter cruelty?

That is why God tells us that we are all of one flesh and of one kind. And Isaiah uses the same reason to persuade us to help our neighbors and to have pity and compassion on them if they stand in any need: "Thou shalt not despise thine own flesh" (Isaiah 58:7). For the furthest stranger in the world is never the more separated from us for all that, but both he and we spring from one fountain, and we ought to acknowledge him to be our image. Therefore, whoever disdains any man surely forgets himself too much, and he does not know what he is, nor is he worthy of the honorable degree in which God has set him.

And why? Because he perverts all order. Now, if this reason ought to take place in general, much more ought men to be deeply moved when they are reminded of what they are, especially seeing they are linked together in a much closer bond. As if a man should say to a father: How now? If you are so far out of love with your son that you are unwilling to see him and disdain to talk with him, and he can find no means to come to atonement with you, what a cruelty is that? For he is your flesh and your blood. And how then can you be so blinded in your excessive mood as not to consider that God has given him to you as though he had come out of your own person?

And likewise, to a son it will be said: How now? Is it right that you should be born into the world, have room and place among God's children, and in the meantime forget your father who begat you and by whose means God sent you into the world?

Now the holiest bond that God has set among us is the bond between man and wife. That is why Saint Paul says that a man cannot love his wife without loving himself; and, conversely, if he despises his wife or hates her, it is the same as if he falls at odds with himself. And is that possible?

Previously, he had exhorted husbands to do their duties by looking to the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. He had stated that the Son of God had given Himself to death to wash His Church; so that, although it was poor and miserable and full of filth and uncleanness, He suffered that which was necessary for our salvation. He left us, moreover, a record of the grace He purchased for us. In baptism, we have a visible token that the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is our washing and cleansing. Can we think upon all these things and not be moved to some gentleness?

Yes, if we consider first of all that we are but wretched worms of the earth and (to be short) that there is nothing in us but utter misery, so that we may well be called vermin, carrion full of all corruption and loathsomeness, and afterward compare ourselves with the Son of God. Should there then be any such pride in us as to esteem and commend ourselves and to tread others under our feet? Now, if this applies generally to all men (as I said), what shall it be between man and wife? For the knot that God has knit between them is such that the husband is, as you would say, but half himself, and may no more separate himself from his wife than the wife may separate herself from her husband. Each of them must regard their own state, as shall be declared in the end, and has been partly declared already.

The husband is indeed the head, but the woman is the body. And whereas the head has preeminence and sovereignty over the body, it does not, therefore, follow that he should hold scorn of it or be glad to have it shamed or reproached. For does not the honor of the head extend to the whole body? But now, forasmuch as husbands are not sufficiently moved by the reason that is taken from our Lord Jesus Christ, Saint Paul brings them back to their origin.

And since the heathen folk and unbelievers were acquainted with marriage and had given judgment on it, therefore we need no Holy Scripture (says he) to teach us in this matter, for the ignorant souls who had only natural understanding and walked as their native wit directed them knew that the wife is a part of the husband and that there exists an inseparable bond between them, so that one ought not to forsake the other unless they will tear themselves to pieces. Seeing that the blind wretches perceived this, what a shame it is for those who are enlightened by God's Word and have been taught familiarly as household folk, just as a father has his eye upon his children, to be ignorant of it.

Seeing (I say) that God speaks so familiarly to us, as it were, mouth to mouth, showing us His will and telling us our duty, must it not need to be that we are worse than the infidels and much more grievously condemned than they if we continue hard-hearted or stop our ears lest we might receive the advice that He gives us?

Therefore, let us mark well that, seeing Saint Paul has set forth our Lord Jesus Christ as an example and told us that He is so given to us, it is right (considering how we are linked unto Him) that we should show ourselves willing to follow Him and fashion ourselves like unto Him. This means pitying those who are in distress, bearing patiently with the vices and infirmities of our neighbors, and relieving those who are in need, if we can conveniently and have the means to do so. Let us think well upon that.

Again, forasmuch as mention is made here of man and wife, let those who are married consider what damnation is prepared for them if they are not moved and touched to the quick by the things that are told them here. Namely, that on the one side, the heathen folk shall rise up to give witness against them on the last day, and that (on the other side) the order of nature teaches them what they ought to do. If they do not live in concord and friendship, as is shown to them here, they do (as it were) willfully withstand God, utterly forgetting themselves and becoming worse than brute beasts.

Furthermore, let them know also that, forasmuch as marriage is a figure of the holy union between the Son of God and all the faithful, the same ought to hold them in greater reverence. Although many contentions may arise, they ought to subdue them, let them lie as dead, and consider that since our Lord Jesus sits over them, it is to show that wedlock was blessed in such a way by God the Father at the first, that He Himself also ratified the same blessing by His death

and passion. Indeed, He reconciled us to God so that the husband may perceive, as in a living picture, that he is one with his wife, but in such a way under the obedience of God, that both of them ought to serve Him with one accord until they come to Him, cleaving to Him thoroughly in all perfection.

Now, although such warnings ought to be of great force among us, very few are touched by them accordingly. And the world sees it. For let a man look into all households one after another, and where shall he find such friendship as may resemble Jesus Christ and His Church? Nowhere. But the man and his wife are rather ever jarring and disagreeing.

And if there happens to be some foolish affection, yet there is no fear of God, and the least occasion in the world will be enough to set them at odds, so that they forget all that is contained here. Or, to say the truth, they never once think of it. The love that is between them is led and provoked by their lusts, not grounded upon any knowledge they have of discharging their duty. The husband does not consider how he ought to bear with his wife, how he ought to guide her in the fear of God, and how he ought to love her as a helper allotted to him for his ease so that he might walk as he ought to do. Nor does the wife humble herself to her husband or bend her wits to please him because she perceives that she is expressly given to him to be a furtherance, not a hindrance, to him.

There is no talk or inkling of all this. If all is well considered, the common and most ordinary state is that, in every house, a man will find devilishness, cursing, banning, blasphemy, swearing, spitefulness, and harming. And although some woman is a fiend towards her neighbors as well as toward her husband, yet if her husband had any wealth or goods by her, he must take her part

without discretion and maintain her quarrel, whether good or bad. One may see that this perverseness reigns nearly everywhere.

Again, every man complains of his wife, saying, "I cannot live with her. She is a mad beast. There is nothing in her but pride and peevishness; there is nothing in her but forward stubbornness. I cannot speak a word to her, but she pays me back with four for it." Now surely, such as men make their wives, such they have of them. For were there no more but this that I spoke of—namely, that men, as it were in spite of God, maintain their wives' wrongful quarrels—ought not God to yield them their deserved hire and make it rebound back upon their own heads? Whatever I say, if a man marks well every man's ordinary trade of life, he will find that there may be a sort of foolish love and a lot of excessive affections, but as for well-ordered friendship, such as depends upon God and is grounded on His Word, hardly shall he among a hundred houses find one where the husband and wife are so well qualified.

Yet notwithstanding, we are inexcusable if we do not profit from this doctrine. So then, every one of us must fight against his unruly affections. If a man does not have such a wife as he could wish, let him understand that God intends to try his patience by that means. Let him consider well that he behaves worse toward our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Husband to whom all of us are married. Therefore, let him not be rigorous toward his wife, seeing that he himself deserves to be so humbled.

To be short, let every man so mind this doctrine, that when the husband does not have all things in his wife that he desires, he may think thus with himself: "Yet am I bound unto her, and I am not only bound unto my wife but also unto God, who is the master of marriage, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is a mirror and lively

image of it unto us. Therefore, I am bound to do my duty toward her and both to love her and to bear with her, even though there be vices in her."

Yet it is not meant that the husband should foster and feed his wife's vices. For as we must warn and counsel one another, there must not be any such closeness or linking together that if the husband sees anything amiss in his wife, he must at least tell her of it, rebuke her, and labor and endeavor to bring her into the right way as much as he can possibly.

But yet, howsoever the world goes, as long as we are married, this stands continually: we cannot change the order that our Lord has set, even to be inviolable. Therefore, we must not pass over what the persons are, insomuch that although a woman has too rough and sharp a husband, and such a one as deals overly harshly with her, yet she must always consider that he is her husband, and that when God matched them together, He allotted her that portion because she was worthy of it. Let her also examine her sins, that she may pray to God to take away that rod and deal more gently with her.

Then, just as the wife must on her side continue the bond of marriage and submit herself without respecting what her husband is, so when the husband does not have a wife to his liking, let him think likewise: "My wife does not do her duty; I cannot live with her." But yet, does wedlock endure still? Who ordained it? God. Then, if I forget my duty, seek revenge on my wife, or become obstinate without regard for what belongs to my charge, it is not against a mortal creature that I shall bend myself. When the husband overshoots himself in that manner, surely he fights against God and endeavors to annul what is inviolable by nature.

So then, let every one of us put this doctrine better into practice on our own behalf, and let not only married folks but also all men in general understand that we cannot estrange ourselves from one another and become unkind, merciless, and impatient toward one another. If we do so, we must be like witless creatures who have no reason or regard for where they come from or the purpose for which we live in this world. This is the essence of what we need to keep in mind.

And if we regarded well the Prophet's reason, *surely we would be more moved by this exhortation that is set here: "No man ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it" (Ephesians 5:29). If every one of us took time to consider the care we have for our own person, how tenderly we cherish all parts of our body, even the smallest toe, how carefully we ensure nothing is lacking, and how we are provident in all respects, so that if any member is ill at ease, we endeavor to remedy it and maintain our health—if we each thought through this thoroughly, then it would surely be a good lesson for us to do likewise to our neighbors, that is to say, to all men.

Much more consequently, the fathers to their children, and the children to their fathers, the husbands to their wives, and the wives to their husbands, and so forth mutually, according to how it has pleased our Lord to link us in a nearer bond, as I have said before.

If anyone replies, "Hush, he or she is not myself," I answer: then it must follow that you are no man. For, as I said before, God's creating and maintaining of us are with the condition that we should all be as one body. For though there are many fingers and many sinews in a man's body, that is no reason why they should not all be one thing, nor is it any reason why one member should not succor another as

well as itself. It is unnatural for the body to start dividing itself into factions; it is impossible for it to do so.

Then, if every one of us is so wedded to his own profit that, in the meantime, he disdains others through pride or is cruel, so that if he sees all the miseries in the world, he has no compassion to relieve them, nor can he find it in his heart to bear with anything or forgive it—is it not a sign that we have forgotten our own nature?

Wherefore, to the intent that we may fare the better by this doctrine, let us weigh well these words of Saint Paul: that never has any man hated his own flesh, but that every man nourishes and cherishes it. Do we need a schoolmaster to teach us this? Does God need to send His angels from heaven, or do we need to take much pain to learn this art or skill? No, we are already too much given to it by nature.

Since this is so, every one of us bears his own evidence recorded against himself, and his own indictment is already framed; there shall need no long examination before God. For the more careful that men have been for their own bodies, the more they have looked out for their maintenance, and, to be brief, the more signs they have shown of loving themselves, the more grievously shall they be condemned before God because they have not done the same toward those who are their own flesh, even if they were the most unknown and from the furthest country in the world, as I said before.

And if this is general for all, what shall become of it when the son sets himself with all outrage and stubbornness against his father, refusing meekness and resisting governance by him, even utterly shaking off the one whom he ought to serve, even to the death? Also, when fathers on their side use nothing but bitterness toward their children, or govern them in such a way as to provoke them to impatience; when husbands deal so roughly with their wives that it

utterly discourages them and casts them into sorrow, leading them to loosen themselves and fall into all manner of lewdness; when women likewise are stiff-necked and cannot be brought to good order; I say, when these disorders are among us, let us assure ourselves that there is no need for any other record to condemn us than the care that each of us has had for himself, in that we have been mindful of our own welfare, and have labored earnestly for it while, in the meantime, breaking the bond that our Lord set among us.

Each of us has drawn alone by himself, forgotten all duty of loving-kindness, and would, if he could, have made a new world for himself. Truly, there is no man of such ability that he can forgo the help of his neighbors; yet we are loath that our neighbors should dwell with us or even be counted in the number of men. There is no man who would not reign alone like a lord. But this unkindness and lewdness are sufficient to show that we are not worthy to enjoy the benefits that God deals to us in this transitory life. For since we are too much wedded to it and mind it more carefully than we should, we are so guilty that no man can open his mouth to reply or to make any excuse for himself.

And Saint Paul, having told us what we ought to know and to judge of our own nature, returns again to what he had touched upon before. That is to say, those who profess themselves to be members of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ ought to be persuaded by His example to live quietly, friendly, and agreeably with their wives. "No man," says he, "loves himself, but he loves his wife also." Truly, God has ordained wedlock in such a way that the wife must be as the body of her husband. Therefore, if a man loves himself, his wife must be matched with him, or else it will be a monstrous love. It is a thing that men ought most to abhor, that the thing which is most holy in a man's life should be utterly debased.

Seeing it is so, he that loves himself will love his wife. For we are of his flesh, we are of his bones (Ephesians 5:30). Here, Paul touches upon a matter he did not speak of before. When he set down the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, it was by alleging that He spared not Himself but shed His blood to wash us from our filthiness and uncleanness. We were then defiled and stained before God, and our Lord Jesus Christ found the means to bring us into His favor again. And how? Even by His own bloodshed.

But here, he presents another reason to confirm the matter further: that we are bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh. In so saying, he helps us understand that when men do their duty, it is to their own benefit. For thereby, they may taste the inestimable and infinite grace of God, in that every man, according to his degree, does in his marriage represent the union between themselves and our Lord Jesus Christ.

The thing, therefore, which Saint Paul intends is, yet again, to remove the hardness of our hearts by showing us that we cannot enjoy the grace that is purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ unless we live in friendship together, according to the image thereof, which we have in the love that He bore us in His death and passion, which surpasses all the love that we can have for one another.

However, before we go any further, let us see why and in what sense Saint Paul says that we are of the bones of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of His flesh, and members of His body. For He is descended from Adam's lineage (Romans 1:3) and is called the seed of David. And although He was conceived after a wonderful manner in the womb of the Virgin, yet He took man's flesh upon Him and became very man. He says that He is the Son of Man to show that He has taken on a nature that is common to us, wherein He has made Himself familiar

with us. And indeed (as the Apostle says in the Epistle to the Hebrews), He is not ashamed to call us brothers (Hebrews 2:11).

But now, let us come to what is said here. It seems that Saint Paul would make Jesus Christ, as it were, the root of mankind, so that we should descend from Him, for he calls us His offspring. But we have to mark that, forasmuch as our Lord Jesus Christ was shaped from the seed of Abraham to perform the things that were promised, and that He could not be the Mediator between God and us unless He was of our nature (for He could not have amended our misdoings, through which we were bound to endless damnation, unless He had clothed Himself with our body and had also a soul to present Himself in the person of all men), it was necessary for our Lord Jesus Christ to be our flesh in our body.

Therefore, we may say that He is of our bones and of our flesh. And why? Because He is descended from Adam's race, as I said before. But, however the case stands, He was conceived marvelously by the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless, there is another aspect to consider. Despite all this, He does not cease to be the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45), as Saint Paul terms Him, by making a comparison between the grace whereby we were set again and the deadly fall whereby we were all lost.

He says that the first Adam, by his transgression, made us enemies to God, so that we have no access to Him and would be thrust back if we approached Him—and that justly. For where sin reigns, there must necessarily be, as it were, an irreconcilable division. God, being the fountain of all righteousness, cannot match with our iniquities and corruptions.

Then there is also a second Adam, who comes to remedy all, that is to say, our Lord Jesus Christ. And how is He the second Adam? For (as

I told you before), it is not meant that we should be so bold as to think we can approach Jesus Christ as though we were linked to Him by our own nature; that is done in the power of His Holy Spirit and not in the substance of His body.

Behold then, Jesus Christ has become truly man and has taken upon Him the very same human nature as ours. Yet, it is not by nature that we are His flesh and His bones (for we are not descended from Him concerning our own substance), but it is by His divine power. Therefore, we must come to this point: that we are bone of the bones of our Lord Jesus Christ because we are restored in Him and have in Him, as it were, a new and second creation.

And Saint Paul (as we shall see hereafter) has an eye to the origin of Eve, for she was taken out of Adam's substance and shaped from one of his ribs. Now then, are we restored by our Lord Jesus Christ? If we consider our first birth, whereby we are brought into this world to be mortal men, we cannot say that we are of His flesh unless we are of the seed of those who were before us. But whatever we are, in that seed we are accursed. It is true that Adam was created in the image of God, but that image was defaced by sin, so we are not worthy to be counted among God's works.

The same horrible condemnation is pronounced with His own mouth, where He says that it repents Him that He made man (Genesis 6:6), as though He disclaimed us all because we do nothing but infect the earth and are not as worthy to be counted among His creatures as worms, lice, fleas, gadflies, and all other vermin of the world. That, then, is the benefit we have by Adam; and as often as it is said that we are of his seed and of his flesh, it serves to show us that there is nothing in us but a gulf of curse.

Now, hereupon, if we come to our Lord Jesus Christ, we are restored again (as Scripture speaks of it), and we are made new creatures in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17). You see then, that it is by the power of the Spirit, and not by order of nature or by any common fashion, that we are of the bone and flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ. The reason we are members of His body is that God His Father has ordained and established Him as our head. However (as I said before), this is done by a secret power that we comprehend only by faith.

Thus, both these things agree very well: namely, that Jesus Christ is of our bone and flesh because He has taken our human nature upon Himself and clothed Himself with it, without which we would have no alliance with Him. For if we cannot attain to the angels, how shall we attain to Him who is the sovereign head of them? But whereas He has come to us in such a way that He has vouchsafed to be knit in the bond of brotherhood with us, that is done especially when He works by the power of His Holy Spirit, so that He is our head, and we are gathered together in Him. We have a heavenly state, whereas before, we had nothing but of the earth. Consequently, having nothing in us but corruption, now we are lifted up on high and made children of God by the grace that is spoken of here. Whereas previously, we were heirs of His wrath, which we hold from our father Adam when we follow his nature, because we are all lost and perverted in him.

This, in effect, is how the two things are to be agreed, wherein there seemed to be some diversity. Indeed, if we do not have this, what would become of us? How miserable would our state be? I have shown already that if any man looks well at what is in himself, he shall find nothing there but matter to separate him from God. Therefore, until we are of the substance of our Lord Jesus Christ, God must needs hate and abhor us and not know us to be of the number and company of His creatures.

Now, it remains to see how it comes to pass that we are of the bones of Jesus Christ and of His flesh. For He is in heaven, and we are here beneath on earth. Again, when we are begotten, each of us is begotten after the order of nature; he has his father and his mother to come from, and they are of the same race that he is. How then are we of the bones of Jesus Christ? It is not in respect of substance, for if we look upon our own flesh, neither the skin, nor the bones, nor the gristles that we have come from the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rather, it is in respect that the curse which we bring from our mothers' wombs and is spread over all Adam's lineage is taken away by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, along with that, He has shed forth the grace of His Holy Spirit upon us so that we are enlightened by it. Therefore, it is as a quality (as men term it) and not a substance. Every man shall descend from such lineage, and God lets the common order continue which He appointed at the beginning, namely, that men beget one another from issue to issue.

But in the meantime, Jesus Christ renews those whom God His Father has chosen and those who are members of His own body, ridding them of the corruption they had taken from Adam. Afterward, He gives them such power that each of them feels by faith that he is under the head that is set over us, that we are all gathered together in Him, and that His life is given to us, so we should no longer live to ourselves or to the world, but rather that He should live in us, as Saint Paul says of Him (Galatians 2:20).

You see then that Jesus Christ does not need to come down from heaven to make us members of His body, nor to diminish His own flesh to make us grow out of Him and be shaped by Him. For all is done by the wonderful power of His Holy Spirit. We do not draw

anything from the flesh or from the body with which He once clothed Himself, for that is in heaven, to the intent that we should be fashioned like unto the glory that is now in Him. Yet, for all that, He works in such a way that we have all our strength continually from Him.

Just as trees draw their flowers, leaves, and fruits from their roots, and just as the body of a person feels its strength flow down from the head, so do we feel the virtue and force of the union that is between us and our Lord Jesus Christ, while He continues still in His full state all the while. Neither does that hinder us from enjoying the inestimable benefit that Saint Paul magnifies so much in this text. Moreover, let us bear in mind that it is significant when we are inwardly stirred up to do our duty, for thereby we taste the grace of God concerning the salvation of our souls.

The matter at hand here is that men should live amicably and harmoniously with their wives. When a husband considers the things spoken of here, he ought to be provoked, not only to discharge himself of the bond in which he is bound to God and his wife, but also to think thus with himself: This is such a state that, although it is corruptible and serves only for this transitory life, yet God has set it before us as a living image wherein I see that Jesus Christ is my head, that I belong to Him, and that not only am I His, but also He is mine, so that His life belongs to me, and, to be brief, I am as if I were a member of His body.

Seeing then that men, in doing their duty towards their wives, and wives also in obeying their husbands, may behold how they are joined unto Christ, and that they do the things that belong to the heritage of the kingdom of heaven, must it not be that we are too unthankful if we do not consider how our Lord Jesus Christ labors by

all means to win us and make us walk under His yoke? Moreover, He not only allures us by gentle and loving means, so that we should take courage to serve Him and to do the things that our calling and state require, but also draws us to Him. Even in this world, in the transitory and earthly things, He sets forth the everlasting salvation that is prepared for us in heaven, which was bought so dearly for us by the blood of His only Son, to the intent that, in the end, we should be partakers of the effect and virtue that proceed from it.

And now, let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to vouchsafe to reform our hearts unto goodness, so that we may seek nothing but to serve Him and to yield ourselves wholly to obeying His holy will. May it please Him, therefore, to bear with us in our weakness, so that we, having received pity and mercy at His hand, may in the end be able to stand up before His face. And so let us all say, Almighty God, heavenly Father, etc.

The Forty-Second Sermon, Which Is the Tenth Upon the Fifth Chapter

31. "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and be joined to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh."

32. "This is a great secret. Yea, say I, in Christ and in the Church."

33. "Therefore, do ye so, as every man may love his wife as himself, and let the wife fear her husband."

God disposes His works in such a way that we have occasion to behold a wonderful wisdom in all His doings, and to receive such instruction by them as may be to our benefit. For example, in what Saint Paul alludes to here: namely, that the woman was drawn and taken out of the substance of the man. For God could well have created Eve in the same manner that He created Adam, but He chose otherwise, and commanded the woman to be shaped from Adam's rib.

And why was this? It was so there would be such a union between man and wife that the man might think, "This is my flesh, this is my bone," and the woman, "Whence has God given me life? Whence has He shaped me? Even from a rib that He took out of the man." We see then that God did not without reason use such diversity in creating man and woman. It was to the end that it should be continually remembered in marriage, so the husband may know that he breaks the whole order of nature if he is not united in good agreement with his wife, and the wife likewise if she does not submit herself quietly to her husband, acknowledging him to be her head.

But Saint Paul applies this further to the union between our Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. For (as was declared on Sunday) marriage is a figure of the knitting together that is between us and the Son of God. And therefore, he exclaims, saying, "It is a high mystery," that is to say, a secret which we ought to take great heed of. "Yea," says he, "in Jesus Christ and in His Church." There are, therefore, two things to be noted here.

The first is that we see how God, even from the beginning, has knit man and wife together in an inseparable bond. The second is that He

intends to lead us yet higher: that is to say, that forasmuch as there is nothing in ourselves but all manner of wretchedness, we should be knit to the Son of God, who is the fountain of all goodness, and from Him draw our spiritual life and have all our strength and power from Him.

And because Saint Paul, having cited this text from Moses, adds that this mystery is great, in that the Son of God has made us bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh, some have imagined it to be a prophecy of what has already been said. But there is no reason nor color of reason why they should think so, and it is evident that the text would be ruined if it were not taken simply as it lies: that is to say, that God intended to warn man and wife of their duty and responsibility. Let that serve for one point.

The Papists have grossly erred in this case and betrayed such ignorance that even little children could mock them for it. Because the word *sacrament* was an ordinary word in old times to mean secrets, mysteries, and all manner of high things worthy of admiration, the word *sacrament* was wrongly inserted here. "It is a great sacrament," says Saint Paul, meaning it is a great mystery or secret.

There is no doubt about this, no more than when he says, "It is a great sacrament that God was manifested in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). It is a great sacrament that the Gospel was preached throughout the whole world, and that the wretched Gentiles and unbelievers were united with the offspring of Abraham. So, in this text, the infinite goodness of our God is a "sacrament," that is to say, a high thing and well worthy to be admired by us.

Hereupon, some people have been so foolish as to say, "Then is marriage a sacrament, just like Baptism or the Lord's Supper." And

because they misunderstood the word, they thought there was something to be found here, just as in Baptism, where the water signifies that we are washed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. And in the Supper, the bread and wine are warrants and pledges of His body and blood. They were of the opinion that as much is done in marriage.

Now, when we see that such foolishness has crept throughout the whole world, and that these great doctors needed to relearn their basic lessons because they did not understand even the things that they ought to have judged by their natural reason, we see that there is great vengeance from God upon those who have corrupted true religion and mixed their own fancies into the Word of God. Therefore, we must thank our God even more for drawing us out of such dungeons.

And seeing there was such horrible confusion in those who claimed to be the lamps and pillars of the Church and were regarded as such, as God so thoroughly dulled their understanding, we should not be afraid to separate ourselves from their company and their synagogue. And seeing that He has granted us the grace to be no longer mingled with them, let us continue on our course and walk forth soberly. For this is a warning to keep ourselves in awe, that as true scholars of God, we may distrust ourselves and not go searching for complexities, but handle the Holy Scriptures with such reverence that God may guide us to the true understanding of it by His Holy Spirit.

But now let us come to Saint Paul's intent. It is certain that he alludes to the record of Moses to show that the man should bear with his wife as with a portion of his own body and the one half of his own person. The cause, then, why Eve was shaped from one of Adam's

ribs is that God meant to establish such a concord between man and wife by that means, as there should be no bond in the world so strong as that. The child ought indeed to honor his father, for he is his seed, and he is his blood, but the bond of wedlock is preferred before it. And by whom? It does not come from men's desires, but according to what Adam had spoken, and as God had pronounced the sentence, so it is an invariable order that man should be knit unto his wife. And in such a way that, if he should need to forsake one or the other, his father should not be so near to him as his wife.

Yet, this is not to say that God meant to break that yoke and to give children leave to be stubborn against their fathers and mothers when they are once married. God does not change any of the things He has ordained. Therefore, a man who has a living father or mother ought still to be subject to them, without ceasing to do his duty, according to what the scripture teaches, and as nature also instructs every man to do. For we have it ingrained in us, and we cannot wipe it out. Thus, you see that married folk do not cease to always be subject to their fathers and mothers. But here, the case stands upon comparing one with the other. As if one should say, "If a young man should forsake his father and hold him in contempt or disdain, or be stubborn against him, or show him no reverence, would not the world say he was a monster?" Now, if God has commanded in His law that stubborn and disobedient children should be stoned (Deuteronomy 21:18-21), and that such villainy should be rooted out of the world, what a grievous thing is it when a man forsakes his wife, or a wife her husband? Surely, it is an outrageous crime. Then, if it is intolerable for the child to rise up against his father, no doubt the bond of wedlock is yet much holier and more expressly commended to us by God.

Since this is so, it behooves every man to see that he discharges his duty. For if a woman has a froward disposition, always quarreling, and refuses to be subject to her husband; or if the husband is churlish and cruel, scorning his wife, they are not merely doing wrong to a fellow human being, but to God, who is the author of marriage and has ordained it under such conditions as we hear of here. So, you see what we have to remember upon the first part of this text.

But this extends even further: that is to say, that every man should love those who are connected to him by means of God. As, for example, a man having only his wife is bound to acknowledge that God has united us all together. And when He created Eve, the mother of all men, out of Adam's side, it was for the purpose that the same unity should extend everywhere, and we should know that He wills for us to live in such concord that none of us should separate ourselves from others. No man ought to be so cruel as to say, "Tush, she is not my wife." But we must consider that, since it is our Lord's will that there should be a general concord among all men, and that every man should think himself bound to his neighbors, it is as though mankind were composed of two sorts—male-kind and female-kind. Then, we are all bound to one another.

True it is that matrimony, as I said, is reserved for itself, but still, men are bound toward women to succor them, seeing that our Lord has demonstrated this even in the first creation. And women also must behave themselves soberly among men, even if they are not their husbands.

Also, there is further, that they shall be two in one flesh. Hereby our Lord Jesus Christ shows us that the man who is married ought to hold himself contented with his own wife, and the woman likewise

should rest wholly upon her husband, so as they do not let their lusts roam abroad, nor give themselves the liberty to change anything in the order which our Lord has set and will have to stand in force to the world's end.

Men have so overstepped their bounds in all ages that they have forgotten both kindness and all kindness. They have not only despised God and His Word but also forgotten the condition under which they were created in the world. They did not even know that which natural reason could have shown them. They would not have come to that point if they had not been overcome by their lusts like wild beasts. Surely, there is no such rage as the reigning of inordinate lusts in our flesh when they are not repressed by the fear of God.

From this came the fact that in many countries it was lawful for men to have three or four wives apiece, as it is still permitted today among the Turks. The Jews also, despite having the Law of Moses, would put away their wives for every small occasion that came into their heads. If a woman was not fair enough or rich enough, she was divorced straight away. True, our Lord had provided for it, but only in part. And indeed, our Lord Jesus Christ declared that God had regard for the hard-heartedness of that people, which was past amendment or taming.

Therefore, when any of them wished to put away his wife, he was bound to give her a testimonial stating that she was no harlot but simply did not please him, and he chose rather to sustain that shame than to keep the faith of marriage. For in putting away his wife after pledging his faith to live and die with her, he showed himself forsworn and unfaithful. Thus, it was a reproach to them to put away their wives in such a manner. Yet, for all that, divorces were common. And our Lord Jesus says that in doing so, the Jews were

backsliders from the law of God, and therefore He tells them, "It was not so from the beginning" (Matthew 19:8).

They took that liberty because it was said that a man who did not feel content with his wife should give her leave to depart. But our Lord Jesus tells them, "It is true that God granted it to your fathers; however, that was because He had to deal with them as with wild beasts." So then, He granted them more than was lawful. But still, know that although He did not punish them with rigor, it was not meant that you should therefore take occasion to do even worse. Therefore, keep your eyes always on the beginning, when God created Adam and shaped Eve out of his side. He said at that time, "The two shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

He who takes two wives is worthy to be cut asunder, and he who takes three is worthy to be cut into three pieces, for it is all one as if he would defy God and nature, seeing that God has imprinted a mark in the person of man and wife, to the intent that wedlock should be kept as it ought to be. Wherefore, if a man disannuls the ordinance of God, does he not deserve to be wiped out completely?

The thing we have yet still to bear in mind is that a man must bridle all his senses and not let his eyes wander here and there, lest his mind be carried away when he sees a woman who seems fairer to him than his own wife. And let the wife also not look upon any man but her husband, except with simplicity. Let them always think, "We are but two, yet one flesh. I cannot be a whole person except I am with my husband." And let the husband also on his side think, "I am but half a creature when I am apart from my wife, seeing that God has joined us."

Thus, you see what we have to remember upon this saying, that the two shall be one flesh.

Now, thereupon Saint Paul concludes, "Therefore let the husband love his wife, and let the wife honor or fear her husband." For the word that he uses signifies "to fear," but it is taken here for the reverence and subjection which the wife owes to her husband. Here we must note the difference between the duty of the husband and the duty of the wife. God does not command the husband to fear his wife, but He commands him to love her. There is yet more in the woman: that is to say, she must be subject.

If someone asks, "How then? Does the husband owe no honor to his wife?" It is not possible to love rightly and with a pure heart where there is no reverence. For a man will never love someone he despises. The world indeed calls it love, but (to speak properly) if I love a wanton person or a jester because he makes me some sport or pleases me, that is not true love. There must be a linking together and an agreement in good manners, so that a man always holds a good estimation and opinion of the one he loves.

The same is true between a man and his wife. When I think to myself, "She is a part of me, she is half of my person," is it possible that I should despise her? The man, then, must honor his wife, yet not by subjection so that he would not always remain in his place as the head and have the governance of his wife. That is why Saint Paul requires nothing from the husband except that he should love his wife.

In another text to the Colossians, he adds that husbands should not be harsh with their wives (Colossians 3:19). For if there is love, surely the one who loves will bear with many faults and infirmities of his friend. And if we do it for one another, how much more should the husband do it towards the one whom he knows to be given to him by God, that he should love her as his own body (Ephesians 5:28).

Therefore, Saint Peter expressly says that men must have discretion and wisdom to help their wives' infirmities by bearing with their frailty (1 Peter 3:7).

If a man takes the notion in his head that his wife is unstable or untrustworthy, or, to be brief, if he despises her under the pretense that she is not a man, it is an improper regard of her. For though she is frail, he must consider that the same is true of himself, and thus bear with her as he would want others to bear with him. This is how we should interpret what Saint Paul speaks of here. He does not mean that a man should be infatuated with foolish love, as often happens.

Last Sunday, I mentioned examples of those who pretend to be passionate about defending their wives' quarrels in public and yet are devils to them at home. So then, the love that Saint Paul speaks of is a proper and good affection that the man bears toward his wife because he knows that God has knit them together as though He had joined them with His own hand and said, "Live you two together in peace and concord."

Again, regarding the wives, because they are often reluctant to bear the yoke that God has laid upon their shoulders, in the other text Saint Paul reminds them that God is the author of marriage and that He has set down this condition: that the wife should be subject to her husband, accept his leadership as her head, and show him reverence. For a woman will always find enough in her husband to despise him. If he has any goodness, she may try to diminish it, finding reasons to ask, "Why should this man have preeminence over me? He is no more capable of ruling than I am." We know how prideful both men and women can be, for everyone thinks themselves more capable than the other.

Wives, therefore, would gladly govern and have the mastery. For that reason, Saint Paul tells them that they must remain in the state that God has placed them in, that is, in subjection. They must not scrutinize their husbands to see if they are worthy of authority and superiority. Instead, they must consider what God has ordained and obey it without complaint or argument. They must not question why this or why that, seeking an excuse to free themselves from obeying God and His commandments. Therefore, we must listen to Him, and every one of us must receive His commandments without opposition. This is how we should understand what is said here concerning the fear and subjection that wives owe to their husbands.

This doctrine is clear and straightforward enough on its own. Yet how is it practiced in the world? People would gladly offer excuses of ignorance to avoid performing their duty, saying that this is too high or too difficult to understand. But when it is said that men ought to love their wives, does it require any special interpretation to explain what the Holy Spirit meant? No, the matter is evident enough, and every man knows within himself that he understands it well enough.

Yet, if you look at the love that men have for their wives, you will scarcely find one in a hundred who would not abandon it, and who does not entertain some wandering thoughts in his head. The women also are so fickle that they would gladly be unmarried twenty times in a year. And why does this happen? It is because they do not regard God, who is the author of marriage.

Truly, even if we had no Scripture at all (as I said), yet the most brutish man in the world would reverence marriage. And why is that? Because it was our Lord's will to leave that record engraved in human hearts. His intention is to show that since even the most ignorant and brutish understand that man and wife should join in

good love in their respective roles, we should pursue that path. Now, we have teaching and exhortations added to spur us forward so that we should not flatter ourselves in our vices. And yet, what are we the better for it?

It is seen daily that men quarrel with their wives and wives argue with their husbands. It is an ordinary matter in every house, and there is constant cursing and bickering. In short, there is nothing but bitterness and contempt. Now, where these things are present, it is impossible for the man and wife to have any access to come before God. For how should our approach to God be, that we might receive mercy and be under His protection, and that He might care for us? It is by prayer.

Now, Saint Peter says expressly, "When a man is oversharpe and rigorous to his wife, and the wife also on her side is stubborn, so as he is not able to manage her by any means, nor she willing to submit herself as she ought to do: then their prayers are hindered" (1 Peter 3:7). As if he should say, "Wretched folk, what are you thinking? Are you not very miserable, seeing that the gate is shut against you and you cannot call upon God?" Now then, what will become of us when we cannot entrust ourselves into the hand of our God? It were better for us to be drowned a hundred thousand times.

Seeing then that God loves the quietness of both men and women, commanding us to live in peace and concord, and moreover bids them come unto Him, saying, "When the husband governs his wife quietly, and the wife on her side does her duty too: then if you call upon Me, I will hear you" (Psalm 34:15). Seeing that our Lord calls us to Him for our own benefit and welfare, when He commands us to call upon Him with a pure heart, must it not be that we are possessed

by the devil and have lost all sense if we do not accept such a good and profitable condition?

Therefore, let us mark well that if the husband intends to discharge his duty, and the wife likewise, both of them must keep their eyes on God and acknowledge their marriage as ordained by Him, assuring themselves that they did not meet by chance, but that the Lord joined them together. The husband must recognize his wife as a companion, receiving her as part of himself, and the wife must yield the degree of honor to her husband that belongs to him in respect of God, submitting herself to him as to her head. The best way to listen to God and to obey Him in this case is to regard Him as the author of marriage and to be ruled by Him in all things.

Let not the husband trouble himself too much by focusing on his wife's faults, saying, "What shall I do with this troublesome person?" For we know that reproaches are grievous and offensive. Likewise, let not the wife look only at the faults in her husband, saying, "He is a devil, and cannot be won by any means," but let her hold to the condition she is bound to and not ask why or how God has put her in subjection. Let her not exalt herself by setting up her pride against God for placing her in subjection to her husband.

Now let us come to the second point and speak more about the great mystery, which Saint Paul magnifies so much here. "This is a great mystery," says he, "Yes, I speak concerning Christ and the Church" (Ephesians 5:32). By these words, it is easy to discern that Saint Paul did not mean to call marriage or wedlock a sacrament, for he clarifies himself afterward. As I told you already, the only thing treated here is the expression of God's inestimable goodness. Instead of merely teaching how we are united to our Lord Jesus Christ, Saint Paul

himself seems astonished and overwhelmed, confessing that he lacks the words to express God's grace in uniting us to His only Son.

I have already explained how we are members of our Lord Jesus Christ's body, and how we are of His flesh. It is not that we are taken out of His body, for we come from the lineage of Adam. But we live by His own substance, according to the saying, "His flesh is our food, and His blood is our drink" (John 6:55). By this, He means that we live in Him, spiritually.

Indeed, we have a common life to talk and walk with all men, which does not proceed from the special grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, even the natural movements we share with the brute beasts proceed from Him, as it is said, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). Saint John goes even further, saying that "the Word" (which is to say, our Lord Jesus Christ) was given to quicken men, in that God gave them the special privilege of having understanding and discretion (John 1:1-4).

But when the spiritual life we have with the Son of God is spoken of, that is something beyond nature. Though we have no worthiness or excellence when we come out of our mothers' wombs, there remains some imprint and image of God. Yet, we are so cursed in our own nature and so miserable that we are even called dead. That is why our Lord Jesus Christ says, "The hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God" (John 5:25). And Saint Paul says in the second chapter of Ephesians, "When we are reformed by our Lord Jesus Christ, we live, whereas before we were dead in our sins and transgressions" (Ephesians 2:1), because we inherited this from our father Adam.

Therefore, the manner in which we are of Jesus Christ's flesh and bone is that we are grafted into His body, just as Saint Paul also uses

the same analogy of grafting. "Like a branch grafted into a tree receives sustenance from the stock, so we must be grafted into our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 11:17). It is true that we do not yet bring forth good fruit of ourselves, for His purpose here is only to show that just as a branch withers when broken off from the root and left alone, but thrives when grafted into another, so it is with us. That is to say, if we continue as we are by nature, then we are in death, being separated from our Lord Jesus Christ. But if we are incorporated into Him, and it pleases Him to communicate Himself to us, then we truly feel that bread does not nourish us more when we eat it, nor does wine strengthen us better when we drink it, than we receive life and strength by the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now then, that this is a high mystery, every man is able to judge for himself. When we have debated as much as we can and examined the matter in our hearts, is there any of us that can fully comprehend how we are knit to our Lord Jesus Christ and made one with Him, so that we can assure and guarantee ourselves that we will, by this means, be partakers of God's glory? Can we confidently say that even now, we live in our Lord Jesus Christ, according to His saying, "*Be of good cheer, for as I live, so shall you also*" (John 14:19)? Can this enter into such a small space as our sensual reason? No, surely not. And that is why many people cannot accept the idea that we are the flesh of Jesus Christ and bone of His bones, contenting themselves with their own imaginations. This is an abasing of God's grace, which Saint Paul was not able to fully express, but rather showed us that it ought to leave us in awe.

Many may hold a shallow and, as it were, a heathenish imagination that we are somehow connected to our Lord Jesus Christ—namely, that we are saved by His grace. But Scripture goes further. Even if there were nothing more than this statement, "It is a great mystery,"

we should beware of limiting it by our own fancy, for doing so would be like calling Saint Paul a liar. All who despise this spiritual union that we have with our Lord Jesus Christ are essentially denying that there is any such secret or wonder-working power of God, as is spoken of here. The Holy Spirit uses such language to humble us and, afterward, to exalt us again.

Therefore, we must, on the one hand, confess that all the wisdom and wit we possess fail us in this regard. And then, on the other hand, we must rise up again because we hear our Lord Jesus Christ calling us to Himself and telling us that we are so knit to Him that He has nothing of His own that He does not make common to us, nor anything of which He will not have us partake.

So if we have contrary thoughts in ourselves, and it comes into our minds to say, "How is it possible that our Lord Jesus Christ, who is in heaven, should nourish us with His own substance, so that His body is our food, and His blood our drink?" If such thoughts arise, we must counter them with what is said here: that "*It is a great mystery.*" We must rebuke our own foolishness and rashness in attempting to measure what is infinite. Our Lord shows us that when He has knit us to His only Son, He has performed such a high and profound work that it surpasses all our capacity to understand.

Seeing that this is the case, let us always conclude that although we may find it a strange and incomprehensible matter, we must rest upon what God Himself has spoken—especially when He says that He will work in such a high fashion that we will be utterly astonished at it.

Wherefore let us learn generally from this text, that all the benefits which we receive by the means of our Lord Jesus Christ, to attain the heavenly life, proceed from the same fountain of God's

incomprehensible wisdom. It is not for us to be so foolish and presumptuous as to say, "I will know what it is," or "I will see what pleases me." Let us restrain ourselves from such presumption, for it will make us unworthy of the mystery of faith because it is a matter that involves a great secret. The starting point, if we desire to benefit from Jesus Christ and to partake of all His grace, is to understand that God's work in our salvation is a great mystery or secret, according to the text I previously quoted from the Epistle to Timothy.

"It is a great mystery," says Saint Paul, "that God was manifested in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). For what a great distance is there between God and man? We are but worms and rotteness, and God's majesty is so high that no one can truly comprehend it, nor conceive even a hundredth part of it in thought. We must be in awe and wonder at it. Seeing, then, that God has so closely linked Himself to us—that He is the true *Emmanuel*, as He is named in Isaiah (Isaiah 7:14)—and that the things which seemed to be so far apart are united in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us conclude that there are only mysteries and secrets in all the grace we receive from God, especially in our being incorporated or grafted into our Lord Jesus Christ.

He has taken our nature upon Himself, clothed Himself with our flesh, and desires that we be grafted into Him as into our root, to be quickened by His Spirit and to partake of His life, so that He has nothing particular to Himself alone, but wills that all be shared with us. Will we then receive our Lord Jesus Christ with all the benefits He brings us, and will we, through Him, overcome all the temptations that confront us? We must fully taste and embrace the things that the Holy Scripture tells us and places before us, giving them reverent credit by acknowledging that God works in us through

our Lord Jesus Christ. This acknowledgment should content us and lead us to forsake all our own natural understanding.

Now let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God, with the acknowledgment of our sins, praying Him to vouchsafe to pardon us in such a way that we may be rid of them. May He govern us by His Holy Spirit, so that we may endeavor to live according to His holy will and reform our whole life according to His holy commandments. May He bear with all our infirmities until He has wholly reformed us, bringing us to the perfection for which we now strive to attain.

And so, let us all say, "Almighty God," etc.

The Forty-Third Sermon, which is the first upon the sixth Chapter.

1. Children, obey your fathers and mothers in the Lord, for that is right.
2. Honour thy father and thy mother (which is the first commandment with a promise),
3. That thou mayest fare well and be long-lived upon the earth.
4. Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but nurture them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Our resorting unto sermons must be, not only to hear the things that we knew not, but also to be stirred up to do our duty, to be awakened when we are slothful and drowsy by good and holy warnings, and to be rebuked if there is any stubbornness and malice in us. And that is the thing which Saint Paul tells us here, which every one of us ought to have engraved in our hearts.

For it is something that all of us understand by natural reason, that children ought to be obedient and subject to their fathers and mothers, and also that there should be such gentleness in those that have children to govern, as to use them mildly and not to give them cause for frowardness through their excessive harshness. This, I say, is well enough known to all people, yet the warning that is given here is more than necessary. For who is it that fully discharges himself of the things that are told us here by Saint Paul?

Fathers and mothers oftentimes spoil their children by indulging them too much, making them so pampered that they lead them to utter ruin. Again, sometimes they are so heated and angry with them, without measure or discretion, that they lose control of themselves and fail to deal with them fairly, as they ought to do.

As for children, although it is sufficiently proven to them that they ought to be obedient and subject to their parents, does not the world see how they despise them, and as it were, hold them in utter scorn? There are hardly any who hold themselves in awe and show proper reverence to their fathers and mothers, considering that God has bound them to it, and that they ought to do it.

Therefore, seeing that Saint Paul exhorts the faithful to things that are so common, we may perceive the stubbornness of our own nature. For these are such things as we ought not to need reminding of, but every one of us ought to be inclined of ourselves to do our duty without warning.

God's Spirit then rebukes us for being so fleshly, that although we know a thing to be as righteous as can be, yet we cannot give ourselves to it. Wherefore, let us endeavor to fight against our own vices. For it is not enough for us to have learned what we ought to do; but also, since there is much fighting and striving within ourselves against it, once we know God's will and what is righteous and fitting, each of us must examine ourselves, and beware that we do not draw back completely. Instead, we must imprison and bridle ourselves, and bear in mind that it is not enough merely to have been instructed and taught, unless we also thrust ourselves forward with force, subdue all our wicked affections, and strive to bring it to pass, however difficult it may be.

Now let us come to what is said here. "Ye children," says Saint Paul, "obey your fathers and mothers." It is true that (as Paul mentions afterward), God has in His law set down a more general term: that is to say, *honor*. For God meant to make us understand that children ought to yield both subjection and reverence to their fathers and mothers. For someone might yield obedience and subjection, yet still have a spiteful, proud, and lofty heart, and despise the one whom he serves.

But when our Lord commands us to *honor* our fathers and mothers, He means to include reverence, and moreover, a fulfillment of all duties: that is, children should understand that they are bound to serve their fathers and mothers, to be subject to them in all things to the utmost of their power. You see, then, that God generally wills children not only to be obedient and subject to their parents but also to yield them reverence, and further, to perform their duties toward them, assisting them and providing them all the ease and comfort they can, knowing that they are not their own, nor at their own liberty, but that they owe all service to those by whose means they came into the world.

Saint Paul says expressly, *in the Lord*, meaning that there is a double bond to hold us in this subjection. First, there is the order of nature; and again, God tells us that He has set us in this earthly life with the condition that fathers and mothers should have superiority over their children. The heathen will not escape being found guilty, even though they did not have the law to direct them, nor were taught the doctrine which we hear now through the mouth of Saint Paul. So much so, that if a child was stubborn against his father and mother among the heathen, he was as it were abhorred, and there was neither great nor small who could not judge of it.

Neither shall they escape God's hand, seeing that they are condemned already in this world. For (as I said before) it is a thing that is engraved in the hearts of all of us and is as clear as can be. However, besides that which we know naturally, God adds His own will for a further and more ample confirmation, and tells us that He has so ordained and appointed it, and therefore we must submit to it. Then, since we perceive that God holds us under the authority of our fathers and mothers, it is certain that we are so much the more without excuse if each of us does not submit himself with meekness and humility.

And those who have followed the order of nature among the heathen and blind souls shall be our judges. For who stirred them up to it? They had not the helps that we have, yet they performed their duty. That is the thing which Saint Paul intended in saying that children ought to obey their fathers and mothers *in the Lord*.

Now he adds that "this is right." As if he should say, no man will gain anything by striving in this matter. For we know that man's mind is so full of pride that there is no man but would want to be a lord. As for subjection, it irks men to yield to it until our Lord has framed us to it by His Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). And for that reason, the Spirit of God is called the *spirit of meekness and gentleness* (Colossians 3:12). Why? Because pride makes men like wild beasts and puffs them up like toads, so they cannot humble themselves.

Saint Paul, therefore, perceiving that this vice is so rooted in our nature, and seeking to redress it, shows that it is right and that it becomes every man to employ himself in it. Although there is some stubbornness in us that will not allow us to be subject to our superiors, this rightful order of God must outweigh it. For when he says, "it is right," he brings us back to God's authority, as if he should

say, "Since God has spoken the word, there is no further debate about it. Men must stop their mouths, and since God has commanded it, men must obey, assuring themselves that His will is a sure and infallible rule from which it is not lawful to stray, neither to the right side nor to the left."

And this is a good warning. For we see that even when men are willing to do well and have some good zeal toward it, yet each of us will be wise in our own conceit. And when it comes to governing ourselves, we want to bear sway above the Word of God. As men are so foolish and presumptuous as to continually attribute something to their own wit, it is all the more important for us to take heed of what is said here. That is to say, we must have the discernment to perceive what God commands and allows, as well as what He disallows.

Have we a warrant of God's will? We must be content with it. And if He once says, *This pleases me*, then it is right, even if we do not perceive the reason for it. Again, if there is some difficulty, let us not ask why, nor let us reply against God when He condemns the thing that seems not to be utterly evil in our eyes. Let us beware of such malapertness and devilish rashness, and let us follow what Saint Paul tells us here: that is to say, that all that God has spoken by His Word is right, and we also must avow it to be so without gainsaying.

For the true proof of our faith and obedience is that when we think this or that ought not to have been commanded or forbidden, yet we accept it as good and beneficial because God has spoken it.

Now, hereupon Saint Paul quotes the commandment of the Law, "*Honor thy father and thy mother.*" And again, he adds further that it is the first commandment with a promise. As if he should say, God intended to bring us by all means to the subjection which we should yield to our fathers and mothers. It ought to suffice us that it is

acceptable to God, but seeing He also allures us by gentleness, and does not frighten us with authority and force but promises to prosper us if we serve our fathers and mothers, this ought to make us more willing in our subjection.

Therefore, Saint Paul, having shown us that we must be subject to our fathers and mothers unless we wish to be rebels against God, bending our will against Him and turning all right and order upside down, adds that we shall be too hard-hearted and willfully stubborn if this promise of God does not move us, whereby He graciously intends to induce us to do what He wills. Surely, if we are not moved, yea even softened, by this promise, it can be said that the devil reigns wholly in us and possesses our hearts.

His statement then is that it is a commandment with a special promise, unlike any other commandment in the law. The promise is that we shall live long upon the earth, and in prosperity, because God will bless us if we honor those who were the means by which we came into the world.

On the other hand, Saint Paul shows what the duty of fathers and mothers is toward their children: that is, to treat them gently. Not to pardon them altogether or to lay the bridle in their necks and let them do what they want, but to deal so mildly with them that they are not discouraged (as it is said elsewhere), but instead are nurtured in the fear of God. By this word *nurture*, Saint Paul means that they should deal gently with them and show themselves loving toward them. However, this word is also seasoned with *nurture* and *correction* of God. Thus, on the one side, there is *nurture*—that is to say, kindness and gentleness—and on the other side, chastisement and discipline, so that children may be kept in awe, and not be allowed to become wanton and unruly, but rather brought up in the

fear of God, knowing that He has not left them without oversight or law, but has given them overseers to rule their lives. This is the essence of what Saint Paul teaches us here.

Now, to gain a fuller and more certain understanding of this text, we must first of all remember that, properly speaking, we have no father but only God. It is true that, at times, He is called the Father of our souls and spirits (Hebrews 12:9). Yet, even concerning the flesh, the honor and dignity of bearing the name of *father* do not belong to any mortal creature. For it is God who fashions us, as it is said in the book of Job (Job 10:8-12). Is the seed of man (which is but corruption) able to fashion a body in which the excellent workmanship of God appears? No. Therefore, we must understand that since our bodies are all records of God's wonderful power, He alone deserves to be held and accounted as our Father.

Yet, for all that, those who beget us and by whom we are brought into this world are also our fathers. By what title? Because God has vouchsafed to make them partakers of the honor that belongs to Himself alone. And here we are reminded that in striving against our fathers and mothers, we make war against God. For He has imprinted His mark upon them, and their title shows us that God has set them in His place. Therefore, we must hold it as an undoubted truth that in honoring our fathers and mothers, we are rendering to God the service He requires of us and which we owe Him. Conversely, if we despise our fathers and mothers, holding scorn for them and refusing to fulfill our duties toward them, we are expressly offending God. This is not only because we are breaking the commandment of His law but also because we are despising His majesty, of which our fathers and mothers bear a certain mark, as I mentioned before.

This is why there is such rigorous punishment in the Law against those who are disobedient to their fathers and mothers. "*Whoever curses his father or mother shall surely be put to death*" (Exodus 21:17). If children are so far out of line as to set light by their fathers and mothers, God will have them removed from the world, for they are like monsters and an infection that defiles the whole earth. Furthermore, He will not require a long examination. If the father and mother once give this witness, "*Behold, this our son will not be corrected,*" then let him be stoned to death immediately (Deuteronomy 21:18-21), and let the world be rid of such an infection.

God says this to show us that it is a grievous and horrible crime when children cannot find it in their hearts to submit to their fathers and mothers, for it is as if they are determined to abolish the entire order of nature. Therefore, that is the lesson we must begin with to profit well from this doctrine.

And the same also is the reason why Saint Paul says that we ought to be subject to our fathers and mothers *in God*, meaning thereby that the thing which the pagans and unbelievers conceive darkly ought to be much better known to us. For the pagans did not well understand how to give a reason why children ought to yield this subjection and obedience to their fathers and mothers, except that it appeared there was a certain equity and right that required it, and that this was reason enough. But as for coming to the foundation of the matter—that God is our Father, and that He requires this subjection at our hands—that they could not do. And why? Because they did not know whether there was a God who created and fashioned them or not.

But we, who know that God is our Creator and Father, and that this belongs to Him, and that He has reserved that honor and dignity to

Himself, and again, that He wills fathers and mothers to be partakers of that privilege, must necessarily conclude that we ought to obey our fathers and mothers, yes, even *in God*, as though He Himself received from us the honor and service we give to those who represent His person and majesty here (as I said before), which is despised in the stubbornness and disobedience of children toward their fathers and mothers.

Here again, I must remind you of something I mentioned before: that when God's will is once known to us, we must bridle ourselves and not take liberty to reply against God, asking why God likes this or dislikes that. Instead, we must accept His will as the sovereign righteousness and equity. And where shall we find His will? In His Word. For when Saint Paul intends to prove God's will, he does not soar in the air above the clouds but brings forth and cites the things contained in the Law. So then, to rule our lives rightly, let us apply our whole minds to seek out the things that are pleasing and acceptable to God, as He reveals them in His Law, in the Prophets, and in the Gospel. That is all our wisdom. And let us beware of the boldness I said was diabolical, which is to be wise in our own conceits and to say, "How can this be? Why should that be?" But let us simply obey our God.

Furthermore, here is also a promise. Indeed, a question might arise here: why does Saint Paul say this is the first commandment with a promise, seeing there is also a promise attached to the second commandment of the Law? "*I, the Lord, show mercy to a thousand generations, to those who love Me and keep My commandments*" (Exodus 20:6). Here is a much larger promise than the one mentioned in this text. So how does Saint Paul say that this is the first commandment with a promise?

The answer is simple: God's promise of mercy to a thousand generations in the first table is not restricted to that commandment alone but extends to the whole Law. As if He should say, "There is nothing better for you than to submit yourselves to My will, for otherwise, you are in a cursed state. And to prove this, do not all the things you hope for come to you from My free goodness alone? Now, for My part, I will not fail those who serve Me and seek to honor Me, but they shall continually find that I am a merciful God."

Herein (as I said before) the Lord's intent is to draw us to obey His commandments and ordinances with a willing heart. Therefore, this is no special promise confined to any one commandment alone. But the promise that Saint Paul speaks of here—"*Honor your father and mother, that you may live long upon the earth*" (Ephesians 6:2-3)—is peculiar to that commandment alone. As if he should say, "God is so gracious that He will cause those to prosper through His blessing and favor who behave humbly and meekly, yielding due reverence to their fathers and mothers."

Therefore, Saint Paul rightly says that this is the first commandment with a promise, namely with such a promise as is special and applies to no other commandment but this one.

Now let us come to the promise. God says that those who obey shall live long. Hereupon we may gather that this present life is not to be despised because it is a record of God's fatherly goodness and love towards us. And, in truth, it is no small thing that God vouchsafes to create us and to set us in this world, not only to live here as brute beasts but also to reign as His children and to have dominion over all other creatures.

It is said that His goodness and mercy extend even to asses, oxen, and horses. And why? When He makes the earth bring forth hay for

cattle, does He not therein show wonderful goodness towards the poor brute beasts, as I said before? But there is a far different reason concerning us. How do we enjoy all the goods and riches with which the earth is full? God has poured out His bountifulness in that the earth brings us forth such a variety of fruits. Yea, we cannot look up to heaven, high or low, without perceiving a thousand (yea, infinite) records of God's goodness.

To what end does the sun shine, but to give us light? Are not the moon and the stars ordained to serve us? And yet they are as noble creatures as may be, insomuch that the heathen people worshipped them, thinking that some godhead was enclosed within them. Again, when we look downward, we see what good things God has appointed for our use. Although He feeds the beasts, yet in the end, all redounds to us, as Saint Paul speaks of them, saying: "*Does God care about oxen?*" (1 Corinthians 9:9). That is to say, when God vouchsafes to succor the beasts in their need by His providence, He does it for man's sake.

Seeing then that God has harbored us in such a way as to make us possess so many good things, besides creating us in His own image and likeness, is this not an inestimable benefit? So then, this present life is not to be held in scorn. But there is yet more: God has set us here as if in a journey to come to a further matter, that is, to the everlasting rest and to the heritage of heaven. If this present life guides us to that end—that is, to the glory which God has prepared for us, and which was purchased for us by the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ—then we see that it is a great benefit and worthy of our esteem.

It is true that there are so many miseries in our life that it might seem better never to have been born than to linger continually as we

do. Therefore, if a man considers how wretched life is in itself, and to what a number of griefs, anguishes, pains, and vexations it is subject, surely he will say it would be better never to have come out of our mother's womb than to enter into such a sea of confusion as we see upon earth. Nevertheless, when all is considered, we shall find that God's goodness exceeds all the chastisements He sends us for our sins. This life should of itself be nothing but happiness and rest, if God did not make us reap the fruit of our sins and transgressions.

Yet, notwithstanding, when God afflicts us now and then with barrenness, or kills our vines with frost, or drowns our crops with rain, or parches them with drought, and, to be brief, when He sends famine and scarcity—these are as rods of God, to show us that instead of His former liberality, He is now against us. Likewise are the plague, war, personal diseases and sicknesses, harms, reproaches, and all other things that cause us grief or displeasure. They are all chastisements by which God reminds us of our sins and faults, with the purpose of humbling us so that we might know what we are, and finally, to make us ready to forsake the world more willingly.

However, when we have gathered all the afflictions, troubles, and griefs that we see into one heap, yet we still see (as I said before) that God causes us to feel the taste and savor of His goodness in that He gives us sustenance in this world. And this present life is always a record of His love. For proof of this, we would fail at every temptation and every vexation that might befall us in this world, were it not that God gives us some consolation to mitigate His rigor. For He always shows such mercy that we might understand He does not intend to deal with us according to our deserts, but that in His chastisements, He leaves room for His mercy, as He Himself says in Habakkuk: "*In wrath, remember mercy*" (Habakkuk 3:2).

Not without cause, then, does God promise prosperity in this life to those who obey their fathers and mothers. It is true that Moses meant the land of Canaan because he was speaking to the people of Israel, who were to be settled there. Therefore, in respect of that people, it was a particular lesson. Yet, even today, none of us can set our foot in any place without being, after a sort, harbored there by God. Therefore, we must all hope for the blessing that was promised in old times to the Jews, of bringing them into the land that was bequeathed to them for their inheritance.

A man might raise other questions here. For we see some who are disobedient to their fathers and mothers, yet they still live, while others who are of a good, gentle, and tractable nature die young. It may seem that God annuls the promise He made in His law. The answer to this is as follows: God does no wrong to those whom He calls out of this world to take them to Himself, nor does He diminish their state.

To make the answer clearer and easier to understand, let us note that things do not always turn out the same regarding temporal promises (as in the example). God promises to prosper all who serve and love Him with singleness of heart. How does this unfold? We see many poor believers who, in the eyes of the world, are wretched and despised by all. So, where is God's promise?

As I said, we must always keep in mind that God gives us whatever He knows is expedient for us. There are two sorts of God's promises, and we must distinguish them. Some promises relate to the salvation of our souls—His receiving us in mercy, His pardoning our sins, His revealing His will to us, His giving us power to withstand Satan, and His strengthening us against all temptations by holding us up with a strong hand so that we never falter. In all these things, we must

firmly believe that God will perform whatever He says, far more than we can understand or conceive. God will surpass all our wit and capacity in things concerning the everlasting salvation of our souls.

But there are other promises meant for easing us in our miseries during this life. In these, God may "portion out" His blessings to us, sometimes allowing us to face hunger and thirst alongside them. Yet this does not impeach His faithfulness. For, as I said, He knows what is best for us, and we must not take His promises precisely word for word in these cases. We should not interpret them according to the bare letter, expecting God to fulfill them exactly to the utmost syllable. No, we must always remember that He knows what is for our benefit.

Now, if He takes someone early out of this world, it is because He knows it is for their welfare and salvation. So, you see, God does not falsify His promise when He takes away those who have obeyed their fathers and mothers in the flower of their age. Surely, no one discharges their duty perfectly, such that they could escape fault if God were to sift them with rigor. Yet some will have done their duty in a way that pleases God, and He may still take them out of the world because He sees it is not for their profit to remain here longer. As for other reasons hidden in His secret wisdom, we must cast down our eyes because we cannot attain them.

Nevertheless, we must understand that if there were no hope of a better life, those who are taken away early from the world would be greatly lamented. But knowing that this world is merely a pilgrimage and this life only a journey leading us to the rest of heaven, we must not complain when God delivers us from the many miseries that besiege us here on earth and takes us up to the perfect happiness that awaits us above.

However, whatever the case, let us bear in mind what is said here: When God holds us for a long time in this world, it is as a pledge of His fatherly love toward us. Therefore, we ought to be the wiser in reckoning the days we live while we are in this life. For the same reason, Moses also says in his Song that it is great wisdom when people can skillfully count their days and consider the shortness of their life, so they may hasten to heaven (Psalm 90:12).

But we must also count our days for a different purpose, which is not contrary but agrees well with the first. When we reach the age of discretion, knowing that God has created us to glorify Him in this world, we must, on the other hand, consider how we have dishonored Him. We should continually reflect on the time we have spent, day by day, and month by month. When we come to the year's end, let us think to ourselves: "Behold, God has bound me to Him in many ways. How have I acknowledged the benefits I have received from Him all my life long? Can my mind fully grasp them? Alas, no, not even the hundredth part of them."

Therefore, we must review all our years and days, reminding ourselves to love and honor God when we see how greatly we are indebted to Him for sustaining us for so long and for His patience in bearing with us. For if we compare the faults we have committed, even the smallest fault demands that we should be confounded before Him. Yet, He continues to extend His goodness toward us.

Thus, let us take note of this doctrine: this present life binds us to God because He allows us to taste His fatherly goodness by sustaining us and extending His generosity toward us. Furthermore, He turns His corrections to our benefit, showing us that He desires us to become accustomed, in this world, to knowing Him as our Father. He gives us His Word and Sacraments, assuring us that

placing us here for a time is meant to draw and gather us to Himself in the end. Therefore, if we consider to what we are called and the purpose for which we were created—to pass through this world and be taken into the inheritance of heaven—we will see that this present life is indeed worthy of esteem when we reflect on the benefits God imparts to us here.

It should also be noted that we will never experience true prosperity or well-being in this world unless we are in God's favor. Thus, in saying, "that thou mayst live long and fare well," it shows that merely having long life is not enough; we must also feel His blessing with it.

The wretched unbelievers, who fail to grasp the point I am making—that God pours out His riches upon us so that we may know Him as our Father and be further confirmed in trusting His goodness and love—may well live to great ages. But what do they accomplish in this world? What is their life? It is certain that all they have will lead to greater condemnation. The riches they enjoy, together with their delights and pleasures, will provoke God's wrath. All the goods they enjoy will serve only to further increase their wickedness and render them more damnable. It is indeed a wretched life if we cannot perceive any token of God's goodness in it.

Moreover, we must proceed further to the second point: those who are disobedient to God and their superiors find no rest. Instead, a worm gnaws at their conscience, and they are constantly in turmoil. In short, experience shows that there is no well-being in this life unless we are blessed by God. Though this difference is not always seen outwardly, the faithful know well enough that God provides them with all that they need. Thus, God promises not only long life but also His blessing. As if He were to say: "You shall not live merely to linger here beneath or to bring upon yourselves greater

damnation, nor to gnash your teeth in torment and affliction, but to taste My goodness. Though I do not exempt you from the troubles, burdens, and griefs of this world, you will always have some cheer, so you may feel that I have not forgotten you. I consider you as My children, and even your sorrows and griefs will work for your benefit and well-being."

Whereas the devil labors to keep you from coming to Me and to turn you away from perfect felicity, I will draw you to it through the afflictions you face in this world. Therefore, the thing we must remember is that being filled with the benefits God bestows upon us in this world and living at ease is not all we should desire. Rather, we must know that it is God who causes us to prosper, that He gives us life and will sustain us in it, providing all that is necessary and needful.

Let this truth be well imprinted in our hearts.

Now then, if we are desirous to enjoy this promise of God, let each of us look to the discharging of his own duty. Indeed, I cannot, as of now, go through all the things that are enjoined here to children and to fathers and mothers, and therefore I will reserve them for another time. Yet, for a short conclusion, let us understand that God allures us to our duty by showing that He seeks nothing else but our welfare and benefit. This is to the intent that we should, with a frank and free heart, receive the yoke that He lays upon our shoulders.

Although it may be an irksome thing to be subject to those whom God has appointed to be superiors over us, when we have first condemned ourselves for it, let us nevertheless yield to what He says and utters. Let us assure ourselves that He seeks our welfare and would rather win us by gentleness than by rigour, and let that make us more obedient. Also, generally, since we see that all superiorities

are from God, let us understand that we cannot oppose them without lifting ourselves up against His majesty and defying Him. Contrarily, if we bear subjection willingly, we may assure ourselves that it is an acceptable sacrifice to Him and not doubt that our labor will be in vain in serving Him.

Not that God will recompense us by His promises as though we had deserved anything at His hand, but He will do it out of His abundant grace. As I have already declared, we are bound to obey Him in all things that He commands. We must not think He is beholden to us for it, nor should we believe we can bind Him to us by any means. Although we are bound to Him, as we are wholly His, He, out of His overflowing goodness, vouchsafes to bless us and make us feel His favor when we reverently follow the things that He ordains in His Word.

That, then, is the recompense we ought to hope for from God's hand, not as the Papists say, "God promises us, therefore we deserve it." They persuade themselves that God is indebted to them because He has bound Himself willingly. Yes, but that is out of His free and undeserved goodness. We must not fall into such errors but understand that God, being in no way bound to us, still vouchsafes to win us by gentleness, so that we might serve Him with freer minds and more cheerful hearts. Thus, He calls us to Him by all means.

Therefore, we are even more stubborn if we do not willingly bow our necks to give ourselves wholly to Him, seeking only to conform ourselves to His good pleasure and will, which is our chief rule, by renouncing our own affections.

Now, let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, acknowledging our faults, praying Him to vouchsafe to bury them, and to wash us from them for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. May He

govern us in such a way by His Holy Spirit, that we may be reformed to obey His holy will completely and follow His commandments, which He has given us as a rule. Let us thereby show ourselves to be His true children, just as He has vouchsafed to show Himself our gentle and loving Father.

And so let us all say, Almighty God, Heavenly Father, etc.

The Forty-Fourth Sermon, which is the second upon the sixth Chapter.

5. Servants, be obedient to such as are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your hearts, as unto Christ;

6. Not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

7. Serving the Lord with goodwill, and not men;

8. Assuring yourselves, that every man, whether bond or free, shall receive of the Lord the good that he has done.

9. And you masters, do the same to them, forbearing threats, assuring yourselves that the Lord of them and of you is in heaven, and that with Him there is no respect of persons.

We have seen already that, besides the general rule which God has given to all men, here are also several warnings on how every man should behave himself in his degree and calling. We have already seen what husbands ought to be towards their wives, and how wives should behave themselves towards their husbands. We have also considered what gentleness parents ought to use towards their children, and what subjection children ought to use towards their parents.

Now Saint Paul speaks of masters and servants. However, he does not refer to the servants we have nowadays, for at that time there were no servants who served for a year or two for wages. Instead, they were held in bondage for life and death, and were in the same condition as those we now call bondslaves.

But we need not dwell any longer on this to gain further understanding. Nevertheless, we have great reason to praise God for removing such bondage from among men. No doubt, it was an excessive authority that masters had in those days over their servants. They held them as brute beasts, with the liberty to kill them for every fault. Indeed, they had prisons in their houses to keep them locked in the stocks, they racked them, they tore them in pieces, and, to be brief, they treated them horribly—yes, even beastly.

Yet, because of man's sinfulness, it was the Lord's will that this state should still be tolerated for a time. Moreover, we see that even those who were known to have lived in the fear of God and excelled in His Church did not refrain from keeping bondmen or slaves in their houses. However, they treated them with a different kind of gentleness than the infidels did, as we shall see here in Saint Paul's teaching.

Also, there was a reason that constrained masters sometimes to use greater rigor towards their slaves, because it was a common proverb among them, that the more slaves they had, the more enemies they had. This was due to their keeping them in awe through extreme force and violence, similar to how those who are now on the sea, called galley slaves, are treated. I have already touched on what and how excessive outrages were committed against them.

There was a great number of bondfolk, and rich men had as it were half armies of them, so much so that some had five thousand slaves in one household. That was a situation where one's throat could have been cut five thousand times over if good care had not been taken to keep them fettered. And this came from sin, as one mischief leads to another, until things come to utter confusion.

But if we consider the right or authority of masters, we will always say that it was entirely against all order of nature. For we are all fashioned after the image of God, and therefore, for a reasonable creature in whom God has imprinted His mark to be subjected to such reproach, it was far too out of all square. Yet, such are the fruits of the disobedience and sin of our father Adam, that all things were turned topsy-turvy.

On the other hand, considering that servants were in such subjection, it might seem that if they could, by any means, pull their necks out of the collar, it should be lawful for them to do so, and that it would be an honest excuse. However, regardless of the state of the servants, Saint Paul commands them to obey their masters and to be subject to them.

Indeed, he also exhorts the masters not to abuse the power given to them, nor to think that what was granted to them by human law was so righteous and impartial before God that they could not be blamed

for it. Saint Paul then counsels masters to temper the excess of their superiority. Yet, he still requires servants to submit to it and to bear the yoke that was so hard and heavy.

Now, it might seem that he did the servants wrong in this and that he should have cried out against the common abuse so that such outrage might have been abolished. But we have two principles to remember that restrain us from attempting any change.

The first is that, since it had been God's will to put mankind into confusion and for all men, both great and small, to be reminded that Adam had perverted the order of nature, Saint Paul counsels servants to bear such subjection, assuring them that it comes from God and that they must take it patiently.

The second is that the Gospel does not serve to change the common policies of the world or to create laws that belong to the temporal state. It is true that kings, princes, and magistrates ought always to seek counsel at God's mouth and to frame themselves according to His word. Yet, for all that, our Lord has given them the liberty to make such laws as they shall perceive to be meet and convenient for the government committed to them. However, they must call upon God to give them the spirit of wisdom and discretion, and because they are not able to rule on their own, they must take advice and counsel from God's word.

Nevertheless, the doctrine of salvation, which is called the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 6:33), and the things that belong to the governing of us in this world, that men may know how to behave themselves towards one another, are distinct matters. That, therefore, is the reason why Saint Paul left slavery, bondage, or servitude as it was.

And he exhorteth servants to do their duty in fear and trembling, that is to say, with all lowliness and reverence. He also adds further, with singleness of heart, which he contrasts against all the sly schemes and shifts to which the servants and slaves of that time were too much given, as is evident from those who have written of them and described the manners and lifestyle in use during those days.

Let us first note that St. Paul does not think it enough for servants to seek the benefit and profit of their masters, to be willing to obey them, and to be eager to execute whatever is commanded. Rather, he requires reverence above all things, as I said before. Let servants understand that although they may not be forced or chastised with whipping when they do wrong, and even if they have gentle and meek masters, they must still patiently bear the state in which they are placed, assuring themselves that God allows it. The superiority that their masters have over them, however hard and grievous it may be, is nevertheless ordained and established by God.

This is why Paul uses the word "singleness," for we are too clever in seeking our own advantage, and none of us is not a great expert when it comes to matters concerning our own profit. We might ask, "Why should such a person have this prerogative over me? What reason is there that I should be bound to him?" Take, for example, the tradesmen who never learned a word of schooling; yet in daily matters and things that benefit them, they are so skillful in debating their case that you would take them to be men of law.

Since men are so crafty in seeking their own advantage to the detriment of others, St. Paul intentionally speaks of singleness of heart, which serves to sift all affections and overthrow all excuses that people can devise to avoid doing their duties.

Paul also purposely says, "As serving the Lord," and this is the chief foundation upon which we must lean when it comes to doing any duty towards others. If we are focused only on creatures, we will say, "Did we not all come from the ark of Noah? Why should he be better esteemed than I? Is it right that I should be put under his feet? What reason is there for that?" And we hear similar words every day.

We are clever enough to argue for our exemption, and we often think we are bound to no one while expecting others to be bound to us. The goal that everyone seems to pursue is that every person wants to be a lord, and no one accepts subjection. This would lead to chaos—living like wild beasts or, as the saying goes, like cats and dogs—until we realize that God is pleased with the service we render to others. If we are not thoroughly convinced of this, we may put on a good face and please men, but our minds will never be truly right until we understand that our Lord accepts our service.

But there is yet another cause that might hinder us or cool our desire to fulfill our duty to others: the ingratitude of people. Those we serve often give us no thanks, instead thinking that we exist solely to serve them. When we see them repaying our service so poorly, it disheartens us, and it would be enough to make us give up altogether.

Therefore, it is necessary for us to return to what St. Paul tells us: namely, that God is above all degrees and ranks, and that He, having authority over the world, will have every person employ themselves with all humility. All subjections that He has ordained in the world are to remain firm and inviolable. This is the essence of what St. Paul teaches us here.

Now, first of all, we have to mark the general principle which I now come to touch upon: when we have superiors over us, we must not

obey them as if we are forced, but because God has ordained them, and there is no preeminence except from Him, as Saint Paul declares to the Romans (Romans 13:1). It is true that there he speaks expressly of princes and magistrates, but it also extends to all authority, such as that which parents have over their children, husbands over wives, and masters over their servants.

Therefore, we must be fully persuaded of this: God's intent is not that all men should be shuffled together (as it would happen if there were no restraint), but that some should rule and have authority to command others, and that those under them should obey. It is an irrevocable decree of God, and we must accept it and be content. For if we protest that we are willing to obey God, yet at the same time seek to remove all the order He has set among us, all that we speak with our mouths is but hypocrisy.

Thus, we must give proof of our humility toward God by willingly and easily bearing the yoke of human authority, which He has placed upon us as if with His own hand. Let that be one point.

Now (as I said), this comprehends all forms of subjection: of people toward princes and magistrates, of children toward their parents, of wives toward their husbands, and also of servants toward their masters. Once we understand this, it will be easier for us to withstand the troubles and inconveniences that hinder us and turn us away from our duties.

What is the reason we cannot submit ourselves to God's will? As I said, all such disputing is unhelpful and foolish when a man asks, "Why am I bound to such a one? Why should he hold his foot upon my throat? Who has given him more authority than me?" But seeing that God has told us He wills it so, we are bound to hold our peace. Therefore, if we are fully persuaded of this, we shall be too rebellious

if we do not show by our deeds that we are willing to please our God and fulfill His good will.

For example, if a master has a great multitude of people in his house, he has sufficient authority to appoint whom he wishes to oversee it, and they must be obeyed. A prince has his officers, and they must command, and others must listen to them and obey them simply. What is to be done, then, when our God, who is the sovereign Lord and Father, and who has the right of preeminence and dominion over us, wills that we obey those He has appointed, without making any reply? What use is it to argue the contrary?

Therefore (as I said), let us deeply imprint this counsel of Saint Paul in our hearts: when we do our duty willingly and sincerely toward those whom God has set in authority over us, we are serving God Himself. And truthfully, without this mindset, all the virtues we may display outwardly to the world are but smoke.

You will see a number of men who pretend to be marvelously well-behaved, so much so that those they serve are too well-pleased with them. But although such behavior is allowed among men, it is worthless before God. And why? Because God will be honored by us; He will have men enjoy their rights in such a way that neither He is forgotten nor they are ignored.

If we only obey men and despise what God has willed as an acceptable sacrifice to Himself, what kind of behavior would that be? Then, let us always tend toward Him and dedicate ourselves to Him. And since it is His will that we should be under authority, let us bear that yoke willingly and with a free, non-slavish, or unconstrained mind.

And for the same cause, Saint Paul says expressly, "Let not your service be eye-service, as though you seek to please men." In truth, those who act in this manner (as they say) are either seeking recompense, hoping to be well entertained and fed with the finest food, or desiring greater wages, and later, some extraordinary gift or reward when the opportunity arises. This is what people aim for when they have no regard for God.

But Saint Paul tells us that, even if those we serve are so difficult that we cannot satisfy them, and we have no hope of receiving even the smallest acknowledgment from them, we must nevertheless perform our duties towards God. From this, we must gather that in everything God commands us, we must not only employ our eyes, feet, hands, and arms (as they say), but we must begin with the inward affection.

Therefore, when Saint Paul says, "Not with eye-service," he shows us that if we desire that the Lord should approve our service as good and lawful, our heart must lead the way, guiding all our actions, so that there is no deceit. As it is written, God regards faithfulness, meaning that we must act sincerely, plainly, and substantially (Psalm 101:6). Thus, all superficial shows of virtue are dashed. For, as I said, many men seem to exhibit great virtue, but God accounts it as nothing—it is merely hypocrisy. Therefore, if we wish to begin serving God well, we must learn to abandon duplicity. To build securely, we must always lay the foundation, just as we see that God prefers to be loved rather than feared.

True, we owe Him reverence, and we ought to tremble at His majesty. But when He reveals the chief thing He requires and that which pleases Him most, He says, "What is it, O Israel, that you shall find in my Law, but that you love me and cleave to me?" (Deuteronomy 10:12). Seeing that our Lord requires willing affection

and that we should come to Him with a free and sincere heart, can we imagine that He accepts anything from us when we approach Him grudgingly and reluctantly, yet pretend great zeal toward men? No matter the circumstances, we will always retain within us a hidden corner where we wish to be exempt from obeying God.

Therefore, we must take pleasure in His service, and it must be our joy and delight. Our bondage to Him must be sweeter and more desirable to us than all liberty, indeed, than all the realms and kingdoms of the world.

Saint Paul expressly says, "Masters as touching the flesh," because, among the deceptions of Satan, which he used to trouble the world in ancient times—and also to make the Gospel hated—he planted this heresy in many minds: that once we are spiritual, we are no longer subject to any worldly or temporary authority, nor is that the state of God's children.

We have also seen in our time a group of seditious and mad-headed people who have attempted to abolish all principalities, remove taxes and imposts, and make every man his own master—like mice in the chaff, as they say. They grounded themselves on this false notion: that since God has adopted us as His children, and the world is now renewed to the intent that we should be grafted into the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is unreasonable, contrary to all equity, and even against the honor of God, for unbelievers to reign over us or for those who call themselves faithful to hold sovereignty over their brothers and neighbors.

See how the devil labors to drive such ideas into men's minds, making it appear that the Gospel confounds all order in the world so that people will hate and abhor it. Moreover, the statement that no

man is better than another is a pleasant sentiment and well-suited to entice many followers.

Saint Paul therefore says explicitly that, although masters have temporal authority, and their superiority pertains to the flesh (that is, to this present world and this transitory life), they must not be defrauded of their right. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come to establish a confused equality here, where no distinction would be made between great and small. Instead, He came to make everyone content in their own calling, without pride or envy (Psalm 131:1-2).

The way to make us humble and meek is for each of us to focus on our own calling so that the person advanced to authority and honor over others is not puffed up with pride and presumption but rather humbles himself before God, recognizing that he is doubly bound to Him for exalting him in such a way. Likewise, the lower classes should maintain themselves in their humility, without usurping what does not belong to them.

Similarly, the way for fathers to receive proper obedience from their children is to treat them gently. Husbands should also rule their wives with concord and friendliness, princes should not abuse their subjects like wretched beasts, and the rich should not devour the poor excessively. At the same time, those who are lowly in the world's eyes should remember that God has placed them in that state, as though He appointed their place with His own hand. Therefore, let not the common sort elevate themselves but be content with their position.

That, I say, is the reason why Saint Paul expressly sets down the saying, "as touching the flesh." It was not to bring masters into contempt for reigning over their slaves but to preempt objections that people might raise when they seek to exempt themselves from

obedience to God and the order He has established. He also helps us understand that such subjection does not prejudice the faithful, as they can still continue in full liberty with regard to their souls.

The devil also uses this argument. "What?" he says. "Since our Lord Jesus Christ shed His blood to purchase our freedom, why shouldn't we continue in it?" Yes, but Saint Paul answers this, as he does with more detail in the fifth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. The bondage we yield to our superiors concerns only the flesh, and our souls and consciences remain free before God.

Therefore, it is a childish objection to say, "Since our Lord Jesus Christ has set us free, why should people make us bondservants?" He has not set us free as regards our bodies because it is His will that there should still be principalities and lordships in the world. These cannot exist unless some are subject to others who hold authority. Since our Lord has distinguished between the governance of the body and that of the soul, and since the governance of the soul is spiritual—ruled by His Word as we walk before Him to attain the kingdom of heaven—when it comes to our behavior toward others of our own flesh, we must learn to conform to all good order.

Let us be assured that, despite this, our state is no worse before God than if we were kings and princes, with all people trembling before us. Indeed, the things we do heartily in serving others only magnify and exalt God all the more. For it takes a person of noble mind to stoop low and obey willingly, regardless of how great, skilled, or wealthy they are.

Saint Paul has cut off any excuse for attempting to change one's state. Therefore, let us learn from what is told to us here: first and foremost, we must have God fastened before our eyes, understanding that He has placed us in this world to serve one another.

Nevertheless, we are to live together in all humility and not disdain to do our duty, even toward those who may not be as competent as we would wish, or as we believe ourselves to be. Once we reach that point, it is certain that we will each submit willingly to the role God has called us to and remain content with the place where He has placed us.

Now, if Saint Paul wanted the slaves of his time to be so obedient to their masters, how much less excuse do servants have today, especially those who take wages? Let us compare the two. Those poor souls, as I told you before, were treated so rigorously that their masters could imprison them, put them in stocks, rack them, dismember them, maim them, and even kill them. It was a grievous condition, yet they were bound to it for life and death. There was no term limit, except among the Jews, where God had appointed a term (Exodus 21:2). But the common law of all nations was that bondservants and their children were to remain in bondage forever, so that a father had no more right over his own child than a horse or any other beast had over its offspring.

Wasn't such a state as bad as a hundred deaths? Yes, for man always desires liberty, to take his ease, and to eat his bread in peace. Yet, those wretched slaves did not even have a bite of bread at their own discretion. Regarding their persons, they were worse off than captives. And yet, despite all this, God willed and strictly commanded that they bear this state patiently, perform their duties faithfully, and approach it with a free and cheerful heart.

Now, what can be said of hired servants today, who can give notice and leave, have their wages paid when their year of service is completed, and are treated far more gently and liberally than those poor slaves were? For those slaves had to labor in their trade or craft,

earn their bread, often drink only water, and were confined in cabins where they were forced to complete their tasks. If today's servants cannot humble themselves to bear the state that God has laid upon them, it is certain that they are without excuse.

The same can be said of subjects toward their magistrates. Therefore, since we see that our Lord spares us, we are all the more bound to the subjection that Saint Paul speaks of here.

Furthermore, we have to weigh again the words where he speaks of frank and free-hearted willingness. For it is impossible for us to find any taste or savor in our state or calling, of whatever sort it may be, unless we know it is for our benefit and welfare. We can reap no great profit from serving creatures. We must, therefore, always turn to our God and aim at this mark: seeing that He has been so good and gracious to us as to set us in this world, to maintain us here, and to show Himself such a good Father towards us, that all we have comes from Him. We must show the reverence we bear to His majesty and labor to please Him in such a way that we do not mind being subject to men, nor take it with grief or scorn. Our state will be greatly sweetened when we know that God accepts it as worthy from our hands.

That is also why he places these things in contrast, not to show any contradiction, but rather to harmonize them. For he says that we must serve God on behalf of our masters, with all willingness, and afterward sets down God's will on the other side. It is a very good harmony, showing that we should know how it is God's will that servants should obey their masters. This will of God should clear away all objections that might hinder or stop us. When the devil tempts us to find anything strange in what is commanded of us, he is enticing us toward our destruction. Now then, let us take God's will

as our sovereign welfare and perfect happiness, assuring ourselves that, however we are handled by Him, He still loves us and watches over what is good for us. Let that serve as one point.

If we have such persuasion well-rooted in our hearts, it is certain that the willingness which Saint Paul speaks of will follow naturally, so that we will not feel reluctance within ourselves to grumble against it, as we see happens with those who are forced to do things against their will. They grumble, and although they may not openly acknowledge it, their hearts are bitter, and there is nothing but rancor in them. Therefore, Saint Paul sets down willingness, meaning that we should do all things with a good heart and freely. In doing so, we will make our state joyful and pleasant. Those who do things only by force and constraint cannot escape the necessity of obeying, and yet they torment themselves more than the sorrow they claim to endure. For when we are handled roughly by our masters, superiors, or magistrates, if we are assured that God accepts our service, it alleviates the grief we may feel. When we have done our duty, we take our rest with praise to God, seeing it as relief that He gives us for our infirmities. Besides this, we will always have our eyes on the heavenly life, finding courage in it to keep walking forward, even with many obstacles. You see, then, that God's children will always fare much better when they do their duty in serving God freely than those who perform their duties coldly, grudgingly, and with reluctance.

Furthermore, let us note that Saint Paul brings us back to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ three times here. This is to rid us of the idea that if others mistreat us, the bond of duty is broken, and we may therefore exempt ourselves from subjection if we can. For example, if a servant has a master who is too rigorous and harsh, he might think to himself, "Why should I bother?" And so, servants consider

themselves half-released if their masters do not perform their duties towards them. But Saint Paul declares expressly that, even if masters are so cruel as to spare no kindness to those under them, their superiority is not diminished. It is true that such masters, in respect of their conduct, are unworthy of authority, as we shall see later. Yet, for all that, the one who is the inferior must still hold himself under the yoke because he sees that God has so ordained it. That is the effect of what we must bear in mind.

And on the other side, Saint Paul does not forget servants, ensuring that they receive their due rights and what belongs to them. For he commands masters to do the same for them, not in a manner of mere formalities, but so that masters understand that although civil laws may give them loose control, God does not grant them leave to do as they please. Instead, He speaks as much for the servant as for the master, which we must keep in mind.

Now, for the masters, Paul gives this rule: they must be careful in how they rule because they have a common Master in heaven, "who shows no partiality" (Ephesians 6:9). As for the servants, he says, "My friends, though you may not receive the recompense you desire in this world, let it suffice you that God does not regard you as slaves. It is true that you may be despised in the eyes of the world, but you have your inheritance in heaven, and our Lord accepts your service. You will be rewarded as much as if you were kings and princes." This is what we must remember here. Indeed, time does not permit a full discourse on this, but we see that, first, Saint Paul does not curry favor with the rich and great by maintaining their rights against their slaves. Instead, he labors to bring both groups into humility and meekness, those who might otherwise exalt themselves too much.

The same order should be observed by those who have charge in the Church and are ministers of God's Word. They should spare neither great nor small but tell every person their duty. Since there is no partiality with God, His Word must be handled directly, and ministers must not be intimidated by the status or authority of those who are esteemed among men. For since it is God who speaks, His Word must pull down all loftiness, as Saint Paul declares in his second letter to the Corinthians: "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). The task of ministers of God's Word is to exhort the lower classes to do their duty, to encourage the poor and oppressed to bear their state patiently without grumbling against men, and to avoid rebelling against God.

On the other side, Paul tells the great ones that they must not act like beasts that devour others, but they must behave uprightly. Indeed, even the heathen, when they spoke according to natural equity, declared that it was improper for masters to abuse the authority they had over their servants. They said that bondmen and slaves should be treated like hired servants paid by the day. Since the pagans said this without the benefit of the divine understanding that comes from God's Word, how much more inexcusable are those today who are trained in God's school, where there is a brotherhood between great and small, and where masters should treat their servants as brothers because they share the same hope of eternal life?

If those in authority, instead of using their power rightly, trample on the weak and abuse their authority, how shameful is that? Therefore, both masters and servants should consider how they walk in their own state and calling. The lower classes should not grumble that the Lord allows them to suffer so many wrongs in this world and to be

mocked and scorned. Even if they must endure a hundred times more, they must not rebel against God, for that would be kicking against the goads. Likewise, those in authority must remember that the closer God has drawn them to Himself by giving them preeminence, the more they must conform to His image and likeness. And what do we find in God but goodness? Throughout Scripture, He is called the fountain of humility, gentleness, and mercy. Therefore, those in positions of honor must especially consider this.

If those in authority do not discharge their duty faithfully, they will pay dearly for their worldly honor and for abusing God's singular favor. As I said before, since both groups—the oppressed and those in authority—are difficult to bring into conformity, the oppressed often cannot refrain from grumbling and are provoked to break all bonds. They must be held in awe by God's Word and through earnest exhortation. Likewise, the great ones must be humbled, lest they forget God as they are prone to do. For they often overshoot themselves, thinking they are no longer mere mortals. Indeed, if people would consider their own state and see themselves in the lowest of persons, it would lead them to humility. Thus, God's Word must work its course in this case to bridle both groups so that we may live according to our calling, obeying God quietly. In hearkening to His voice, we should desire nothing but to fulfill our duty to Him and all His creatures until we come to the everlasting kingdom, where we shall be partakers of His glory, majesty, and all the good things that are in Him.

Now, let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God, acknowledging our sins and praying that He would vouchsafe to touch us with true and lively repentance. May we be so deeply sorry for offending Him that it leads us to hate our vices and earnestly seek

pardon at His hand, with the hope that He may govern us by His Holy Spirit.

May He guide us to live according to His holy commandments, bearing with our weaknesses until He has completely rid us of them.

And so, let us all say: Almighty God, heavenly Father, etc.

The Forty-Fifth Sermon, which is the third upon the sixth Chapter.

10. Moreover, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the mightiness of His power.

11. Put on the complete armor of God, that you may stand against the assaults of the devil.

12. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against the spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places.

We know that prosperity often puffs people up, making them believe they are privileged and exempt from the common rules. In short, they think they can do whatever they like. On the contrary, the poorer sort, who are despised and cast off, sometimes think that God has forgotten them, and thus, they cannot conceive that He has any care for them.

Therefore, it is necessary that those who are drunk with presumptuousness, thinking they can do too much because they are in a position of authority or credit, have their courage abated and be reminded that they have a master in heaven who will punish them even if they escape the hands of men. On the other side, it is necessary to comfort those who are ready to falter and tempted to fall into despair. Saint Paul addresses both here.

He tells the servants not to be afraid because God regards them as long as they walk in His fear. God accepts their service just as though they were in an honorable state and held great worldly dignity. To the masters, Paul says that they have a superior in heaven before whom they must give an account, and their greatness and high status will not serve as payment there. All such worldly appearances vanish before the Sovereign Judge.

This also follows what is said in another passage, that those who are faint-hearted must be comforted, for otherwise, they may falter, believing that God does not care for them—speaking of those who are despised in the eyes of the world. Therefore, they must be told that God has not forgotten them, even though it is His will to keep them low for a time.

It behooves every one of us to apply this to our own situation, according to the state God has set us in. When we are wrongfully troubled, despised, or dismissed by men, if we imagine that God has also given us up, we cannot call upon Him. And likewise, we cannot serve Him with a free heart, as we think our labor is in vain.

Therefore, when we are assailed by such temptations, let us remember this lesson: Even though we are afflicted in this world, scorned, mocked, and endure all manner of reproach, we are still in the safe keeping of our God. He esteems us, values us, and will, in the

end, show that He does. Even if we linger and wither away, even if He withholds Himself as if hidden, and a man might think, according to natural understanding, that we are forgotten by Him, yet, after He has kept us low for a while and tested our humility and obedience, we shall find that our faithful and uncorrupt walking in His fear will be recognized. In the end, we will realize that we have not labored in vain.

That is the lesson we must bear in mind when the great persons of the world exalt themselves in their pride and seem to have the power to trample us under their feet.

Howbeit, let all those who have superiority over others, carefully advise themselves and consider that God has not given them the bridle without reserving His own right to Himself. Both great and small must appear before His judgment seat, and there will be no accepting of persons. Therefore, let those who are rich, those who are in authority, and those who have any advantage over their neighbors, remember this well: there is no accepting of persons before God. Although in this world one man goes before and another follows after, when the trumpet sounds and we all come before the Great Judge, there will no longer be such a difference.

For this reason, even kings and princes are brought to this point and to this understanding in the Psalms: "*You are gods, and you are children of the Highest,*" (Psalm 82:6), which means that God has ordained them to be His lieutenants and set them in high degrees. It is true that this must stand for a time, but yet, "*you shall die like men,*" (Psalm 82:7), and as any one of the common people, and then you shall be driven to know that you were but mortal men. All these great and glorious shows shall then be laid aside.

In truth, the very use of the word *person* should remind us that the things being referred to are but temporary and cannot be brought before God as if they were our own. It is true that in our common speech we take the word *person* to mean a man or a woman. But when Scripture speaks of it, it refers to external things such as riches, statuses, offices, nobility, great birth, and all the things men possess in this world—things they can also be deprived of.

Therefore, when it is said that there is no accepting of persons before God, it means that He will judge us simply as mortal men, as fragile and frail creatures. We cannot shield ourselves with any external thing, for the richest cannot bring their treasures, lands, or possessions with them to elevate themselves above others. Those who have been in great dignity will not be able to say, "How so? Everyone trembled under me." Such things will hold no value before God. All worldly greatness and authority will serve no purpose, for every man shall be taken as a child of Adam.

So, let those who have any reason to exalt themselves remember well that all the things that bear glory and esteem in this world will fade away like smoke and be consumed to nothing when we come to be judged by God. Therefore, let all men, both great and small, live in humility and trust.

This is why Saint James says, "*Let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position,*" (James 1:9). Why so? Because God has adopted us as His children, and although we may be poor worms of the earth, and even though men may consider us filth and refuse, God has vouchsafed to imprint His mark on us, that we might be known as His children. He has given us the privilege to call upon Him as our Father with full confidence. Therefore, we have

just cause to glory, even though we are of low degree, for we have a high position by which God exalts us above the world.

On the contrary, Saint James says that those who are great must glory in their lowliness. While unbelievers are so bewitched with pride that they despise God and, as I said before, convince themselves that they are exempt from all law, believers must understand that all worldly dignity and excellence serve only for a time and will pass away. When we stand before God, we shall have nothing to cover ourselves with—no riches, no honor, no nobility.

In short, the things that Scripture refers to as *persons* are like clothing. Consider this: if a man dressed in rich apparel thinks he can escape God's judgment because the world marvels at his outward splendor, he deceives himself greatly. All those things must be set aside when God calls us to judgment. Conversely, poor folk who scarcely have enough to cover their bodies with rags must not think they are less esteemed by God because of it. There will be no distinction of persons—neither riches nor poverty, honor nor baseness. We must all appear as we truly are: mortal men, children of Adam.

This, in effect, is the lesson we must gather from this.

After Saint Paul has shown every person's duty particularly, he now returns again to general doctrine. For (as I said before), there is one rule common to all men without exception, which is the same as contained in God's law—namely, that we should lead a holy life, giving ourselves over to His service, and also love one another, living chastely and soberly, in all mildness and honesty. This is common.

But it is said afterward that every man must have an eye to his own calling, as the husband has a special duty toward his wife, and the

wife toward her husband, as we have seen previously. For Saint Paul has laid forth all these things. Now he addresses all men, saying, "*Moreover, my brethren, be strong in the Lord.*" (Ephesians 6:10). In this, he shows that we cannot give ourselves to the service of God without facing challenges, but must make efforts to prepare ourselves for it.

It is true that if we were whole and sound, and our nature were uncorrupted, it would not trouble us to live according to God's commandment. Rather, it would be our whole pleasure, as the faithful do experience when God has touched them deeply. For that reason, our Lord Jesus Christ also says, "*My yoke is easy, and my burden is light,*" (Matthew 11:30), meaning that He desires nothing but to guide us by gentle and loving means.

But if we consider what we are—how incapable we are of standing firm and constant, and of holding out in the way that God shows us—we will see that it is not without cause that Saint Paul exhorts us here to be strong. As if he should say, "I have exhorted you to do your duties thus far, but I know well that each of you will find such stubbornness within yourselves that you will not be able to overcome your wicked desires except by fighting manfully."

And though you are weak, do not think that this ought to serve as an excuse. When your passions, on the one side, are stubborn and rebellious against God, and on the other side, you are frail, do not think that this will excuse you before God, for you will be condemned for your sins nonetheless. What then must be done? "*Be strong in the Lord,*" (Ephesians 6:10), meaning that while most people wallow in their sins, thinking themselves discharged because their thoughts and affections are rebellious against God's righteousness, you must

recognize your own miseries, dislike them, and seek the remedy for them.

And what is that remedy? Strengthen yourselves. That is to say, we must exert ourselves. As if he were saying, "It is a hard thing to walk rightly, for we will face many obstacles. The devil will not cease to seek every possible means to push us off course, and we will encounter many oppressions and vexations. For he has enough schemes and more, and he will attack us in various ways, and we do not have the strength to resist him. Therefore, we must gain strength."

However, he says, "*in the Lord*," (Ephesians 6:10), so that men do not imagine themselves able to accomplish this by their own free will or wisdom. Therefore, he says, "*Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might*," (Ephesians 6:10). This means that God will demonstrate such power that we need not doubt victory against all that the devil can scheme, as long as we are not negligent or fall asleep. Therefore, let us call upon God, that He may help us and come to our aid when we need it.

Thus, two things must accompany us: first, vigilance and the care that the faithful should have to strengthen themselves; and second, a heartfelt desire to call upon God. This is a text well worth noting, as it contains a great matter in few words. For, first, we see that we must not be slothful if we wish to live our lives according to God's will. But since each person makes excuses for themselves, desiring nothing more than to shake off all responsibility and cast aside anything that might trouble them, we must note, first of all, that if we want to serve God, we must exert ourselves—meaning, we must fight against the devil.

For (as I said before), he is not idle, nor will he allow any of us to perform our duty with ease, as though we were strolling in a pleasant garden. Rather, he will set thorns in our path and cast logs before us to stop us. He will also give us such blows as could overthrow us a hundred times before we even take a single step, unless God helps us. Therefore, since we cannot walk in the fear of God without fighting, we ought to remember Saint Paul's warning.

Furthermore, he intends also to make us aware of our own weakness. For we know that men tend to indulge themselves and seek nothing but to wallow in their pleasures. There are also those who presume upon their own strength, convincing themselves that they can perform wonders as though they were as strong as could be desired. This cursed persuasion has deceived wretched men in all ages, and it is by this that the doctrine of free will has been so widely embraced. But Saint Paul tells us here that we need to be strengthened, which implies that we are naturally weak.

And afterward he expresses himself yet better, in saying that it is in the Lord that we must be strong, and that He has all power in Him to give to us as much as needed. Then, if we undertake anything without calling upon Him, we shall be punished for our rashness and pride. Saint Paul, therefore, shows us that men cast themselves into decay by their overconfidence, imagining themselves to have what they do not, which conceit turns them away from calling upon God.

Now, it might be said here that it is a superfluous exhortation to bid us be strong in the Lord, for no man is able to uphold himself; that lies not in anybody's power to do. No, but yet for all that, we feel by effect that God works in such a way in us that we do the same things that He does. But yet, that working must be pleasing to us. If a man has lived a holy life, so that he may have been a mirror of holiness

and all virtue, it may well be said, "He has done this or that." And indeed, we are not like inanimate logs, and therefore we do good.

Yet, we must understand that this working comes from elsewhere than from ourselves, and there lies the crux of the matter. So, if it is asked whether men can do good, the answer is yes, but not of themselves, nor of their own volition or kind, but only because they are guided by the Holy Spirit. If it is asked whether men can do evil, the answer is also yes; they are wholly inclined toward it—it is their common tendency. Thus, men do evil of themselves, and the root of it remains in them. The blame of it is rightly imputed to them, and they must not seek to justify themselves by excuses. Whoever has done evil shall remain in condemnation. But let us consider well that God works in us when we do good, and the praise for it ought rightly to be given to Him.

However, although there is nothing in us or on our side when we serve God, yet still Saint Paul does not exhort us in vain, saying that we must be strengthened in God. For we must not be lazy, as he speaks of it in another place where he says, "*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*" (Philippians 2:12-13). This saying may seem strange at first when Saint Paul wills us to work out our salvation. For is that within our power? No. But he corrects any presumption or overconfidence by saying that it must be done with trembling, and that we must walk in fear. That is to say, we must distrust ourselves, and indeed be utterly humbled, assuring ourselves that we cannot stir even one of our little fingers, nor think one good thought, as he says in another place, "*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God*" (2 Corinthians 3:5).

Afterward, which confirms this matter yet better, he adds, as a conclusion, that God gives both the will and the ability to perform the will. Therefore, it is God who does all, and yet we do not cease to act as well. Yes, but that is by Him and through Him, as I have already declared. In short, the Holy Scripture does not say that God renews us so that, when we are born again by His Holy Spirit, we begin to have a good mind and to be well-inclined, to the intent that we should be slothful and idle, but to the intent that God should be glorified, and we should not imagine ourselves to be the workers of our own salvation, but rather yield Him the honor for all the good that He has put into us.

However the world may go, we must still be watchful. That is to say, we must keep good watch against the devil and endeavor to give ourselves to goodness, so that every one of us may strive. We must imprison our own wit and wicked will to make them obedient to God, but yet, all must be acknowledged to be of Him.

His adding of these words, "of the mighty power of God," is to help us overcome all distrust, for we see that we are prone to lose heart. If we cannot accomplish the things as we would wish, according to His commands, we conclude that, in the end, we must fail. But, on the contrary, Saint Paul says that God will reveal a mighty and victorious power, according to what is said: "*He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world*" (1 John 4:4). Seeing, then, that God takes our part and upholds us with His power, let us not fear being overcome by Satan and all that he can devise against us. Whatever distress may befall us, in the end, we shall overcome all by resting upon God's invincible power.

And truly, God perfects His power in our weakness. That is to say, He works in such a way that we still limp, are pulled back, stumble, and

sometimes step awry, or even start out of the way. You see, then, that the Lord's assistance with His Holy Spirit keeps us in awe, giving us the occasion to humble ourselves. Our weakness, therefore, is mingled with the strength of God's assistance, and this is so that we may know our need to call upon Him and to seek Him as our refuge. We are too quick to diminish God's glory on our own. Therefore, God is compelled to wake us up and say to us, "Wretched creatures, would you not be lost a hundred thousand times if I did not hold you by the hand?"

Now then, the Lord's allowing infirmities in us is to draw us to Him and subdue us to meekness so that we may have cause to praise Him, knowing that He does not allow our falls to be fatal. Again, we should seek Him every minute of every hour, knowing that if He did not help us up again and hold us on our feet, we would perish without any mercy. That is the reason why, to Paul's former statement, we must also join this: God indeed leaves some weakness in us as long as we live in this world, yet He does not cease to display His invincible power in making us prevail. We must dwell on this conclusion: that when Satan has done his utmost, we shall march on nevertheless and continue our journey to its end.

Why? It is not only said that God will humble us and have pity on us, but also that His power shall show itself in rescuing us, not with a mere ordinary operation but with a mighty power. That is to say, with a power that shall overcome all the obstacles of the world.

Now then, we see the great difference between the doctrine of the Papists and the doctrine that we follow, which is grounded upon Holy Scripture. These blind wretches say they can work wonders by their free will. Indeed, they will give some small acknowledgment to God, saying that He helps them because they are inclined to evil and

vice, but that they are restrained by Him. To them, God is merely a helper at a dead lift, but in the meantime, it is their own free will and natural power that holds sway.

But when they have done all they can with their own strength, men are still left in doubt, and if they manage to hold their ground for an hour, soon after, they stumble and cannot rise again. But we, on the contrary, hold the view that man must be utterly broken down, as the Holy Ghost teaches us, so that not a single drop of power remains in ourselves, and we are completely emptied. Once we are at that point, our Lord shows us the remedy.

If we turn to Him, acknowledge our lack, and are ready to beg with open mouths, not puffed up with pride but utterly emptied, then our Lord assures us that He will not fail us. We shall have confidence, but not in the manner of the Papists, who boast and then fall short of their reckoning and are put to utter shame. On our part, when we have acknowledged that we are nothing and can do nothing, we resort to God, to glory against Satan, against all his assaults, against all the powers of hell, and against all the impediments and temptations of the world.

Thus, you see how we ought to put this lesson of Saint Paul's into practice.

After he has spoken of the mighty power of God, now he adds that we must arm ourselves with His complete armor. As if he should say that it is due to none but ourselves that we are not well armed and equipped to overcome all Satan's assaults, and that our own negligence is the cause that we are so often vanquished and foiled. Why? Because God not only promises to help us with His power, in such measure that we shall gain the upper hand, but He also provides us with the means and arms us. Yet, despite this, we hang

up our armor on the wall. Is it any wonder then, if we are caught unawares or unable to resist in the moment of need, when we scorn to use the means God offers us, which are so near at hand?

Now, what is this armor? Saint Paul will show it in due time. For now, let it suffice for us to understand his intent. When it is said that we must be armed with God's complete armor, it serves to rebuke and awaken us from our carelessness in neglecting the things He offers us. Indeed, we gladly hear it said that God is ready and willing to help us and that we need not fear victory against all our enemies as long as He is on our side. We accept this willingly. But, in the meantime, we are content to sit still, for we think it is not for us to encounter our enemy, as he is far too strong for us.

However, we must, in this case, engage in hand-to-hand combat. We would rather have God's armor prepared for us without needing to use it. For this reason, we are commanded to "put it on," meaning that we are to apply it to our use, since our state requires that we engage in battle. It pleases God that we should be so armed, and that the devil should not attack us unprepared.

Saint Paul not only uses the word "armor" but also adds "all the equipment," as if to say that we must be armed from head to toe. This will be explained in more detail later. However, his current meaning is that our ungratefulness is all the more apparent in that God arms us at every point, so that nothing is lacking unless the fault is our own. Indeed, we may be willing to put on some part of the armor that God gives us, but it is as if one man puts on a helmet just for appearance and takes neither a shield nor breastplate nor anything else, another grabs a sword, and a third picks up a spear. Meanwhile, each of them lacks many other things they will need.

Likewise, we may apply some part of God's armor to ourselves, that is to say, we may not utterly reject or refuse all the grace He offers us. But none of us arms himself as he should. That is to say, we are not fully equipped with all the virtues that God gives us. For it is certain that from every side, whether right or left, above or beneath, God provides means for us to fight, which are sufficient if we do not despise them but, realizing our need, receive what He gives us so freely.

To encourage us further to arm ourselves and receive the help God provides, Saint Paul adds, "that you may withstand all the assaults of the devil." Here, he confirms what I mentioned earlier: that we cannot serve God at our own ease as though nothing hinders us. A man may go about his work all day long, and it shall progress smoothly because he is not disturbed. But it is not so in the obedience that the faithful owe to their God. Why? Because the devil never ceases to trouble them and works a thousand ways to spite and hinder them.

Therefore, if we desire to walk in the fear of our God, we must be armed and ready for battle, for our enemy will never let us rest. For this reason, Saint Paul speaks of many assaults from Satan. As if he should say, Satan's attacks to lead us into wickedness are not just for once or twice and then gone. Rather, he maintains a continual battle, and when he has given us one alarm on one side, he comes around again on the other. Thus, besides strengthening and encouraging ourselves, we also need armor to repel our enemy, no matter which side he attacks us from.

And again, he amplifies it even further, saying that our fighting is not only against flesh and blood but also against the powers and principalities of the air, against the lords of the world, and against

wicked spirits, which fight from heaven against us. Commonly, when we have to deal with an enemy that is not greatly able to harm us, so that we fear not what he can do, we tend to despise him, and this often causes those who would be regarded as the most valiant to come up short. Why? Because they despised their enemy.

But Saint Paul tells us that we have to deal with other kinds of beings than mortal men, and yet we do not fear them. If a man hates us, even if he is not of great ability, we still take precautions (as they say), thinking it wise to prevent whatever schemes our enemy might practice against us. But especially if our enemies are mighty and strong, and we are unable to stand against them or repel them, then we are greatly amazed. And yet, they are but mortal men like us. However, Saint Paul tells us that we do not fight against mortal men, but against enemies far stronger. For that reason, he calls them "powers" and "principalities," giving them authority as though they already have the upper hand over us.

If we were to fight with an enemy who had the advantage, it would greatly trouble us. Such are the devils, for they are even called "kings of this world." Moreover, they have a thousand wiles and tricks. Therefore, it is said that they not only attack us with force, but they also lay many traps and ambushes to ensnare us, such that we could not escape them if we did not remain constantly vigilant. It behooves us to be fully awake, even if we were not merely asleep but in a swoon. Yet, despite this warning, it does little good, for we see how cold we are in preparing ourselves for battle.

Saint Peter tells us the same thing, though he does not use the same words. For in saying that the devil is like a roaring lion, going about seeking someone to devour, so that he will swallow us up if we are not watchful, he shows us that it is not for us to be careless and

unafraid but rather to remain steadfast in our duty. Not that we should be overly afraid, for the intent of both Saint Peter and Saint Paul in describing the devil's force is not to discourage or dismay us, leading us to think, "How shall we ever prevail? We are beyond hope." No, but Saint Peter adds, "Resist him, firm in your faith" (1 Peter 5:9), and Saint Paul also tells us that although the devil is strong and mighty, God is even stronger. If we are armed with His power, we need not fear, for we will certainly overcome Satan and all his assaults and, in the end, gain victory over him.

So then, what we must remember is that whenever we see obstacles hindering our walk with God and preventing us from enduring as we ought, we should acknowledge our own weakness and reject all the foolish overconfidence of popery—such as their belief in free will, their works of preparation, and all the things they imagine they bring to God. Let all such things vanish away. When we have acknowledged that we can do nothing on our own, we must also recognize the strength of our enemy and fear, not as those who fall into despair, but as those who are awakened to seek help from God through prayer and supplication and to embrace His promises with faith, which shall triumph over all the world. And let us not doubt that God will always prevail over Satan and all his schemes, for He has promised to wield infinite power whenever it concerns our deliverance.

Thus, we must walk in fear and vigilance. Why? Because we are besieged by many enemies and are, of ourselves, destitute of all goodness and inclined to all evil. Therefore, we must distrust our own strength and mourn over it. We should be stirred to action by the awareness of our enemies, who could utterly destroy us with a mere glance, as it were, for we would be completely undone a

hundred thousand times over by the devil's power if our Lord did not uphold us.

But no matter how we fare, let us march on with our heads held high, trusting in the help that is promised from above, and we will experience it in such a way that we will remain unvanquished. And though we may falter at times and endure fierce skirmishes, and though at times we feel deep, overwhelming distress (for indeed, God perfects His strength in our weakness), let us not doubt that all will work out for our benefit. Even our troubles will serve to humble us, acting as spurs to drive us to call upon God and, moreover, to move us to give Him thanks and honor when we see that He has granted us the grace to overcome our enemy. Thus, we will continually acknowledge the goodness we have received from His hand.

The way for us to order our lives well is, first, to know God, and secondly, to understand that we owe Him for all the goodness and blessings we receive. Therefore, let us not be cold or lazy, but let each one of us strive to glorify Him, walking continually in His fear.

Now let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us perceive them better than we have done, and that our doing so may cause us to resort to Him. May we not only obtain forgiveness for our past faults, but also be so strengthened that we may order our whole life according to His holy commandments, even according to the measure of grace that He shall have given us, until He takes us out of this world and rids us of all the vices and spots with which we are stained as of now.

And so let us all say: Almighty God, heavenly Father, etc.

**The Forty-Sixth Sermon,
which is the fourth upon the sixth
Chapter.**

11. Put upon you the whole armor of God, that ye may withstand all the assaults of the devil.

12. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the Principalities, against the Powers, against the Lords of this world, the governors of the darkness of this world, and against the spiritual wickednesses that are in the heavenly places.

13. Wherefore take to you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and stand fast when ye have performed all things.

14. Stand fast therefore, having your loins girt with truth, and being clothed with the breastplate of righteousness:

15. Having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace:

16. Taking above all things the shield of faith, whereby you may quench all the fiery darts of wickedness.

17. Also, take to you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

I showed you this morning why Saint Paul speaks here of the force and craft of Satan, that is to say, to wake us so that we are not taken unawares, as often happens. Therefore, it is essential for us to know what kind of enemy we are dealing with so that it may stir us up to resist him. True, at first, we might be astonished when we compare our own weakness with the strategies and preparations of Satan, as mentioned here.

However, the remedy is provided alongside, as I have already touched upon, and as Saint Paul continues to explain in greater detail. First, he says that the encounter we face is much harder and more dangerous than if all the men in the world were to set themselves against us. For the power of Satan surpasses them all. This is why he says that our fighting is not against flesh and blood.

By these words, he helps us understand that we are not only contending with mortal men. It is true that men will often challenge us, and they will be Satan's instruments in tormenting us. But this is not the primary concern. Satan uses them to drive us to despair, provoke us to revenge, or cause us to grumble against God. Regardless of the situation, the wicked never trouble us unless they are instigated by another—namely, Satan, who rules over them, is their head, and sets them to work for these purposes.

Therefore, if we focus on men alone, we miss the point, much like dogs that, when a man throws a stone at them, bite the stone in retaliation and ignore the hand that cast it. Similarly, we lack discernment if we think our struggle is merely with men, while forgetting about our invisible enemy.

Thus, we should heed what Saint Paul tells us here: that Satan is the chief enemy we face, and it is him we must resist. Although he uses

various means to vex us and turn us away from the fear of God, we must always keep our eyes on him and be vigilant.

Again, a man might think it strange that Saint Paul should say that the devils are the principalities of the air, the lordships and powers of heaven, and the princes of the world. For one might deem that he matches them against God. Now, although some heretics in old times have abused this passage, intending to create the impression of two beginnings, so that God should be hindered in maintaining Himself against Satan and defending those He has taken under His protection, yet, if we understand Saint Paul's intent, this question will be easily resolved.

Why? Because here there is no mention of any power that the devil should have as though in spite of God, to advance himself against Him. Rather, we must remain fully convinced of this point: that the devil is the executor of God's judgments and cannot attempt anything more than what is granted and permitted him. If there were no other text but this one in the first chapter of Job, where the devil appeared with the angels (who are named there the children of God) to seek permission to do mischief, it ought to thoroughly satisfy us. Indeed, the devil seeks nothing else but to pervert and confound all things. But even so, God holds him bridled and executes what He deems good through him, insomuch that when the devils have devised what they can, they still cannot attempt anything without God's leave, and without His having ordained and given them express charge to do this or that.

Nevertheless, it is not without reason that Saint Paul names them the powers and principalities of the air. All this depends on the things he will speak of later concerning the darkness of the world. However, that the devils should have superiority over mankind, which is

shaped after the image of God, would be against all reason—especially if we had remained in our original purity. If we had held out in the state wherein God created our father Adam, it is certain that the devil would not have had any advantage over us.

But because we are now overwhelmed with darkness and enslaved by our own nature, the devil is called the Prince of the world. Therefore, let us note well that after having elevated the power of the devil, Saint Paul shows us from where all of it originates and what the source of it is, so that we do not think the devil has free rein and is able to do as he pleases, with God unable to stop him. To prevent us from imagining that God's sovereign dominion is diminished by any power of the devils, Saint Paul says their power comes from the fact that this world is in darkness.

True, the sun shines upon us, and so does the moon, but nevertheless, we are plunged into the dungeon of death and remain blind wretches because we are banished from the light of life, which is in God. Since we are deprived of the knowledge of Him who made and fashioned all things, and our minds are entangled in all wickedness, with our reason utterly perverted, Satan reigns over us. Thus, the question is answered that might have been asked: how are the devils called the princes of the air and given such scope in this world, which God has created? That does not come from the original order of nature, as I have already explained, but from the corruption that has occurred through the fall of man.

No matter how things stand, the devils have such power over us that we could not resist them unless God were both our shield and our wall, serving our needs at all times, even fighting for us when we can do nothing. We must remember this well, and also suppress the foolish presumption rooted so deeply in our hearts that it is hard to

uproot. For we see how men always boast of themselves, seeking to make themselves into idols.

But how does Scripture speak of them? It calls them the devil's slaves. So long as we do not have Jesus Christ as our King, and His throne is not set up among us because of Adam's fall, the devil must necessarily be our prince, having all authority over us, and we are subject to him. Let men boast and claim what they will for themselves, and yet the words spoken by the Holy Ghost remain true. For the irrevocable sentence is given here—that the devil is our prince, and we are his subjects, held down in bondage until we are set free by our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the saying in John 8:36, that it is He who makes us free, that we might depart from the cursed tyranny and bondage of Satan.

Now, seeing that we are wretched people, overthrown, with the devil ruling over us and having already gained the upper hand, unless we are rescued in a wonderful manner, there is good reason for us to humble ourselves, as I already declared this morning, and distrust the strength we imagine ourselves to have, for it is nothing but deceitfulness. This realization should quicken our carefulness, leading us to seek God, praying that He does not forsake us or allow us to be given as prey to our enemies. Finally, it should cause everyone to exert themselves, knowing that although we can do nothing ourselves, God works through us in such a way that He will not have us be as lifeless blocks, but He will have us exercise our faith and serve Him in battle. In this way, the obstacles we encounter will not prevent us from continuing on our course, but we will withstand all the ambushes and assaults that are set against us.

Thus, you see, in effect, how we must apply this text to our lives.

And he concludes again, that we must hold our ground to resist the wicked days, until we are firmly settled after the performance of all. Here, he reminds us again that it is not enough to have fought stoutly for a month or for a year, but that we must hold out to the end—even all our life long. For God has placed us in this world to maintain the battle until we come to the rest of heaven.

The earth, then, is not only a pilgrimage for the faithful but also a battlefield where we will always have enemies to trouble us, day and night without ceasing. That is why Saint Paul expressly says that we must resist until we have finished and performed all things. By "evil days," he refers to our entire life, but especially to those times when our Lord allows us to be pinched more than usual. Although God tries us to the end, He nevertheless shows forbearance at times. For if He had no pity on our weakness, what would become of us? It is true that we must not take a truce with Satan, but still, God sometimes gives us respites so that we are not continually burdened with extreme hardship.

The evil days, therefore, are when there are great and almost extreme temptations and trials, although our whole life is comprehended under the same words. This does not hinder our continual happiness, for God still counts us as His people and heritage, but there will always be that evilness which Saint Paul speaks of here. Therefore, let us not expect an earthly paradise here, or think that we will reap the fruit of our victory or live in rest, but rather let us assure ourselves that miseries are prepared for us without ceasing or number.

Wherefore, let us be armed to endure them and overcome them. There is no pleading against God's will in this matter. It is true that He could deal with us much more gently, setting us apart from our

enemies so that we would suffer no vexation. But it pleases Him not to do so. Therefore, we must bow our necks and each of us must prepare for the battle that God calls us to. For, as Saint Peter says, it is good reason that our faith, which is much more precious than gold and silver, should be tried. Seeing that a corruptible metal is refined by fire, should our faith, which is much more excellent, be kept from coming to its purity and perfection? (1 Peter 1:7).

Let us, therefore, take note of what is said here—that we must finish things (or go through with them). This is to prevent any man from indulging in self-congratulation when he has held his own for a while and taken great pains in devoting himself to God's service. Instead, he should continue to walk forward to the end and put into practice what Saint Paul shows us in another place, even by his own example. Although Paul had accomplished notable things—so much so that one might say God should have given him some rest for his often perilous journeys by sea and by land—yet he says he forgets all that is past and strains and forces himself forward, until he may attain to the fellowship of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:13-14).

What causes many to take such great liberty? It is because they think they have done enough and that others should now take their turn. "Why not?" they say. "It is now twenty or thirty years that I have taken extreme pains without ceasing, and the world has seen my faithfulness, zeal, and care in serving God and in performing my duties." And with that, they conclude that now they may well take their rest. But we must not make such an agreement with God.

Whatever we have done, we must forget what is behind, says Saint Paul, and look forward to what is yet to come (Philippians 3:13). We have not yet reached the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, and there are

still many infirmities in us. Our faith is not yet fully refined, and it still needs to be brought again to the furnace and the fire. Therefore, let us hold out until we have finished all things.

What is meant by "all"? It is that, having lived in obedience to our God, we die likewise when it pleases Him and according to His will. It is not enough for us to live in fear of Him; we must also, in our death, give testimony that we are wholly His. We must not desire to live here until we are weary of life, but we must always have one foot lifted, ready to depart when it pleases God.

Thus, all is finished when we have lingered in this world as long as it pleases God, and each person has endeavored to live according to their calling and has been patient to the end. Finally, whether we live or whether we die, let us always be true sacrifices, offering ourselves to God, and seeking nothing but to yield up our souls and bodies into His hands.

Therefore, let us stand fast, says Saint Paul, so that we may be able to present ourselves before our God.

Hereupon, he shows with what manner of armor we must be fenced and furnished: that is to wit, with Faith, with Righteousness, with Truth, with God's Word, and with the Gospel. Now, we must not be curious in seeking here why Saint Paul gives the title of Helmet to one, the title of Breastplate to another, and the title of Shield to another. For in the first epistle to the Thessalonians, he touches on the same doctrine briefly, though without following the similitude throughout, saying that we must be armed with the helmet of faith and charity. But he speaks otherwise in this place. If any man would say there is some contradiction, the doubt would soon be resolved, namely that Saint Paul's intent here was not to detail particularly all the pieces of a Christian man's armor, but to show briefly that if we

receive the means that God offers us and are diligent to serve Him, we shall be furnished with all pieces, and we need not fear but that we shall have what is necessary to withstand all our enemies and to vanquish them. That, then, was Saint Paul's meaning.

Now, he sets down here first of all that we must be girt with the sword girdle of truth and put on the breastplate of righteousness. By those two words, he means soundness and holiness of life. Therefore, whenever we hear this word "Truth," let us understand that Saint Paul condemns all hypocrisy and wants us to learn to give ourselves to the service of God with a free heart—not with eye service, nor as to the sight of the world, but with a pure and right-meaning mind.

And to understand why this truthfulness, or uprightness, and this soundness are compared to a breastplate: it is not necessary now to trouble ourselves much, as I said before. The point we must bear in mind is how Saint Paul shows us that if we take the armor that God gives us, we shall be sure, without fail, to have victory against all our enemies. Righteousness is matched with it, which is a true rule by which to walk in the fear of God and to live with our neighbors without doing any harm, without fraud, without malice, and without extortion—rather, we are to endeavor to do good to one another, according to the end to which our Lord has joined us together. That end is that we should so communicate with our neighbors, so that no man is wedded to his own profit, but all of us seek the common welfare.

No wonder now, though, that the Devil overcomes us easily and stealthily in many ways, both evening and morning, and every minute. For where is this soundness that Saint Paul requires here first of all? Nay, rather every one of us flatters ourselves, and we think we have done much when we have put on a few fair

countenances and have not been utter rebels against God so that the world cannot upbraid us for despising His majesty. Then, if we do not act like stark madmen but pretend some fair show and make some polite appearance of religion, we think we have discharged our duty very well when, in the meantime, the Devil has turned us quite away from the soundness and substance of which Saint Paul speaks here.

It is the same with righteousness. For we would like to content God with a little. Indeed, we will confess readily enough with our mouths that it is right that God should be served and honored and that we should live peacefully together and endeavor to do good to one another. We will condemn robbery, extortion, whoredom, deceit, and wrongdoing, but yet when all is done, we want God to accept the little He finds in us and to be content with it. But by that means, behold, the Devil finds us still unprepared. Since we open such a gap to him, we should not be surprised that he gains the upper hand of us.

Therefore, it would be much better for us to go through with our race and to hold firmly to the equipment that enables us to stand fast. For we may see many who have a good zeal, as far as can be judged, and yet it shall be but a passing breeze—it will not continue. And why? Because we are not properly armed against Satan.

For proof of this, if we follow what is shown to us here, it is certain that the promise will never deceive us. For although Saint Paul exhorts the faithful to stand fast and to hold out to the end, there is a certain warranty included therein, that God will always help them at their need and that they shall not find themselves disappointed if they continue to fight under His banner, continually calling upon His power and using the means offered them by His Word.

Therefore, if there is such cowardice in us that we are so afraid of the Devil that he causes us to fall down, to stray aside, and to wander quite out of the good way, we must impute all to our own recklessness, because we have not put on the armor that God gives us, but have instead hung it up on a peg.

Afterward, it follows that we should be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. No doubt Saint Paul had an eye to the ancient fashion of men of war. They wore no shoes at home but only when they went to warfare. This was both to defend them from the cold and to save their feet when they entered into battle with the enemy. It is said that the Gospel serves us in this way.

However, there are two other words to be marked also, in that he adds *Preparation* and *Peace*. But that we may lay things forth in their proper order, let us note that Saint Paul assigns to the Gospel this power and property of "shooing" us because when we are trained in the doctrine of the Gospel as we ought to be, then we may walk safely through the world.

For we see how unbelievers are plunged head over heels in it. Those whom God has not prepared to walk and to attain the kingdom of heaven are so ensnared in this world that they are altogether unprofitable, as though they had their legs broken, and they sink themselves deeper and deeper into it every day. Therefore, there is but one only way to make us wade through this world and to attain the kingdom of heaven: which is to have such instruction as is in the Gospel—namely, that God, having adopted us as His children, will not have us dwell here beneath forever but that we should come unto Him, even with all haste and speed. Again, that we should not intermingle ourselves with the uncleanness of unbelievers but separate ourselves from them.

Thus much concerning the first point.

There is also the word *Preparation*, whereby Saint Paul means to make us understand that if we have the skill to avail ourselves of the Gospel, we shall be rid of all things that hinder us from coming unto God. What is it, then, that we find there? It is this: whereas formerly we were, as it were, fallen asleep—or rather doting in our pleasures and vanities—our Lord disposes us to come unto Him.

We have seen already that this whole world is in darkness, and that as long as we abide in it, we are as if we were asleep, so that we see no way before us and only reel and stumble—or rather lie along in it as dead men, as it is said in Isaiah (Isaiah 59:10). If we are not rescued by our Lord Jesus Christ, we will continue to lie snoring in it, forever weltering in that darkness.

Therefore, let us learn to put ourselves in such readiness as our loins may be girded up (as says our Lord Jesus Christ, Luke 12:35), and our lamps burning in our hands, that we may see the way by the light that is given us in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is not without cause named the *Light of the World* (John 8:12). Again, let us withdraw ourselves from this spiritual drunkenness that turns unbelievers away from the kingdom of heaven and holds them down here beneath until they come unto final destruction.

Therefore, let us mark well that we cannot profit fully from the Gospel until we are made ready—that is to say, until we are weeded out from all things here below, and our Lord has so disposed us to Himself that our only labor is to come always forward and nearer unto Him, until we are gone out of this world and are quite rid and set loose from all the bonds of Satan and from all the means he uses to hinder us.

If we understand this well, we shall have profited greatly for the day.

But Saint Paul adds another title to the Gospel, which serves to make us more in love with it, saying that it is the *Gospel of Peace*. And thereby he gives us courage to fight, as if he should say, "My friends, it is true that your enemies are mighty and will give you hard skirmishes, insomuch that you would not be able to withstand them, but would be overthrown a hundred thousand times in an hour if God did not aid you. Nevertheless, if you do not refuse the help that God gives you, but rather make it effective by striving to resist all evil, you shall have peace in the midst of war." And why? Because the Gospel always brings that benefit with it.

Now, it is something great when we can fight without being afraid. For we see in what a state they are who are out of peace: there is neither counsel nor good judgment in them. They are utterly disheartened, and, in short, trouble always dismays them. However, it is true that we must have care with us, as has been said before. For if we are careless, we will be easily overtaken. Nevertheless, this care does not hinder us from entering into the battle freely with a steady and well-settled mind, forasmuch as God is on our side and will display His mighty power in our defense. This is the thing that ought to bring us peace, so that no fear may overwhelm us or cause us to turn away or rob us of good judgment. Instead, the more we are afflicted, the more we should flee to God, praying Him to help us and provide for all our needs, which He knows much better than we ourselves do.

Now then, we see what Saint Paul's meaning is when he says we should be shod with the Gospel. It is not to keep us in this world, but rather that we should be ready to travel freely toward the kingdom of heaven and, moreover, have a quiet mind to serve God, trusting

assuredly that despite all the troubles we must endure, we shall not perish. For He assures us not only to help us in one assault but to continue with us to the end, even until He has delivered us from all the griefs and troubles we sustain today.

Furthermore, we must above all things take the shield or buckler of faith, and the spiritual sword, which is God's Word. As touching this shield, he explains that by means of it, we may beat back the burning or fiery darts that the enemy hurls at us. It might seem that Saint Paul uses an unnecessary distinction here, in separating God's Word and faith, and that he should not set down two things that are essentially one. For faith is nothing by itself unless it is grounded upon God's Word, and God's Word is of no advantage to us unless we receive it by faith. But his distinguishing between these two things—which, nevertheless, go together—was for easier understanding.

He sets faith as the shield, saying that we should use it to ward off all the enemy's darts. Again, he shows us that of our own power, we are not able to ward off the blows that Satan can give us, but that they would be deadly. For he thinks it insufficient to say simply "to ward off the blows or assaults," but he says "the darts." Now, one will sooner be hit unawares by darts than by spears or swords. Similarly, today a man will sooner be hit with a musket ball or cannon shot than with a sword that is swung in front of him, which he can more easily avoid.

Saint Paul, therefore, speaks of the devil's darts, just as he had earlier spoken of his wiles. Let us mark that Satan not only uses force but could also wound us to death by subtle means if we were not protected by faith. For (as is said elsewhere), we must know his wiles (2 Corinthians 2:11), and if we do not, we can never withstand him. He is the father of lies, and besides that, he has such a store of wiles

that no one can have more to beguile us and entrap us. Therefore, let us heed these warnings so that we may be more alert to apply the promises given to us in God's Word to our benefit.

He speaks of fiery darts to show that the wounds would be deadly, as I said before, if God did not set His power before us, defend us, and preserve us by it. Now, we see what the force of faith is.

Now, look how much is attributed to faith, so much is taken away from men. For faith borrows all things from God's mere grace and liberality. Therefore, let us mark that in this text Saint Paul meant to humble us and to show us that God must provide us with all things necessary for our victory. Thus, whoever makes shields out of any other bulwarks devised to repel Satan will have but a spider's web (as they say), and Satan will only mock their presumption. Inasmuch that when they think they have all the mountains of the world to fortify them, it will profit them nothing at their time of need.

Therefore, let us learn to make faith our buckler. That is to say, when we intend to enter into battle and to hold out, let us remember that God is our Father because He has elected and chosen us to be His children out of His infinite goodness. Seeing He has assured us that He will always be on our side, and that He is greater than all the world, and that He has put us in good and safe keeping by ordaining our Lord Jesus Christ to be our Shepherd, let us gather all those promises together and make a shield of them to set before us whenever we are assailed. Let us defy the devil because we are under the protection of our God, who is of invincible power, and because our Lord Jesus Christ has taken upon Himself the charge of our salvation and promised to be a faithful keeper of our souls to the end (John 10:28).

When we reach that point, then we will beat back the darts of the devil. For on one side, he will labor to make us distrust God's grace, and on the other, he will tempt us to believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is far from us. He will try to provoke us to murmur and grumble against Him or to entertain trivial and unprofitable questions or even blasphemies. All these are darts. Again, when we are enticed by any wicked lust or longing in our hearts, it is the quickest way for us to be caught off guard. True, at first, these temptations may not seem bitter or burdensome, but they are deadly darts nonetheless. Faith, however, repels them all.

How? If we are tempted to covetousness because we fear that the earth may fail us, God has taken upon Himself the responsibility to nourish and sustain us. So, let us rest in Him and ask for our daily bread at His hand. If the devil tempts us to immorality, we know that Jesus Christ has incorporated us into Himself, made us His own members, and we are one with Him. Shall we then defile ourselves in filthiness? What a grievous thing that would be! He has set us free and cleansed us by His blood. Shall we go back and wallow in our uncleanness? Are we tempted to gluttony? Has not God created food for our sustenance? (Yes), but should we overturn the order that God has set, where food should sustain us and direct us to heavenly life? Shall we turn what is meant for our good into harm? Again, are we tempted by ambition to glorify ourselves? But what example has our Lord Jesus Christ set before us? (Philippians 2:5-8). Moreover, if we seek greatness in this world, we shall be enemies of God, for He resists the proud, and their pride must inevitably be brought low (James 4:6). Thus, in every way, we can beat back the darts of Satan.

Again, if anyone questions you, saying, "How can you be sure that all your efforts will benefit you? Where is the reward that the Gospel promises?" Faith must work in this case, for we do not see the

reward that is promised. Instead, we see many troubles, encounters, and sorrows. To be sure, we often seem to be the most miserable creatures in the world. What then shall we do? We would falter every minute if God did not reach out His hand to us. How do we take hold of His hand? That is to say, how do we benefit from His power? Faith must be at work here. We must look to the things that are not seen, as the Apostle says in Hebrews (Hebrews 11:1). In this way, we will be able to beat back Satan's darts.

Finally, Paul adds the Word, which, as I said before, should not be separated from faith. But I have already told you that Saint Paul meant to add that statement for further clarification.

As if he had said, "My friends, when I told you that you might withstand your enemies and beat back all their darts by means of faith, it is because God's Word cannot fail you. Since you have the promises of salvation and God speaks to you, so that you know He has you in His keeping and that you cannot be confounded if you trust in Him, therefore I set faith before you as a buckler. However, if you have faith, you have more than just one buckler. For God's Word is the true spiritual sword, whereby we may not only beat back our enemy but also discomfit him and trample him under our feet."

What remains now but to learn how to benefit more from God's Word than we have done up to this point? Seeing, then, that our Lord Jesus Christ grants us the inestimable grace and benefit of teaching us in His school, let us consider to what end He does this. It is to arm us against Satan because we cannot live in His obedience and walk in the way He shows us without fighting. And He also gives us armor. So then, let us assure ourselves that we have a good sword when we know how to apply God's Word to our lives. Moreover, that faith (which arises from it) will be a good shield for us.

Also, we shall have the helmet of the hope of salvation, and to be short, we shall be thoroughly fenced and furnished on all sides. For from this comes the soundness of conscience and holiness of life, which he has spoken of. Finally, we shall lack nothing if we know how to use well the means that God sets forth for our welfare.

So then, although the state of the faithful may seem as irksome as can be, because God exercises them against all the devils in hell—and not for one day only, but for the entire span of their lives—yet we must think it sweet and amiable, seeing that God provides for all our needs. At least if we are awake and consider the dangers we are in, we will resist them.

Let us consider, I say, on the one side, Satan's violence and force, and on the other, his craft and subtlety. And together with that, let us call upon our God (as Saint Paul will show us again hereafter), and also consider the benefits that God's Word brings us.

Here we see how the wretched Papists have stripped themselves stark naked of all the armor that should serve them for their salvation. For what is the Word of God among them? A nose of wax. They have not been ashamed to belch out that blasphemy, both in all their books and also in all their sermons: namely, that there is no certainty in God's Word.

Yes, but it would be wrong to call it the spiritual sword if it did not arm us against all the assaults of Satan. Therefore, we could not repel the temptations with which we are provoked to evil unless God's Word served us in that regard. And if we did not find it so by experience, surely Saint Paul would never have given it that name.

Now then, let us endeavor to profit more and more by it. Let us be good students and give good ear to it while God has His mouth open

to teach us. We shall find that Saint Paul has not in vain promised us here that we shall always gain the upper hand, even until we come to the heavenly kingdom, where we shall fully enjoy the fruit of our victory.

Now let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to make us feel them more deeply, and that in the meantime, we may always resort to Him, and not be disheartened, even though we are all too unworthy to offer ourselves before His Majesty. Let us not falter because of our vices and imperfections, but seeing that it has pleased Him to be on our side, may He make the remedies He has given us serve us when we need them, as we desire them at His hand.

May we endeavor to profit from His Word so that it may guide us to the end, so that we may not falter in any encounter, but that the devil may be confounded, and our Lord Jesus Christ exalted, for it is under Him and by His power that we fight, and He is also the source of our victory.

May it please Him to grant this grace not only to us but also to all people. Amen.

**The Forty-Seventh Sermon,
which is the fifth upon the sixth chapter.**

18. Praying with all prayer and supplication, at all times in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints:

19. And for me, that in opening my mouth, utterance may be given unto me with boldness, to proclaim the mystery of the Gospel (Ephesians 6:18-19).

Many, supposing themselves to have profited well in faith, are yet ignorant of what belongs to prayer. They think it enough if they can say, "God help me," when they see any danger at hand, and yet in the meantime, do not flee to Him for refuge. But such people do not understand the purpose of the promises that are made to us.

For God does not say simply that He will care for us and help us in all our needs; He also draws us to Him and encourages us to pray. Therefore, the two cannot be separated—that is, we should rest upon the hope of God's promises, have them deeply rooted in our hearts, and be stirred up to approach our God, so that our faith is exercised in prayer and supplication.

Thus, we see that they are inseparable things. The more we grow in faith, the more earnestly we should call upon our God, acknowledging and confessing that our salvation lies in His hands and that we expect all good things from Him. Since we are so often slow in this regard, He sets down two words, *prayer* and *supplication*, to express that we should not approach this coldly, lightly, or merely out of courtesy. Instead, we must be deeply moved, continue in prayer (as He will soon add), and persist without ceasing at any time.

It is true that God tells us through His prophet Isaiah that He will hear us before we cry and His hand will be ready to help us before we

have opened our mouths (Isaiah 65:24). However, this is not to make us lazy, as if we could just wait idly for Him with open mouths, but to show that He will not allow us to linger when we call upon Him. It demonstrates that He is not negligent to help us and, as proof, He often anticipates our needs, as we have seen by experience.

Yet, He still wants us to offer a true proof of our faith by praying to Him. The best way to show that His promises have taken effect in us, and that we trust in them, is that as soon as we are touched by any grief or affliction, we go straight to Him and unburden our hearts, as is said elsewhere (Philippians 4:6).

Now, we see how we must take advantage of God's Word, by which we are assured that He will never fail us. This means that we must seek from Him the things He has promised to provide. Prayers, therefore, are like keys that open the treasures that God reserves for us, treasures that He does not intend to keep from us. Thus, we must open the way to these treasures by praying.

And yet Saint Paul does not think it enough to say that our faith must be matched with prayers and supplications to our God, but he also says, "*with all prayer.*" As if he meant to say, in all matters, in all things both great and small, in all our doings, whatever they may be, that must be our anchor. For it might happen that we would call upon God only when we thought of Him or when we had some matter of importance in hand. But Saint Paul, as I said, wants us to render to God that homage everywhere and at all times, protesting that we cannot receive any good but from His hand, and by His mere free gift. This is what the word "*all*" means.

Indeed, we see how our Lord takes charge of our whole life, with the condition that we should seek Him even for the lowliest things, for matters we would not even ask of a friend who is our equal or

companion. Even those things He wants us to ask of Him. For under the phrase that He gives us "*our daily bread*" (Matthew 6:11), it is certain He includes all that pertains to our life. Alas, how many small things we need, which we would be ashamed to admit even to our inferiors! Yet God humbles Himself so far as to care for our persons, which are but wretched and decaying, and yet He will not have us hesitate to ask Him for what is necessary and expedient for us.

Since this is the case, let us remember well what Saint Paul says, that we should pray to our God for all things we need, assured that He will yield to us so far that nothing will escape His hands.

He explicitly says that we must pray "*at all times, and in the Spirit.*" When he says "*in the Spirit,*" it is surely to exclude all hypocrisy, for we know that most of the world babbles enough when they ought to come to God. However, it is only their lips or the tips of their tongues that perform their duty. But that is not the manner in which God desires to be prayed to or called upon. He does not approve of such supplications but rather abhors them, because when we pray to Him so foolishly, we use Him as a false cover, which is a kind of treachery.

For if we think we will be heard by God merely for our babbling, while our hearts are dead and our prayers do not come from a rightly disposed and earnest mind, we make God into an idol or a little child, thus doing great wrong to His majesty. To put it briefly, we transfigure Him after our own fancy. Therefore, it is necessary that our prayers not only be made with our mouths but also come from the depths of our hearts.

Now, since we do not have this power of our own, the Holy Spirit must be the one to work in us. Thus, by the word "*Spirit,*" it can be understood that we should beseech God to govern us in such a way that He thoroughly touches us so that we may pray to Him as we

ought, and that He may also accept our prayers, recognizing in them the marks of His Holy Spirit.

We must always remember what is said in the Epistle to the Romans, "*We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans*" (Romans 8:26). For, in respect to ourselves, prayer is something that surpasses our understanding, and even the most capable among us fail in this regard, despite the fact that many believe they know perfectly how and what to pray to God.

However, such opinions only shut us out from the gate unless, upon recognizing our faults and infirmities, we go directly to the remedy. As Saint Paul says, "*The Spirit intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words*" (Romans 8:26), without which we could not even utter the word "Father."* Also, as he says to the Galatians, "*Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father'*" (Galatians 4:6).

It is certain, therefore, that we will never be properly disposed to pray to God unless He governs us by His Holy Spirit.

Moreover, Saint Paul's intent (as I have declared already) is to exclude all counterfeiting, and that we should not hope to justify our case before God by ceremonies or by "popish holiness" (as they term it), in making long prayers and many circumstances, but rather allow the Spirit to bear sway.

Wherefore, first of all, let us be so touched that the Spirit may be our master and teacher, and direct us in the things we have to utter in calling upon our God. Secondly, let our prayers proceed from the bottom of our heart, and let us put this saying of the Psalms into practice: "*The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on*

him in truth” (Psalm 145:18). For it is said that He is near only to such as possess that quality.

And not without cause is such an explanation given. For (as I have declared already), we are so inclined to deceit that, in our estimation, God ought to yield to us and to our nature. But it is the very opposite. Now then, forasmuch as God perceives that men abuse His name in that fashion, making prayers after their own manner—that is to say, prayers wrapped in hypocrisy and untruth, and lacking substance and sincerity—He says expressly that we must not hope to be heard by Him, nor to obtain anything from Him, unless our prayers are ruled by a right heart, meaning that we must pray with sincere affection.

Thus, you see what we have to remember concerning Saint Paul's saying. And when he says, “*steadfastly and with endurance to the end,*” it is to express even more clearly that it is never out of season to call upon God. This is added because we would gladly exempt ourselves from our duty to God. In this, we see how imperfect our minds are and how devoid of wisdom and reason we can be.

For all our welfare consists in having access to God, seeking help from His hand, and being near to Him so that we are assured He regards us and cares for our well-being. Besides, who would not desire to be heard? Yet, when it comes to praying to God, it seems we are dragged to it by force, though we ought to be drawn to it with love, as I have shown already.

Now then, this vice of recklessness and coldness, in that we never pray to God unless we are compelled or constrained, must be corrected. Saint Paul, therefore, tells us that we must not wait until utter necessity forces us, but rather we must understand that all times are suitable and convenient to resort to God. Indeed, the more

we are urged forward, the faster we should run, for it is certain that we are often spurred by afflictions and manifold troubles that God sends us.

And just as if a donkey will not go, it must have a good cudgel laid upon its back, so God, perceiving that we do not come to Him willingly, is often forced to draw us to Him as if by violence. But still, every person must cheer himself up, even if no urgent necessity compels him.

In short, we must pray to our God both in times of prosperity and in times of adversity. That is the meaning of these words: “*at all times.*”

And thereupon Saint Paul says that we must be watchful in it, even with all persistence, to pray for all the saints. In saying that we must be watchful, he touches on a vice to which we are too much inclined, even wholly given over: that is, we are sleepy when we should pray unto God and need to be awakened. Because of our heaviness and sluggishness, we are commanded to wake and keep a continual watch, so that we do not let opportunities slip but always resort unto God with prayer.

There is no person, no matter how perfect, who does not find this malady within themselves—that when we should pray to God, many things distract us, sending our minds wandering abroad. Instead of holding out earnestly, we find our thoughts roving here and there. Seeing then that we are so fickle, with minds so skittish that it is hard to hold them steady for any length of time, it is all the more necessary for us to be watchful, to bring ourselves back again into the good way when we have strayed from it.

Let us not wait until the devil has gained the upper hand, plucking us away from our prayers and supplications, breaking off the continual

course of them and the steadfastness that ought to be in them. Rather, when we pray, let us be as though we are locked in and tied to it—that is, let all our thoughts be fully focused and fixed upon the matter at hand.

Even the heathens, when they were about to sacrifice to their idols, had this proverb: "While you worship God, do nothing else; be wholly occupied and fastened thereunto, thinking of nothing else." If God wrested such a confession from them, what ought we to do when we offer Him the chief sacrifice He values above all others—when we confess that we are indebted to Him for all good things? Should we mix our own vanities with it, making our prayer merely a matter of custom or fashion?

This watchfulness that Saint Paul speaks of is very necessary, given the frailty of our minds and especially because we are so prone to wandering. Therefore, when we go about to pray unto God, let us focus our entire minds upon it, letting no other cares or affections entangle our thoughts. Let our coming to prayer be as though we had broken all other bonds. That is why mention is made of lifting up ourselves in prayer and supplication. True, in offering ourselves to God, we must come with humility, but we must also lift up our hearts in such a way that we may, in a sense, stand in the presence of our God. This, I say, is the diligence required.

He goes on to say, "with all persistence," which emphasizes that if we intend to be well-disposed to praying, we must not approach it lazily. If we follow what our own nature shows us, we will be far from approaching God. Therefore, each person must force themselves. For when Saint Paul speaks in this way, it is as if he says, "My friends, you will find such coldness in yourselves that you will never pray to

God, nor will you ever be willing to pray unless you provoke and force yourselves."

The devil will always seek to blind you, so that you do not see the need to pray unto God. And if you remain asleep, it will cause your God to forsake you, seeing that you are so thankless as to despise His benefits and give Him no honor for them, nor even acknowledge that all your welfare proceeds from Him. Like wicked fools, we defile the benefits God bestows upon us unless we acknowledge that we have all things from His hand, even by asking for the things we lack from Him, and by giving Him thanks for the things we have already received. So then, let us learn to match our watchfulness with all persistence.

And herein we comprehend holding out or perseverance: it is not enough for us to pray unto God by starts and bursts (as they say), but we must continue in it, and that in two ways. First, when we have prayed today—both evening and morning, and every hour—we must hold on still and never swerve from that course as long as we live. For our faith (as I said) must exercise itself, and the means to exercise it is through prayer.

There is yet another form of perseverance: when we have asked God to help us in this or that matter, we must repeat the same request—not just twice or thrice—but as often as we need, even a hundred or a thousand times. For example, although God has told us that He will come to our aid before we even open our mouths to Him, yet He does not always show it openly to our eyes. Therefore, we must never grow weary in waiting for God's help. Also, it is not fitting for us to be heard according to our own preferences, because God knows what is best and most expedient for us.

So then, He must govern us according to His will. But (as I said) if we pray to Him in the right manner, He promises that we shall obtain all our requests, even before we have uttered them. Nevertheless, He may sometimes hold us at a distance, so much so that it may seem as though He is asleep when we call upon Him, or that He has turned His back on us. For this reason, perseverance is necessary, so that if we are troubled with any distress and seek relief from God, we must not do it just once and be done, but must return to it often and be (as one might say) persistent, according to the parable our Lord Jesus told us about the widow who dealt with a judge who had neither fear of God nor regard for men, yet she obtained her request through persistence (Luke 18:1-8).

So must we do—that is, we must be persistent with God. Not that He is slow to help us (as I said before), but because He will test the constancy of our faith. For those who pray to God and then become impatient or angry if He does not relieve them immediately are not truly praying to Him, but (as it were) summoning Him to be at the command of their desires. However, we must restrain all our passions and desires to align with God's will, so that even when we pray for Him to act swiftly, we may nevertheless be patient and content to wait for His timing, whether that is today, tomorrow, or as long as it pleases Him.

You see then that we must continue in prayer and supplication. We must pray presently for the needs that press us today, and likewise tomorrow for those that may come. We must pray daily and consistently. Moreover, if God does not deliver us as soon as we would like, we must not cease to renew our petitions until we perceive that we have gained from our praying, and that He has shown us the fulfillment of His promise.

Since it is difficult for us to be brought to pray properly to God, Saint Paul here puts forth something that ought to persuade us—that is, we are bound to pray not only for ourselves but also to care for our neighbors and consider them in our prayers. It is true that if we properly understood our own miseries, the great number of sins within us, and the dire need we have to be helped by God, we would find ample reason to dedicate ourselves entirely to prayer and supplication. Indeed, we could spend our whole lives sighing and lamenting before God for our offenses, asking Him to reach out His hand so that Satan may not overcome us.

As I said, we would have enough cause within ourselves. But now, when we must extend our prayers further—that is, to the whole Church of God—and understand that God does not want me to think only of myself but also to remember all His chosen people, knowing that He has bound me to them, and I must endeavor to include them in my prayers as much as possible. Seeing, then, that we are resolved on this matter, it must be that we are truly blockish if we are not more deeply moved and set afire with the carefulness spoken of here, and furthermore, that we continue steadfastly in it.

Howbeit, Saint Paul speaks here expressly of the Saints or the faithful, yet that is no impediment to praying generally for all men. For the wretched unbelievers and the ignorant have great need to be prayed for unto God. Behold, they are on the high road to destruction. If we saw a beast at the point of perishing, we would have pity on it. What then shall we do when we see a soul in peril, which is so precious before God, as He has shown by ransoming it with the blood of His own Son? If we see a poor soul heading toward destruction, ought we not to be moved with compassion and kindness to desire that God remedy it?

Saint Paul's meaning in this text is not that we should leave the wretched unbelievers alone without care for them. Rather, we should pray generally for all men. However, he also shows that we must have a special care for those whom God has knit to us with a closer bond. Likewise, when Paul speaks of almsgiving (Galatians 6:10), his intent is that it should be done to all men without exception who are in need. Yet, he adds that we must especially help those who are of the household of faith. The same applies to our prayers and supplications. The spiritual brotherhood which God has set among us ought to touch us more deeply and make the Church of God come before our eyes and into our remembrance as often as we pray.

The words "Our Father" ought to teach us to make our prayers communal. None of us can say "My Father" alone, but we say "Our Father" to show that we ought not to have such care for ourselves that we forget those who belong to us and are linked to us by such a close bond, as I have already explained. That is why Saint Paul says explicitly that we must pray for the Saints.

If this truth were well imprinted in our hearts (as I said before), we would be more fervent in praying to God without end or ceasing. Consider the state and plight of the Church in these days. Although the Lord gives us some rest, yet our poor brethren are tormented by tyrants and the enemies of the faith. Some are forced to flee; some have their goods taken from them; many are thrust into prison; and others are burned at the stake. These poor souls are in constant distress, facing new terrors every minute of every hour.

We see the most terrible threats and menacing actions. We see how the devil drives all those who seek to abolish the doctrine of the Gospel with outrageous fury. We witness the stumbling blocks Satan thrusts in through his champions, scattering the faithful. Many seek

nothing less than to bring the Gospel to shame. Meanwhile, the poor servants of God, who devote themselves to His service, are troubled and vexed in every way.

If we gather together all the miseries and adversities to which the Church is subject, and consider the distress of each of our brethren, must it not be that we are duller than brute beasts if we are not moved to pray unto God with true perseverance? For though I may be at ease today, there are many thousands in great perplexity. I show that I cut myself off (as much as I can) from the body of our Lord Jesus Christ if I do not pity the members to whom I am linked.

It is not without reason, therefore, that Saint Paul sets all the Saints before us when he intends to inflame us with a rightly disposed mind in praying and to continue faithfully in the same.

And thereupon he also requires that men should pray for him. "You shall pray for me also," says he, "that God may give me boldness in opening my mouth, so that I may utter the secret of the Gospel accordingly" (Ephesians 6:19).

When Saint Paul commends himself to the prayers of his neighbors, he shows in this way how humble we ought to be. He did not pretend in exhorting the Ephesians to such praying; he truly expressed his need for it before God and His angels. Now let us compare ourselves with Saint Paul. Who among us is so able that we can do without the prayers of our neighbors when even Saint Paul does not exempt himself from such need? Therefore, let every man in his prayers to God desire to be a partaker of all the prayers made throughout the Church, both generally and particularly.

Indeed, this promise shall always remain true, that God will be near to all those who call upon Him (Psalm 145:18). Jonah was not

forsaken, though he was in the belly of the whale (Jonah 2:1). Now, therefore, when we are forsaken by men, when we are as good as dead and the memory of us is as good as buried, yet God will not cease to regard us. He will cast His eye upon us to help us, according to this saying: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry" (Psalm 34:15).

Nevertheless, to humble us further, our Lord tells us that we need each other's help and that there should be mutual sharing among us. Besides this, there is another reason: God desires to keep our charity in action. Therefore, let us learn to show, both by our alms, by our counsel, and by all other helps, that none of us is given to himself or his own private profit. Rather, since God has linked us together, let each of us seek to help our members and to communicate with each other in prayers and supplications. For commending one another to God in this manner is the chief duty of charity. That is why Saint Paul specifically asks the Ephesians to pray for him.

Now, if anyone alleges that this is a sign of unbelief—saying, "If God's promise suffices us, does it not show distrust to ask others to pray for us?"—the answer is simple. While God says He will have pity on all who seek Him, He does not nullify what He commands in so many other passages: namely, that we should be mindful of one another. Furthermore, we should note that following God's Word can never be blamed as unbelief. Misbelief occurs when people go beyond the bounds of God's Word and add things He has not commanded.

For example, in the papacy, men have invented so many patrons and advocates that they no longer know whom to turn to. This stems from their own overactive imaginations and their distrust of what God has revealed. We have this general lesson: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you" (Psalm 50:15). God wants us to

turn to Him alone, confident that He will not refuse us when we pray in His Son's name.

Our Lord Jesus Christ comes before us and offers Himself as our advocate, saying that He will intercede for us. As long as we walk in this path, we need not fear that we will be denied access to the Father or that He will not receive us. This is the testimony of Holy Scripture. But what have the papists done? They say, "We need advocates to intercede for us." It is true that we need an advocate, but our Lord Jesus Christ, whom God the Father has appointed for us, should suffice. He alone has been assigned to that office.

In contrast, the papists invent advocates in paradise at their own pleasure, thereby stripping Jesus Christ of the priestly dignity given to Him by the Father, even confirmed with a solemn oath. They are not content with that but have patched together such confusion that their case has become a horrible mess.

As for us, if we follow what is taught in God's Word, we shall walk in faith and need not fear going astray or being blamed for unbelief, for God will always guide us rightly. This then is the answer to the question or doubt that might be raised: Is it a sign of distrust to ask others to pray for us, when every person can be heard individually? The things God has joined together, man must not separate. We must always remember that every person should engage in prayer and also draw their neighbors to join them in prayer. Thus, we will never turn away from faith.

Now if any man objects further that our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be the only advocate and patron if we make supplication for one another, the answer is easy. It is said that Jesus Christ is the only mediator, and that all men, both great and small, must resort to Him

to obtain their requests (1 Timothy 2:5). For unless our prayers are sanctified by His holiness, surely they will be foul and infected.

When Isaiah was commanded to deliver the message that God had appointed, he said, "Woe is me! For I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5). How, then, shall I call upon my God and speak familiarly to Him, as it were mouth to mouth, seeing that we are full of uncleanness and infection? Thus, all our prayers must be sanctified by our Lord Jesus Christ, or we will never find favor with God.

It is also most certain that Christ is the only advocate and intercessor, as even the ancient patriarchs, prophets, and apostles were bound to follow that rule, and we must continue in the same way. Yet, this does not prevent us from praying for one another, for we all have but one common head, which is our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all our prayers must be united. In this way, we may all with one accord and in harmony declare that we have no other welfare than what it pleases God to provide. Our full felicity rests upon His care, and based on that trust, we come directly to Him.

The means for us to continue on the right path and ensure that our Lord Jesus Christ is not diminished is to take Him as our only advocate and not turn aside after our own vain imaginations, as has happened in the papacy. We see that the papists have not hesitated to use this very text to persuade us to pray to Saint Peter and Saint Paul, even to saints of the Pope's own invention, or rather to idols, which the devil has whispered into his ear.

But here we must consider that we are commanded to pray mutually for one another because God has also commanded us to seek help and comfort from our neighbors. Our Lord wills it so and promises

that we shall find it. Saint James speaks similarly: "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another" (James 5:16). That is to say, when you are pressed with temptation and feel many infirmities and vices within you, let each man unburden himself toward his neighbors, saying, "Alas, I have such a thing that grieves me; I have offended my God in such and such a way." By confessing these infirmities, you will stir one another to pray.

But now, is there anything similar between the saints who have passed and us? Will Saint Peter and Saint Paul come to confess their sins to us, so that we might pray for them? Or do they have ears long enough to hear our prayers? Certainly not! We see then that God intended to restrict mutual prayer to those who are still living and engaged in the battle. Those who need our prayers shall also pray for us, and we must do the same for them. But as for those who have departed from this world, it is not for us to make them our advocates before God.

If we cannot appoint an advocate in a legal matter concerning even a few shillings, because it is within the judge's power to appoint such a person, how much more presumptuous is it for us to assume the power to appoint advocates in heaven? What pride and arrogance is this? Is it not an affront to God's majesty and authority?

Therefore, let us learn to pray for one another within the bounds God has established, without wandering into each person's conceit. We should be content to care for all the members of the Church, as we are bound to do, and to take comfort and joy in the fact that God has graciously bound His whole Church to us. Through this mutual communication, we show ourselves to be members of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

At the same time, let us all aim toward our head, knowing that our prayers, if not sanctified by our Lord Jesus Christ, would be unworthy, foul, filthy, and offensive. Knowing this, let us never presume to open our mouths to call upon God except in the name of our Mediator, assured that it is His office to intercede for us and to make us heard, so that we may find God favorable and eager to help us.

This, then, is the way for us to pray boldly to God, as is said in the texts from Romans 8 and James, and also as we have seen in the third chapter of this Epistle. We must call upon God through the faith we have in Jesus Christ, assured that He not only came into the world to shed His blood once for the remission of our sins but also stands continually before God to intercede for us. Thus, we can be fully convinced that, though we are but wretched earthworms, God accepts us and avows us as His children through Christ. He will always be merciful in receiving our prayers and supplications, not because we offer them in our own name or through our own merits (for that would be foolish presumption), but because He has commanded it and shown us the way we should follow.

Now let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to pardon them, notwithstanding that we deserve to be quite cut off from the hope of salvation. And forasmuch as it has pleased Him to call us to Himself, and to promise us that we shall be received in mercy if we come to Him with faith and humility, let us pray Him to prepare our hearts in such a way that we may make requests to Him as He allows.

Moreover, may He bear with our infirmities, so that we may not fail to obtain favor, even though there may be many imperfections in our prayers. And so, let us all say: Almighty God, heavenly Father, &c.

The Forty-Eighth Sermon, which is the sixth and last upon the sixth Chapter.

19 Praying also for me, that in opening my mouth, utterance may be given to me, with boldness to utter the secret of the Gospel.

20 For which I am an ambassador in chains, to the end (I say) that I may speak freely as it becomes me to speak.

21 But that you may also know of my state and what I do: Tychicus, our dear brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall show you all things.

22 Whom I have sent to you for the same purpose, that you might know my state, and he may comfort your hearts.

23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith from God, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Grace be with all them which love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

We saw this morning how we ought to be careful in praying one for another, and the fruit that comes from it: namely, that every person who is a member of the Son of God must assure himself that the

whole Church labors for him, and that generally both Jesus Christ and all his must be refused if God does not have pity on us.

But we also need to note that Saint Paul, in commending himself to the prayers of the Church, is not as mindful of his body as he is of something far more excellent—namely, the proper execution of the charge and office committed to him. If a man is sick, in need, or troubled by his enemies, we tend to cry out for help and succor, wanting everyone to occupy themselves with us. And why? Because we are fleshly: as soon as we feel any disease in our bodies, we are sorrowful at heart. But in the meantime, we forget the chief point—namely, the things that concern the everlasting salvation of our souls.

Again, when it comes to serving God, every person thinks they are sufficient in themselves to do it without help from their neighbors. But Saint Paul shows here that he does not consider himself sufficient to execute the charge committed to him of preaching the Gospel without help from above. Therefore, he requires the prayers of the Church.

Afterward, he shows that he values this more than his own life, despite the fact that he was held in prison and even chained. You see here that Saint Paul is held in strict confinement, like a miserable offender, and looks daily for nothing but death. And yet, for all that, he does not care as much for his life as for the advancement and promotion of God's word. Indeed, he would rather die than be slothful in doing the thing that was required of him. This is the key point we must remember from this text.

True it is that in the Epistle to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:1), he also notes the reason why he desired to be delivered from the wicked and faithless, who ceased not to lay snares for him. And why?

It was lawful for him to set store by his life, but yet for all that, he did not set the cart before the horse, as they say. For we see by this text (1 Thessalonians 1:2), and also by that which is written to the Colossians, that he always had more regard to discharge his duty towards God, especially in respect of the Church, by preaching the Gospel faithfully, than to ease himself or to escape the danger in which he saw he was.

First of all, if our Lord calls us to any charge whatsoever, let us learn to understand our own infirmity, that we may be succored by Him as we need, and not presume upon our own strength or cunning. Rather, let us consider that God must be the one to hold us up by His strong hand, and that we have need to resort unto Him, even desiring (after the example of Saint Paul) to be commended to the prayers of all the members of our Lord Jesus Christ, as indeed it is good reason that we should pray mutually for them as well. That is the first point.

Secondly, although it be lawful for us to desire men to pray for us when we are sick, or when we are pinched with any other affliction, yet, like as we must above all things pray for the coming of God's kingdom and seek the advancing of His glory (Matthew 6:33), making an income of all other things, so in this case, we must learn not to be so wedded to the world and to this transitory life as to cry out for help when we are pinched with any adversity or need, while in the meantime forgetting the things that ought to be preferred before them.

Wherefore let us learn to be careful of our life in such a way that we may covet above all things that God should be glorified in our persons, whether it be by life or by death, as Saint Paul shows us by

his own example in the Epistle to the Philippians (Philippians 1:20). And so you see what we have to remember in the first place.

He expressly says that utterance might be given him in the opening of his mouth (Ephesians 6:19). As if he should say that God might give him such courage and constancy that he might not speak faintly but freely preach the Gospel, not concealing anything that might serve to make known the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the infinite benefits that He has brought us. That is the thing which Saint Paul meant by the opening of his mouth.

Now experience shows that he did not without cause desire of God that his mouth might be opened as a gate or door, for he uses the same term in the aforementioned place in the fourth chapter to the Colossians (Colossians 4:3). For such as shun death—that is to say, the most part of them that profess the preaching of the Gospel—will not hesitate to say something to the matter. But yet they do oftentimes so disguise the truth, or else speak it so fearfully, that the hearers do not know what they mean by it; their words shall be so entangled.

To be brief, whereas they should show with a loud and clear voice what our Lord Jesus Christ is, what God's service is, what true religion is, what faith and repentance are, they touch on these things only briefly. But to thoroughly delve into matters and search them to the bottom, they cannot bear it. And why? Because they see peril hanging over their heads if they should speak with such boldness. However, God's true servants must practice what Saint Paul says to Timothy (2 Timothy 1:7), namely, that they have not a slavish and cowardly heart but march forth freely in their vocation, overcoming all the hostility of the world.

They must have a brazen forehead (Jeremiah 1:18), as it is said in Jeremiah. And although they may see many hard battles and realize that they cannot please the world in doing their duty—knowing that they shall face the enmity of many for exalting the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ as they ought to—yet, let them not cease to go forward and overcome all hindrances. Nevertheless, for as much as we are fearful and feeble, God must work in us and give us the boldness to speak as we ought to.

Then is it not enough for us to be warned of our duty, but we must also add this point of resorting unto God with acknowledgment of our wants and faults. Furthermore, let us all take notice in general that the preaching of the Gospel is too high and weighty a charge unless we are governed by God's Spirit, according also as Saint Paul cries out in the second letter to the Corinthians: “Who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Corinthians 2:16). When he speaks of the preaching whereby men should be reconciled unto God and certified of their salvation—whereby the kingdom of heaven is opened, whereby we have witness of the forgiveness of our sins, and whereby the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is given forth to wash us from all our stains—who is able (says Saint Paul), except God makes us able by working in us? For we cannot so much as think to do good. Yes, we are so far from having power to do anything indeed that we cannot so much as think one good thought unless God gives it to us.

Now then, let such as are called to the office of teaching God's Church understand their own weakness and put themselves wholly into God's hand to be made able to discharge their duty, knowing that they shall never bring it to pass—not even the hundredth part of it—unless it is given to them from above. Therefore, let all men pray for those who are ordained to be teachers and ministers of the Word,

for it is a singular gift of God when we have such shepherds of our souls as are able to guide us well.

Wherefore, let it be known both to great and small that to maintain the Church in her perfect state and soundness, God must give power and strength to those who teach, and men must pray for them. For in so doing, every man procures his own welfare and salvation. If we are negligent in this, it is a token that we make no reckoning, neither of our spiritual life nor of the common welfare of the Church.

Herein we see what we ought to think of such as pretend to preach God's Word in these days, and in the meantime are so fearful that they dare not open their mouths until they have well thought about whether the things they intend to speak may offend or delight the ears of their listeners. What a sort do we see in the Papacy, which row between two streams, and would gladly have it known that they would like to preach purely? But yet, for all that, they paint over the doctrine they utter as crafty merchants, and there is nothing but falsehood in them, according also to what Saint Paul says, using the same comparison when speaking of such as abuse God's Word to purchase the favor of the world and to maintain it (2 Corinthians 2:17).

Now the saying of such men is that they must strike sail, hold with the hare, and hunt with the hound, avoid occasions of stumbling blocks, and that it is not for a man to strive against the stream. As if they were wiser than God, who, speaking by Saint Paul, tells us that Jesus Christ must be preached thoroughly and that men must not go about to bury Him any more. For seeing He is risen unto glory, He will have the voice of His Gospel ring loud and clear, without any dissimulation, as I said before.

Moreover, even where there is no persecution by sword or fire, the world sees that they who call themselves ministers of the Gospel would gladly curry favor in such a way that there is no shift but that our Lord Jesus Christ must stoop and twist His truth to suit men's pleasures. Nowadays, when the preachers perceive that it is not a pleasant thing for them to put men under the yoke of our Lord Jesus Christ, what do they say? "Shall we offend great men and such as are in authority over us? Should we not rather win them by gentleness?"

Yes, but they are wild beasts tossing with their horns against our Lord Jesus Christ, and they cannot abide that there should be any discipline in the Church. Yet, for all that, men must preach to their liking. What treachery and villainy is that! Yet, a man need not go far to find such preachers of the Gospel, that is to say, lewd changers, who turn everything upside down, not knowing what their duty is. The world sees such examples too plainly before their eyes.

Therefore, it stands us so much more to heed this text, where Saint Paul shows that the Gospel is not preached as God has commanded unless men go to it fully and openly, and with full mouth, as they say (Ephesians 6:19).

Now he speaks of the secret of the Gospel to magnify this doctrine, which otherwise would be despised by many who fancy themselves subtle and sharp-witted fellows. You will see a sort of presumptuous people who think themselves so wise that the Gospel is not for them. They find such simplicity in it that they cannot endure it. They wish to soar above the clouds and engage in speculations that might amaze them, yet neither they nor anyone else can understand them.

It is true that at first glance, when men read the Gospel, they see that God, in a way, plays the nurse there (as He Himself says) because He knows our rudeness and how we are like little children. He lispeeth

with us. Yet, for all that, the doctrine surpasses all human wit. For even the very angels wonder at it (1 Peter 1:12) and are compelled to honor it, as it is said in another place (Ephesians 3:10).

Let us understand, then, that in the simplicity seen in the Gospel, there is such wisdom of God that it is incomprehensible unless it pleases Him to reveal it to us by His Holy Spirit. For even if we were the best-learned doctors in the world, we would grasp nothing unless God enlightened our understanding, as is said in the first two chapters of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. That, therefore, is why Saint Paul tells us that there are great secrets in the Gospel, which we cannot understand beyond what God works in us. No human tongue is able to utter them unless God guides both those who hear and are taught, and also those who speak, so that all are governed by His Holy Spirit.

He adds, "as it becomes me to speak." In this, he shows again that it is not enough to preach by rote whatever comes to mind, but everything must be ruled by God's Word, so that it may pierce men's hearts and win them to His obedience. As is said in another place, there must not be only language or speech (1 Corinthians 4:20), for the kingdom of heaven does not consist in fine rhetoric but in the power of God.

To the end, then, that there may be such liveliness, and so that men may know that those who teach us are stirred up by God to be His instruments and to do Him service, Saint Paul desires men to pray for him. Therefore, let us learn that stepping into the pulpit to expound on some text of Scripture is not all that must be done. There must also be a special grace, which does not grow in the gardens of men but proceeds from the extraordinary goodness of God (James 1:17).

In this, he shows what he speaks of in another place, namely, that no man can perform the duty of a good and faithful teacher unless he is sent (Romans 10:15). Now, this sending implies that God gives men what is required for the execution of their charge, for they lack it of themselves.

There is yet further, that Saint Paul glories in his bearing of the ambassadorship of the Gospel, notwithstanding that he is a poor prisoner, even in chains, as if a man were now set in the stocks or fettered. Therefore, he uses the word "ambassador" to the intent that his imprisonment should not prejudice the doctrine of God. "No, no," says he, "God avows me as His ambassador." Although men scorn him, and though he is thus afflicted, and although men might loathe to look upon him, yet all this does not diminish the office in which God has placed him—that is, his ambassadorship of preaching the Gospel in God's name.

It is not only in this text that Saint Paul magnifies the honorable dignity given unto him, declaring that men cannot in any way diminish it. But even more, he greatly glories in that he was held in iron chains and strict prison. Surely, it served as a good testimony that he had preached earnestly and that men ought to receive his doctrine quietly and without contradiction.

It is true that if we follow through with our charge and pursue God's calling with a free heart, we will be His servants. But there is no better proof of us than when God sends some trial, so that we are sometimes in prison, driven from place to place, and troubled and vexed in various ways. If we endure that, and if we are wrongfully blamed, torn to pieces, yet continue to hold out without swerving one way or another despite anything that may befall us, then God ratifies and seals our calling and shows that He has made us His servants.

Now, since Saint Paul was in prison, tempted to deny himself, and could have escaped by forsaking the truth of the Gospel but remained steadfast so that his life meant nothing to him, and his continual pursuit was to magnify the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when such constancy was seen in Saint Paul, it could well be concluded that there had been no hypocrisy in him before. For when a man preaches but then, at the slightest pain, he draws back and wishes to save himself, does not the world see that he was but a pretender and a performer before?

If a man is a great writer and an excellent teacher, but will not shed one drop of blood when God calls him to it to show that the doctrine he carried abroad was not his own, it is clear that he was only a mocker and is worthy of having men spit in his face and more shame and reproach than if he had been an ignorant beast. So then, Saint Paul glories in his chains, saying that although the world made no account of him and disdained him, yet nevertheless, God avows him as His ambassador.

Upon this, let us learn not to be so scornful as to despise God's servants when we see them held in prison, but let us understand that God exalts them to much greater dignity and honor than those who are mounted aloft in pulpits. He that is in prison and persists in the pure confession of the Gospel is in a much more honorable degree than all those who preach with free liberty. Mark that for one point.

Again, in the time that God spares us and gives us leisure, let us learn to fortify ourselves beforehand with courage and constancy so that we may be His ambassadors whenever it pleases Him, whether in prison, in the midst of the threats of enemies, or in all the rages of death that can be brought against us. That is what we must mark upon this point.

Let us not be dismayed, as a number of unsteady persons are, who, when they hear that many are imprisoned in one place and another burned in another place, are immediately discouraged, and the Gospel is no longer esteemed by them. Those who forge for themselves such stumbling blocks show well that they never had any living root in faith. But on the contrary, when we see that our Lord Jesus Christ so uses those whom He calls to trial by putting them into the hands of tyrants and enemies of His truth, and yet gives them invincible constancy, it is a great strengthening of our faith, and we have reason to be all the more inflamed.

For unless God worked in them, it is certain that such strength would not be seen in any man living. Therefore, we must pray to God to arm us when we need it and also to show us that the doctrine of His Gospel, which has sufficient authority in itself, must be further confirmed by a manner of provision. Yet the blood of the martyrs and of those whom God has sanctified to His glory must serve that purpose, for they are as it were His representatives before men.

Now hereupon Paul adds that he has sent Tychicus to Ephesus so that the Ephesians might know in what state he was. This is said for the common edification of the Church. For when Saint Paul speaks of his state and doings, he does not mean things concerning his body or his health, nor anything that belongs to this present life, but he refers especially to the confession of faith and his free maintaining of the Gospel.

We know that if a man is in prison, especially a man of renown, people will be concerned for him, saying, "Alas, will God give him constancy?" And again, the devil does not sleep at such a time. There shall never be a man of credit who has edified God's Church, who is cast in prison or impeached, without some slander or rumor being

spread abroad to disgrace him and undermine the work that God has done through him. That is one of Satan's strategies.

Therefore, Paul, knowing that men might spread many lies and say, "Oh, see? I guarantee you he would not have been tolerated in Rome for so long, especially with the Emperor and all the court against him, unless he had yielded. It may well be said that his case is not clear." And others might say, "Tush, no one makes any account of him; they see he is just a fool." Others might say one thing or another, each according to their own fancy. Paul, perceiving that many weak believers might be hindered by him and cast into confusion, and that others might be kept back from coming to the Gospel, wanted his state to be known. He intended to foil the devil with all his slanders, silence the mouths of all backbiters, and stop the tongues of all gossips who seek nothing but to create trouble in the Church.

Additionally, for fear that those who had begun to profit in the Gospel might be hindered and that this might be an occasion to shut the gate against those who had not yet come in, Paul, intending to prevent all such hindrances, says that he has sent Tychicus.

We see even better in this text what care Paul always had to ensure the Churches continued in goodness. For he could have argued that he had enough troubles for himself and that he was overwhelmed by enemies. He could have made them believe that he had no leisure to think of others and that, for his part, it was enough for him to do his duty in Rome without sending across the sea to confirm the Churches, especially since there were many others besides him. Again, since God had shut him up, it would have been enough (as one might have judged by common opinion) that he did not waver even unto death.

But Paul was not content with merely being a faithful witness and martyr of our Lord Jesus Christ. He also believed it was his duty to prevent all the stumbling blocks that the devil stirred up in various ways to defame the Gospel. He applied himself to this task, as we see here by example.

Now then, let us learn to serve God in such a way, even to the last gasp of our life, that we may also care for our neighbors and seek their welfare as much as we can, according to the duty God has bound us to.

To ensure that Tychicus would be well received, Paul calls him a brother and faithful minister in Christ, intending to give him credibility so that people might trust his testimony. Indeed, we must strive to the utmost of our power to advance those who can serve the Church. Men need to know who they are, and they must be given a mark of sorts, granting them the authority they require. This is the example Saint Paul sets for us. It was not out of vanity or a desire for human approval that Paul commended Tychicus in this manner, but his desire was that men would recognize Christ's faithful minister for their own benefit, so that Tychicus might have access to them and not be rejected as unworthy, but that his words would be received as they deserved.

Thereupon, to conclude his epistle, Saint Paul prays that the brethren might have peace, love, and faith from God and from our Lord Jesus Christ. The word "peace" is commonly used by Saint Paul to signify all well-being and prosperity. Indeed, it primarily means concord, but since the Apostles were accustomed to the Hebrew tongue, they used the word to imply both meanings. When Saint Paul says, "Grace and peace be given unto you," by grace, he wishes God's

favor and mercy, and by peace, he desires that God would prosper us in all goodness and blessings.

In this text, he shows that all the prosperity of the godly comes solely from God's goodness, not from elsewhere. He also adds faith and charity. Here we see that God reserves for Himself the task not only of providing us with outward goods that we lack but also, and especially, of giving us spiritual gifts, which we are entirely void and destitute of. However, it is hard to make people believe this because they are always drunk with pride, imagining themselves to have some ability of mind to believe the Gospel and to discern between good and evil. To their thinking, it seems unnecessary to pray for God's enlightenment.

Yet, we must be punished for our arrogance if we believe we have faith or charity of our own. Therefore, let us conclude that both faith and charity are the unique gifts of God, and let us confess that they come from Him alone. Moreover, we must acknowledge that we are blind, even when we have the Word preached to us and explained to us in the simplest terms, leaving us no more to do than to receive it. Still, we remain dull, like blocks of wood, unless God enlightens us by His Holy Spirit and bends our hearts to His obedience.

If God does not work in this way, it is certain that, even if our ears have been filled with good doctrine throughout our entire lives, it will be to no avail. This is not only said in this text but can be found on nearly every page of Holy Scripture, where God reserves for Himself the giving of faith. Indeed, we ourselves see how Holy Scripture enlightens us and how utterly destitute we are without God's Spirit. If we compare ourselves with faith and the blessings it brings, we will see clearly that there is just cause for us to give God homage for so great and excellent a gift.

As it is said, "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, and He found them all given over to evil, steeped in their filthiness, so that there is none who seeks after goodness" (Psalm 14:2-3). Again, when there is any mention of our reason and wisdom, it is said to be sheer ignorance and that we are utterly brutish. We must become fools in ourselves if we wish to profit in God's school (1 Corinthians 1:21). As for our hearts, what are they? They are full of wickedness and stubbornness, even from our childhood, as the Holy Scripture testifies everywhere.

Since we are blind in our understanding and perverse in our will, let us come now and see what faith is. It is the comprehension of God's secrets, so that we know the fatherly love He bears us and are assured of it. We take hold of the heavenly life, which is otherwise incomprehensible to human understanding. In short, faith allows us to be acquainted with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which extends high and low, deep and wide, as we have seen before (Ephesians 3:18).

Therefore, if on one side we consider what faith is, and on the other side we examine ourselves and find ourselves utterly destitute of all goodness, it is reasonable that we should confess that until God gives us faith, we have no faith at all. This is what we must take to heart from this text.

The same can be said of charity. For is it not apparent that every man is inclined to love himself, and that our affections carry us away so that we continually seek our own profit, often at the expense of others? Yet, in this selfishness and lust, we cannot truly love our neighbors but would rather oppress them. Therefore, we must receive charity from elsewhere, and God must break the cursed inclination in us, namely, the excessive love of ourselves.

Moreover, once we have renounced ourselves, we must understand that we are indebted to our neighbors and must endeavor to do our duty toward them. Thus, faith and charity are justly called the special gifts of God, and Saint Paul rightly says in this text: "Charity and faith be unto you from God our Father" (Ephesians 6:23). It is certain that this wish was not made in vain, but that in saying so, he makes us understand that we must receive these virtues from God's hand. Therefore, let us set aside all foolish pride and understand that all the spiritual benefits we have are the free gifts of God, through which He effectively shows and declares His liberality toward us.

It is certain that all the perfection of Christians consists in faith and charity. Therefore, let us conclude that whatever belongs to the salvation of our souls or is worthy to be esteemed and commended, we have none of it of our own making, but it comes to us from above, *as it is said* (James 1:17). Regarding the confession of our faith, "flesh and blood did not reveal to us that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but the Father" (Matthew 16:17). Likewise, our Lord Jesus Christ says, "Father, I thank you that you have hidden these things from the wise and revealed them to little children" (Luke 10:21). Therefore, let us learn to be as little children, that we may be God's pupils, and to become fools in ourselves, that we may be filled with His wisdom. Let us also give Him honor according to the measure of the gifts we have received from Him, and not be so wicked as to claim the praise for ourselves, which He rightly reserves for Himself.

However, Saint Paul mentions our Lord Jesus Christ alongside God the Father to help us understand that we can obtain nothing except through Him, who has reconciled us to God. For what is the reason that we are so corrupted in our nature, void of all goodness, and full of all vices? In short, why are we altogether abominable? It is because we are utterly estranged from our Lord Jesus Christ, *who is*

the fountain of all goodness (John 15:5). For this reason, He was endowed with all the fullness of grace, *as it is said*, “The Father gives the Spirit not in measure to Him” (John 3:34), but in such a way that all of us may draw from Him and lack nothing, for He is the fountain that can never run dry.

Thus, we cannot receive one drop of spiritual gifts except through the grace that flows down upon us through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only conduit of these blessings. Our Lord Jesus Christ not only has the office of giving us whatever is necessary for our welfare as He sees fit, in His role as our mediator (as we have seen in chapter four), but also, Saint Paul affirms that He grants us faith and charity by His own authority and power. For he places Christ on an equal level with the Father.

Therefore, let us understand that our Lord Jesus Christ's role in enlightening us by faith and reforming our hearts belongs not only to Him as mediator and God's servant but is also His by right. Saint Paul's manner of speaking would not make sense otherwise.

But here, by the way, a man might ask a question. For Saint Paul does not pray for God to give faith to the faithless and charity to the fleshly, but to the brethren—that is, to the body of the Church. Now, if they are of the Church, they are already God's children, begotten again by the Holy Ghost, and by that means, they have both faith and charity. But here, Saint Paul shows us that it is not enough for God to begin faith in us unless He continues it to the end. Just as we call faith the gift of God, He must also make it grow and increase day by day.

As it is written, “It is given unto us not only to believe in Jesus Christ but also to suffer for Him” (Philippians 1:29). Therefore, God's giving of faith to us is not in such a way that He merely prepares us to

believe the Gospel if we wish and then leaves us to bring our own consent and go forward by our own power. No, when God disposes us to believe, He must also give us such an affection that it touches us deeply, drives us forward, and gives us the ability to persevere, so that we may profit, grow, and be confirmed even to the end. That is why Saint Paul, speaking here of the faithful who were already brought into the good way and to whom the grace of God was manifested, says nonetheless that God must further them and give them the gift to hold out, growing more and more in both faith and love.

Therefore, we are warned to pray to God to increase and strengthen our faith, to inflame us with charity, and to make us aware of our imperfections. Even though we may see others who are not near us in their spiritual journey, we must not become proud and think we have already attained perfect faith. Let us assure ourselves that as long as we are in this world, we are still on our way, and thus we must press forward. For whatever perfection of faith we find among men, it is certain that God will find much lacking in it. No matter how far we have come or how much we have grown in charity, we all fall far short of forgetting ourselves, trampling underfoot covetousness, ambition, and all other things that keep us from seeking the benefit of our neighbor and dedicating ourselves to serving them.

Since this is the case, let us learn, as I said, to acknowledge our own imperfections in such a way that we may be dissatisfied with ourselves for them and be motivated to do better than we have done thus far. And although men may praise and commend us, let us learn to confess with all humility and meekness that we are still far from attaining our ultimate goal.

Now, upon this, Saint Paul adds again, "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ incorruptly" (Ephesians 6:24). Here, he clarifies who the brethren are that he spoke of just now—not all those who profess to live according to the Gospel, but those who love our Lord Jesus Christ. "Yes," says he, "with such soundness that their affection is not a fleeting one that soon fades away." And this is said for good reason. For we see how few there are who love Jesus Christ rightly and soundly. The number of those who pretend to follow the Gospel is large enough, but how many renounce God in their actions, even after they have confessed Him with their words?

Again, if a man carefully examines even those who show some good signs and live in a decent, blameless manner, so much so that it could be said there is no hypocrisy in them, he will find that they often stumble quickly. For example, we see how persecution nowadays reveals those who do not have a living root of faith, and temptations likewise expose them, to the point that those who once lived with a good reputation later turn aside and go astray. What is the cause of this? Some new stumbling block that Satan places in their path, or some other hindrance that causes them to turn out of the good way.

Therefore, when all is thoroughly considered, a man will find very few who love Jesus Christ incorruptly—that is to say, who possess true steadfastness and strength so that, even when they are tempted with the fear of death or poverty, they do not falter but continue in their calling, showing that the Holy Ghost reigns within them and possesses the depths of their hearts until they are entirely freed from all the imperfections of their flesh.

No doubt, even the most perfect have many imperfections. Just as a tree may appear withered outwardly by its branches, yet if its root

remains strong, the tree will survive. Though some superfluous branches are cut off, it will spring forth again, and it will become clear that life remained within it. In the same way, from day to day, we cut off the corruptions of our flesh, which still linger within us, until we attain the fullness of the incomprehensible perfection that we labor to reach.

Now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying Him to vouchsafe to open our eyes more and more, that we may consider the infirmities and vices that are in us, and also those into which we would have been given if God had not delivered us from them and did not draw us away from them day by day.

Thereupon, let us mourn before Him, acknowledging ourselves to be wretched offenders, well worthy to be condemned if He did not pity us. And let us so profit from His Word that it may lead to the amendment of the things that are still amiss in us. For the accomplishment of this, let us call upon the grace of His Holy Spirit, for we know how needful it is for us, given the recklessness or rather rebelliousness that is in us.

Yet for all that, let us not cease to continue striving toward the heavenly perfection to which He calls us. May it please Him to grant this grace not only to us but also to all people and nations of the earth. Amen.

FINIS

All glory, honor, and praise be to God alone, and to our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

MONERGISM BOOKS

Sermons on Ephesians, by John Calvin, Copyright © 2024

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By downloading this eBook, 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 September 2024. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068.