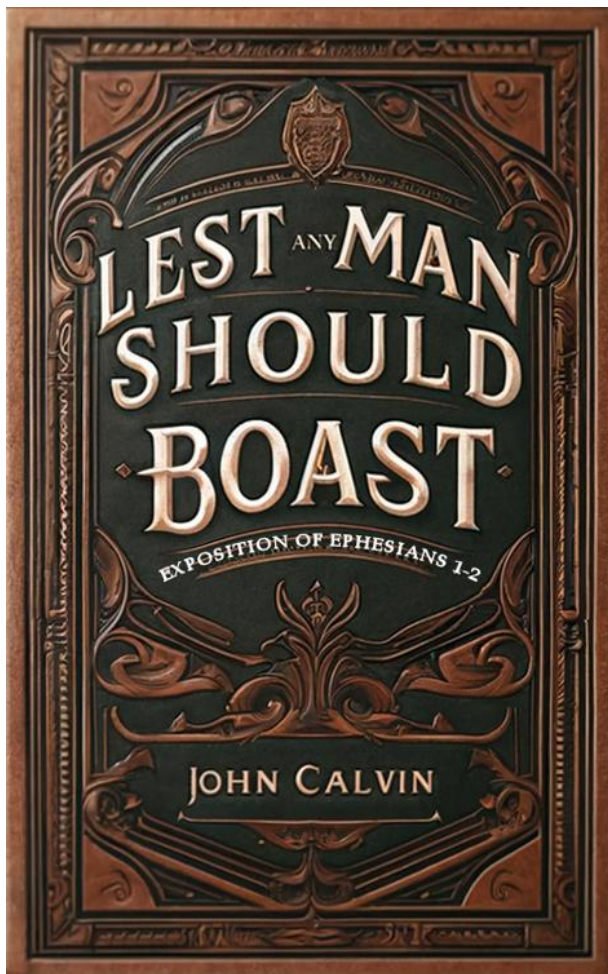




LEST ANY MAN  
SHOULD  
BOAST.

EXPOSITION OF EPHESIANS 1-2

JOHN CALVIN



# Lest Any Man Should Boast

Exposition of Ephesians 1-2

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 - Ephsians 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](#)

## **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 which St. Paul wrote to various places, we must always consider that God meant they should serve not only for one time alone or for some certain people, but forever, and generally for the whole Church. Truly, if a man considers well the doctrine that is contained in them, it will be easy to discern that God's intent was to be heard in the things that are spoken there, even to the world's end. Also, He has had such a care for us that He has not overlooked or forgotten anything that might further our welfare and salvation.

The main aim of this Epistle, which I have now taken in hand to expound, is that St. Paul confirms those who had been trained in the Gospel before, so they might know that this is the foundation upon which they must rest, as the true, lawful, and perfect wisdom, and that it is not right to add anything thereto. He tells us that the benefits brought to us by our Lord Jesus Christ, and whereof we are partakers, are so excellent that we must be exceedingly ungrateful if we seek to and fro like people who are never at rest nor contented.

Thereupon, he shows us also what we have in Christ, so that we should cleave to Him and not presume to seek help anywhere else, assuring ourselves that He has bought us all. Again, on the other side, he shows that Christ has so well provided for His Church, that if we have the wit to use the gifts of grace which He offers us, we shall have full and perfect happiness. Furthermore, he exhorts those who have been instructed in the truth of the Gospel to lead a holy life and to show that they have profited as they ought in God's school.

Now, these things serve not only for the city of Ephesus, nor for any one country, nor for any one age or time, but we need to be furthered

more and more, seeing that the devil practises without end or ceasing to thrust us out of the way. When he cannot lead us completely away from the doctrine of Jesus Christ, he labours to bring it out of favour with us by some means or other, and to entangle us in new curiosities, only to prevent us from being constant in the faith we have received, but instead always wavering. Whenever our fancies are thus tickled, it is certain that a gap is opened to wipe out the remembrance of all that we had learned before, and to take in many follies and erroneous doctrines which serve to corrupt and pervert all the purity of our faith.

We see then that the doctrine contained in this Epistle is directed and dedicated to us at this day, and that God has by His wonderful providence so disposed things beforehand, that we not only have had the foundations of the Gospel upon which to ground ourselves, but also whereby our faith may from day to day grow and increase, and we go still forward, till we come to perfection.

First and foremost, St. Paul claims the authority which had been given him by God, to the intent that men should not stop at his person, as though it had been but a mortal man's saying. For in very deed, our Lord Jesus Christ is the only master at whose hand we must learn, for it is witnessed of Him from heaven that it is only He and none other whom we must give ear unto. It has always been God's will to have the guiding of His own Church Himself, and that His word should be received without gainsaying, and He has not given that privilege to any creature. And whereas Jesus Christ is ordained in the place of God His Father, it is because He is God manifested in the flesh, and the infallible truth itself, and His wisdom which was before all time.

Furthermore, when men speak, they must not do it in their own name, nor allege anything from their own fancy and brain; they must faithfully set forth the things that God has enjoined them and given them in charge. Thus, you see why St. Paul almost everywhere uses this preface: that he is an Apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ. He holds it as a sure and absolute ground that if any man thrusts himself forward to speak in his own name, there is nothing but rashness in him. Why so? Because he takes upon himself something that belongs solely to God.

Again, forasmuch as our Lord Jesus Christ was purposely sent to be our last teacher, so that we might have such wisdom as is perfect and utterly without fault, St. Paul therefore calls himself an Apostle sent by Him. This presupposes two things: the one is that St. Paul had that charge committed to him, and the other is that he acquitted himself duly of it, by employing himself faithfully in the office that he was called to. For were a man the best able and most excellent in the world, yet if he thrusts himself forward of his own accord, he troubles all common order. We know that God will have order, and not disorder among us, as St. Paul says in the fourteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians.

He that speaks (at least to teach) must have a calling: that is to say, he must be admitted, and have his charge given to him, so that every man may not put himself forward out of an unadvised zeal, as I said before. Now, to speak any further of St. Paul's calling is not needful at this present. For we know how God gave record that He avowed him for His Apostle. Indeed, he does not dispute much of it here, because it was well known in the Church of Ephesus. But forasmuch as the Galatians had been troubled by deceivers, insomuch that St. Paul's authority, yea, and the name of God Himself, had been disgraced there, we saw how he maintained his own status, telling

them that the reverence due to an Apostle of Jesus Christ could not be taken from him without overthrowing the order of God. Therefore, it is enough for him here to have said in one word that he is an Apostle of Jesus Christ.

Let us come to the second point which I touched upon, namely that it is not enough for a man to be called, unless he discharges his duty with a pure conscience and upright dealing in his office; which thing St. Paul took upon himself as a thing out of all question and he had given sufficient proof of it. The deceivers may well boast themselves with full mouths that they are called, as we see they do. For all those who fight against God and His word, and sow trouble and darnel in His Church, would gladly make a shield of their calling, and also of their zeal, for they will needs be called Christians, yea, and more too. But St. Paul had sufficiently proved that he came not of himself, nor sought anything else than to spend himself in the building up of the Church. And forasmuch as the same was well known in Ephesus (as we may gather from the story of St. Luke), yea, and that he had borne out many a hard brunt, therefore he thinks it enough to say in one word that he is an Apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here we are warned, first to hold ourselves to the pure doctrine which we know to have proceeded from God, for we cannot go amiss if we follow that rule. Because in our Lord Jesus Christ we have the fulfillment of all that is requisite and needful for our instruction, so that we need not doubt whether we may hold to the Gospel or add anything to it: let us be content to take the Son of God for our master, especially since He vouchsafed to stoop so low as to take that charge upon Him, and also protests that if we have profited well in His doctrine, we shall come to the true mark whereunto we should aim.

You see then that the first lesson which we have to gather upon this text, is that our faith must not waver one way or another, but have a sure and immovable foundation to rest upon, that is to wit, God's truth, even as it is contained in the Gospel. Seeing that St. Paul is sufficiently avowed unto us, let us not doubt that God's Spirit speaks to us at this day by his mouth. Neither let us hear the doctrine as though it were subject to our judgment; but let us imprison our own understanding and wits, and receive it without questioning, unless we willfully make war against God and advance ourselves above Him. And so, that is one of the things which we have to mark upon this text.

Furthermore, so that this doctrine may not only be revered among us but also be amiable to us, let us note that Paul speaks in the name of Christ, who was sent by God His Father to bring us glad tidings of peace. Let us also bear in mind how he says elsewhere that he was ordained to bring the message of reconciliation and to beseech men in God's name to be reconciled to God. This was done to make the doctrine of the Gospel sweet to us, so that we might desire it and give ourselves wholly to it. When we hear that God speaks to us, it is enough to authorize all that He says. However, we might tremble at His voice and be weary of it, as many confess well enough that God deserves to be obeyed and to have all men subject to Him, yet they shy away and avoid Him as far as they can because His voice makes them afraid.

But when Jesus Christ speaks to us as the mediator between God and man, we may go to Him boldly. As it is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are no longer at Mount Sinai, where lightning flashed when the law was given, so much that if a beast came near, it must die. The voice that God uttered then was terrible, but nowadays, seeing that He encourages us by the Gospel to receive the grace He

offers and is willing to wipe away the remembrance of our sins, let us allow ourselves to be justified by His free goodness. Let us be peaceable and obedient to Him, for that ought to move us to resort to Him like poor hungry souls, to be fed with the heavenly food He gives us.

Thus, you see, in effect, what we have to remember when St. Paul calls himself the apostle of Jesus Christ. When he adds that it is by the will of God, it serves to cut off all questioning, to prevent men from blaming him for presumption, as if he thought himself more reputable than others. For he protests that it was not for any worthiness of his own, but because it pleased God to choose him for that office. Indeed, it is no feigned humility that he says he was set in that place by God's mere grace and choosing, for we see how he protests in other places that he is not worthy of such honour, but rather had deserved utter damnation. Therefore, he wants to be taken as a mirror of God's infinite goodness, in that He exalted him so high, even though he had been a murderer of Christians, had shed the blood of martyrs, and had railed against God and His Word, as he himself reported.

We see then, that there was no faintness in this confession of his, where he says that he was set in that state and degree by the will of God alone. And this serves a great purpose still, to the intent that we do not esteem God's word based on the quality of those who bring it to us. For one of the ordinary policies which the devil uses to diminish the reverence of God's Word is to confront us with the persons who bring it. Now it is certain that we are frail vessels and have no value, yea, even as good as broken pots. What is there in those whom God has ordained to be the ministers of His word? But it is a treasure always inestimable, notwithstanding the despised nature of the vessels.



Then let us mark that when men come to warrant us the forgiveness of our sins and the salvation which we ought to hope for, our faith must ascend higher and not stand examining whether such a man is worthy to be heard or not, or inquiring about the manner of the person. Let us hold ourselves contented that God, by that means, intended to draw us to Himself. That is the way in which we must walk. And if we stray from it, we run astray and are on the highway to destruction. Then let us mark well that we must submit ourselves to God's will and ordinance and receive without hesitation the doctrine that is preached to us by the mouths of mortal men.

We must not be wise in the manner of those who demand whether God could not send His angels from heaven to teach us by revelations, nor like some busybodies who imagine they have the Holy Ghost within themselves. By means of which, they set up their own schools and seek to receive gifts as they are dealt abroad by God, lest we be bewitched by Satan after that manner. Let us note how it is said here that it is God's will that the gospel is preached by the mouths of men and that they are, as it were, witnesses of it unto us. Whosoever exempts himself from that order is like one who thrusts back God's hand when He offers him a sure and infallible record of his salvation.

Thus, you see what we have to mark upon this text. Again, those who are called to spread God's word ought to take warning by St. Paul's example to walk in lowliness. For who are we if we compare ourselves with him? He shows us that he was not chosen for any sufficient merit or ability but because it was God's will to have it so. Therefore, let us assure ourselves that we owe all things to Him and His mere grace, and we cannot claim anything for ourselves unless we intend to rob Him of His right. And we know that such unthankfulness is not to be tolerated.

Hereupon he says, "To all the holy ones that are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Jesus Christ." This expresses the aim of the epistle. But as I have touched on already, the doctrine is common to us all. God has ordained it for our use today, and we must receive it as if St. Paul were still alive and among us. We must not only have an eye unto him but also unto the party by whom he was sent. Although he died when he had finished his race, God's Spirit did not. However the case stands, we must, for our learning, bear in mind what St. Paul means 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 join us with those to whom St. Paul wrote in his time, let us assure ourselves that it is our duty today to be strengthened in the faith we have received by the gospel. This was the intent and purpose of the Holy Ghost, to encourage all those to hold out who have been instructed in the gospel and are yet weak and need further confirmation.

Let us bear in mind these words: "the holy and faithful ones in Jesus Christ." St. Paul shows us that all the holiness of men is nothing else but lewdness unless God has applied them to His own service, dedicated and consecrated by faith. For we are all unclean by nature, and nothing can come from us but uncleanness. It is true that men can set a fair appearance upon things they have taken for as righteous as may be, and their virtues shall be commended everywhere. According to the prophet Jeremiah, man's heart is a dungeon of horrible confusion. We ourselves may not perceive it, but God does. So let us assure ourselves of this: all the holiness men assume to have is but corruption, utterly abominable before God, until they are made one with Him by belief in the Gospel.

Let us note this foundational point: no holiness is liked and allowed by God other than the holiness of believers. For unless we first become Christians, we are blind and can never yield God His due. If nothing else, this lewdness alone is enough to mar all the virtues we could have besides. Again, seeing that the spirit of perfection, the spirit of the fear of God, the spirit of righteousness, and the spirit of purity abides and rests in Jesus Christ, it is certain that all who are separated from Him have nothing but vice and all manner of uncleanness, however much the world esteems them.

On the other side, let us mark also that all who boast of belief in the Gospel but are not sanctified by God betray their own hypocrisy and lying. They undo themselves by their own lives, whatever their mouths may say. As we see nowadays, many defile and unhallows the name of faith, which ought to be holy. Every man will say he is faithful, and those with the least faith are boldest to claim there is no faith but in themselves. Would God it were so bad in only half of us. But among all who bear the name of Christians, their whole life is disordered and loose, mocking God to the full and despising all religion. Yet they think they have great wrong if they are not taken for good Christians and Catholics.

Yet for all this, we see how St. Paul ties these things together in an inseparable bond: if we have faith in the gospel, we must wholly give ourselves unto God and separate ourselves from the corruptions of the world. As we have seen in the Epistle to the Galatians, he says that the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is to sanctify us by His blood to yield obedience henceforth in all purity unto God His Father. As he says in another place, we are not called to uncleanness but to righteousness so that God's name may be honoured and glorified by us.

Thus, you see what we must remember in this preface, so we may be better prepared to receive the doctrine contained in this epistle. It should have the authority it deserves among us and be made amiable to us. We must understand how it is for our singular benefit to learn at Paul's hand, as he witnesses the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ unto us and leads us to God to be reconciled unto Him, whereas we are naturally the children of wrath.

The more that we may stand in His favor, so we may behold, call upon Him as our Father, and be sure that He also takes us for His children, therefore, with thanksgiving, we lift up all men's hearts to acknowledge how much they are bound and beholden unto God, especially considering that He has shown Himself so bountiful towards them, giving forth Himself in all manner of ways. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things, or in heavenly places in Christ.

For as much as the chief sacrifice which God requires from man's hands is that they should acknowledge His benefits and be thankful to Him for them, St. Paul considers first of all how this may provoke them to do their duty. For we are so reckless, it is a pity to see. We can well enough confess that our chief study and endeavor ought to be to have a well-ordered life, that is, to praise God. For if a man asks us why we are in this world, why God has such care of us, why His goodness feeds and cherishes us, and finally, why He, as it were, overwhelms us with the great number of benefits He bestows upon us, it is to the end that we should yield some acknowledgement of them unto Him. For as it is said in the Psalms, we on our side cannot profit Him at all, neither does He require anything else from us in exchange but thanksgiving, according to the 116th Psalm: "What shall I render to the Lord for all the benefits I have received from

Him, but only to take the cup of salvation at His hand and to call upon His name?"

We see then that all we can bring unto God is to acknowledge ourselves bound to Him for all things. And yet, for all that, no man discharges his duty, not even a hundredth part of it, in that respect. Instead, all of us, from the greatest to the least, defraud Him of it, inasmuch as through our lewdness, we bury His praise, which ought to ring out loudly from our mouths. For this cause, our Lord rebukes us for our negligence. Whereas the Holy Scripture exhorts us to praise God and uses so many words to that purpose, let us not think that they are superfluous. Rather, let us acknowledge them as many reproaches of our churlishness and unkindness for failing in that which is so requisite. And, as we should say, the principal point of our life truly is that the Holy Ghost often sets forth other reasons why we should magnify God's name: the order of nature, the fruits which the earth yields, the aid and help which God gives us, and such other things. Those are sufficient reasons to praise God.

But St. Paul leads us higher here and helps us to glorify God above all things because he thinks it not enough that God has set us in the world, cherished us here, and provided all things needful for this transitory life. God has also chosen us to be heirs of His kingdom and of the heavenly life. Thus, we are doubly bound unto God, and that much more strongly than the ignorant and unbelieving. Although they are sufficiently bound already, the good which He has done us in Jesus Christ is without comparison more excellent and noble because He has adopted us to be His children. Truly, as men, we are among the number of His creatures, which He has fashioned after His own image. But this image is defaced in us by sin and the corruption with which we are tainted by Adam's disobedience.

Now, what heritage have we but His wrath and endless death? To be sure, we are not worthy to be reckoned among the number of brute beasts if we abide in the state we have of nature. Now, then, seeing that God makes us members of His only Son and sets us in the array of the angels and prepares us to become partakers of His own nature and glory, as St. Peter says in his first epistle, ought we not to perceive this so high and noble grace, as should ravish us wholly in love with it? Thus, you see, the first thing St. Paul meant to say in this text is that we are here exalted to apply our whole endeavor to the praising of God. Verily, because we are too cold and slothful in that respect, we need to be driven and enforced thereunto.

Besides this, St. Paul had another intention, which was to feed us in such wise with the grace we have by the gospel, that we may more covet this thing. According to our ordinary manner, we see how fickle we are by nature. When God is so good unto us as to set His word before us, we will need to have some other things besides, and nothing can content us.

And what is the cause of it? It is because we are dull and never conceive nor understand what God shows us by His Word. For we shall see hereafter that those who know the love which God shows us in our Lord Jesus Christ have all that they can wish for, upward and downward, far and wide.

Also, St. Paul now calls upon us to bless God so that we may hold fast to the doctrine in which consists the fullness of all felicity, at least if we have the wisdom to use it to our profit. Furthermore, let us also note that not without cause, he says that it is in spiritual blessings. For although we cannot eat a bit of bread nor drink a drop of water without acknowledging and confessing that therein God shows Himself a true Father towards us, yet the things that concern this

body and our transitory life are nothing in respect to the things that serve for the everlasting welfare of our souls.

Indeed, St. Paul's exhortation to praise God for His heavenly blessings is in such a way that he gives us an inclination that we must be patient if we are pinched in respect of the flesh and do not have all things as we wish, but that God cuts us short of our petitions and handles us not as tenderly as we would like. Two things, therefore, are contained here. One is that we should learn to know where our true and perfect happiness lies, that is, in a life which we hope for and which is yet hidden from us, so that we are not tied to the world. Note that for one point.

Secondly, if this world shakes us off, despises us, and men make a laughingstock of us, we must settle ourselves in patience. While the despisers of God vaunt themselves with pomp and flattery, and it seems that we are unhappy in comparison to them, inasmuch as some of us suffer hunger and thirst, and others are troubled and vexed wrongfully, we must look further. And why? Because we ought to content ourselves with the heavenly blessings which God has bestowed upon us. Then must this so great, so high, and so inestimable treasure make us overlook all the encumbrances that we can conceive, whensoever God exercises and tries us in this world by many afflictions, and would have us endure a scarcity and lack of many things. This is the effect of the things which we have to note in this strain.

Now, before we proceed further, let us note that this word "blessing" is taken in diverse senses when St. Paul applies it either to God or to ourselves. It is said that we bless God, and how does He bless us? In what manner does He bless us? We do not bless Him as He blesses us; we fall short of that, for as I have already mentioned from the

16th Psalm, all our services can do Him no good. And again, we must conclude that, as I have already mentioned from the 116th Psalm, all that we can bring unto God is no more than this acknowledgement that we are beholden to Him for all the good things we have. You see then that all our blessing is about yielding the sacrifice of praise unto God. Let that serve for one point. But now, when God blesses us, is it only in words? No. It is in fulfilling us and bestowing all things upon us which we need so far as is necessary. And why is this word "blessing" attributed to Him? Because He does not need to toil and take much effort to help His servants and to give them the things He knows to be expedient for them. If He does but say the word, that is to say, if He but utters His will, the thing is done. For as much as God, having created the world by His only word, has power also to do us good by His only bidding. Therefore it is said that we become rich by His only blessing, that is to say, by His showing Himself loving and favorable to us.

Now, let us see if we are to be excused when we defraud God of His due by disdain to open our lips to confess how much we are bound and beholden unto Him, after we have received so many benefits at His hand. If all the blessings that all the men in the world can give unto God were laid in the balance against the only blessing with which He enriches us, His blessing would outweigh all. All that they can allege is that they must confess that they can neither do nor say anything that is of worth. Whereas on the other side, God shows us that He has all that is requisite for our welfare. Therefore it is not without cause that St. Paul says here that the faithful must give and apply all their wits and endeavors to bless God, seeing He gives them so great cause. Otherwise, they would be unthankful and utterly churlish.



Therefore, he speaks of two things: the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ. When he says, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," it must be understood in this manner, namely, that the God whom we feel so favorable toward us is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This circumstance deserves to be well marked. For therein, Paul helps us understand that God's benefits, especially those that belong to the heavenly life and the everlasting salvation of our souls, cannot come to us except through Jesus Christ, who serves as the conduit pipe of them, allowing us to be partakers of them for his sake. Therefore, let us mark well that we are shut out from all God's benefits and from all things that concern the salvation of our souls unless Jesus Christ becomes our means.

True, it is that the unbelievers do eat and drink and give themselves to the utmost, and the sunshine shines upon them. But yet, properly speaking, they do not truly enjoy any of the things that God gives them, because they usurp them without any lawful title to them. For the world was made for God's children, especially in respect of their head, which is our Lord Jesus Christ. To be sure, it is not without cause that Paul shows how God has given himself unto us, saying that it is because he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But as I mentioned earlier, the matter is not about eating and drinking but about far greater and more precious things, namely, that God has adopted us as His children.

You see, in effect, what we have to bear in mind. For better understanding, let us note that we must bridle ourselves, lest we wander into diverse speculations when we know God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And why? Because people often have the word "God" and the name "Jesus Christ" on their lips, but they disfigure Jesus Christ and utterly falsify the doctrine of his gospel. Thus, they have a god, albeit backed by confused imagination, and in the

meanwhile, they do not truly know Him. Truly, they do not know what god they worship, no more than the Turks do.

We know that our Lord Jesus Christ, in the fourth chapter of John, says that those who do not have the doctrine whereby to rule themselves do not know what they worship, but continually forge idols for themselves. Therefore, there is only one way to have good and infallible access to God: by beholding Him in His living image. For His majesty is too high, too far off, and too deep for us, but Jesus Christ has communicated himself to us, applied himself to our weakness, and taught us all that is requisite to know so that we might come to God his Father.

You see, then, that we must have our Lord Jesus Christ as our way to avoid straying, for seeing that God is the Father of our head, and of him who is made one with us, you see how we may have access to come familiarly unto Him. Without that mediator, we are all shut out from Him, and the majesty of God would need to make the hairs of our head stand up in fear. But when we consider that He calls himself the Father of him who is our head, we know that He must also vow for us His children because He has bought us.

Furthermore, although some people sit down with only the word "spiritual blessings," St. Paul shows that God has shown Himself bountiful toward us in more ways than one. Therefore, he will make a larger declaration hereafter by laying forth the benefits we obtain by the gospel. For all this chapter is full of them. But however the case stands, Paul wants to give us to understand in this strain that God's giving of his gracious gifts to us is not in patches and parcels, and that his making us taste them is not with a wet finger and away, as they say, but that He has given us them so diversely and fully that we have cause to magnify Him in all respects.

Therefore, let us understand that seeing Jesus Christ is so given unto us, and in him, we obtain all that is available for our salvation, and to make us happy, according also to what Paul speaks of in Romans 8. For if the only Son is given unto us, how should not all the benefits which he has in him be communicated to us with him and by his means? But however we fail, let us learn to favor God's spiritual gifts in such a way that all our wits may be gathered home to make much of them. For the bringing of this to pass, let us beware that we do not have our minds too much wedded to the world, for the very thing that draws us away causes us to perceive not a hundredth part of the good that God has done for us, nor can we apply His benefits to help us.

Offered is our own vanity because each of us beguiles himself with his own fond and wandering desires. Therefore, let us learn to shake off the things that stop us from coming to our Lord Jesus Christ. And although our naughty nature provokes us to seek the transitory things of this world, let us endeavor to withdraw from them so we may yield ourselves with a free heart unto God and be earnestly minded to obey Him, and to give ourselves wholly unto Him, for it is His will to have us joined unto Him.

This is the thing we have to mark upon St. Paul, who, having spoken of the spiritual blessings, immediately adds "in heavenly places," or things, meaning to show that we are not able to receive the gracious gifts which are communicated to us in our Lord Jesus Christ, and which God would have us possess, until we know that there is nothing in this world that ought to hold us back. Therefore, when we once know that we are not created and made to dwell always in this world, but that we must be only as wayfarers in it, and that our everlasting heritage and rest are above in heaven, let us thereupon make our way and strive toward it more and more. And although we

are feeble, let us not faint, but take heart, and pray God to give us strength.

Moreover, you see that the reason why St. Paul sets down the word "blessings" is to show that whereas the devil lays many traps to thrust us out of the way, God will provide a remedy for them all. And why? Because He has such store of blessings that He can overcome and destroy all that may be against our welfare.

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 and more with them, that we may be brought to true repentance. So that we may condemn ourselves and seek to our Lord Jesus Christ for all that we lack, and not just for one day or at a moment, but continually and steadfastly until our lives end. And that, whatever befalls us, we may always assure ourselves that we have cause to praise our God, and that if we are poor and miserable in this world, the heavenly felicity is enough to quiet us, and to sweeten all our afflictions and sorrows, and to give us such consolation that we may nevertheless have our mouths open to bless God for showing Himself so kind-hearted and liberal towards us, even adopting us as His children and showing us that the heritage which has been purchased for us by the blood of His only Son is ready for us, and we cannot miss it if we go to it with true and invincible constancy of faith.

May it please Him to grant us this grace, not only to us but also 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 scorers, 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 forlorne 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 scorners 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 succoured 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 with 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 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 that 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 shake 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 labours 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 endeavour 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 always 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 pretence, 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 honour 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 succoured 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 labour 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 honour, 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 favour 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, that 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, "Hold here 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 nothing boot 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, till 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 wit, 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, as 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 favour 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 we should learn to give all glory to God, and not have any cause to vaunt ourselves any more.

Afterward, upon knowing thereof, 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 to 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 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 Saviour 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 raising 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 endeavour 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 behoves 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 attained, 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, freedmenizenship, 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.

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ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions May 2024 Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068