

THE THIRTEENTH SERMON

WHICH IS THE SEVENTH UPON THE SECOND CHAPTER

- 17** But if we that seek to be justified by Christ, be found to be sinners: is Christ therefore the minister of sin? No not so,
- 18** For if I build up the things again which I had cast down, I make my self an offender. — ^{<480217>}GALATIANS 2:17-18

WE HAVE SEEN already, that to beat down all the pride and self-trust which men put in their own works and merits, Paul alleged that the Jews who had great preferment above other men, could not for all that come in God's favor, otherwise than by believing the Gospel. Yet notwithstanding it was a good likelihood that the Jews had some righteousness in themselves wherewith to win God's favor, because the law was given to them, with promise that whosoever performed those things should live in them. (^{<031805>}Leviticus 18:5) Therefore a man would have judged, that the Jews even in respect of themselves alone without Christ, might after a sort have been justified before God: otherwise it should seem that the law was superfluous. But when they come to our Lord Jesus Christ, there they perceive themselves to be wretched sinners, forlorn, and damned. It should seem then, that Jesus Christ bringeth sin: for before his coming, the Jews were reckoned for God's children. They bear the badge of holiness in their bodies, and moreover it was said unto them, that they were the holy and chosen people of their God. (^{<050706>}Deuteronomy 7:6) Now then seeing they become fellowlike with wretched sinners, and there is nothing but cursedness to be found in them, so as they be fain [*obliged*] to flee for refuge to the mere grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: it seemeth that Jesus Christ brought sin into the world. Truly so will men judge of him after their own opinion, howbeit foolishly. For it behooveth us to mark, that our Lord Jesus Christ doth not bring sin, but bewray [*exposes*] sin. For although the Jews exercised themselves in the keeping of the law: yet did that serve but to prove unto them still more and more, that God would never show them mercy, but by the mean of the Redeemer. No doubt but

that in living chastely and soberly, and therewithal in walking in obedience to god, they had some show of righteousness: but that came wholly of grace, and we must not father that thing upon men, which belongeth unto God, for by that means God should be defrauded of his honor. Then if the Jews being governed by God's spirit, had some willingness and desire to lead a holy life: it must not come in account, as who should say, that God were beholden to them for it: for contrariwise they be so much the more bound unto God. But on the other side, we have to mark (as we shall see more fully in due time and place) that there was never yet any man so perfect, but there was always much to be blamed in him. Therefore we have to conclude, that the Jews could not be so well taken and accepted at God's hand, but that they had need of his mercy, and that their salvation must needs be grounded wholly upon the forgiveness of their sins. Also as in respect of Ceremonies, they bear themselves on hand that there was great holiness in them, as whereof hypocrites have always made their cloak. But howsoever they fared, it is certain that the Jews were more damnable than all other men. And why? For (as Saint Paul saith) without the law sin doth not upbraid men: (^{<450513>}Romans 5:13) insomuch that men fall asleep and flatter themselves in their vices, when they have not that Sumner [*def: one employed to summon persons to appear in court*] to cite them before God's judgment seat. Then whereas the wretched Gentiles might have some defense and excuse, at leastwise that they be not so guilty before God: the Jews in offering their sacrifices had it witnessed to their face, that all of them were worthy of eternal death and so consequently double guilty in comparison of the Gentiles. And therefore in ^{<510214>}Colossians 2:14, Saint Paul useth this similitude, that the Ceremonies of the law were as evidences to bind a man the more. Truly like as although a debtor be not condemned by order of law, nor have bound himself before a notary nor given assurance in writing under his hand and seal: yet ceaseth he not for all that, to be bound [in conscience] to pay his debt: even so although the Gentiles had not any authentical matter of record whereby to be condemned: yet ceased they not to be still worthy of death. But as for the man that hath passed bonds by order of law, and enter his debt in the common records: what shall he say more? There is no shift for him: he must be fain [*willing*] to answer [the debt] out of hand. Now the Jews were in the like plight. For their washing of themselves when they went into the Temple, and in their own houses, and

everywhere else, was a confessing that there was nothing but uncleanness in them. Again, when they killed the beasts, and saw them slain before them, surely the same was as a lively picture of their own death and cursed state. And yet could not the brute beasts nor the shedding of their blood set them clear: nor likewise the water, which is a corruptible element, and cannot come at the soul. So then, the washing which they used had been a fond thing, if it had not directed them to the spiritual washing which we have in our Lord Jesus Christ. Likewise in baptism at these days, if we think ourselves to be made clean by the water: what an abuse is it? All these things must serve to lead us to the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore I conclude, that whereas the Jews were exercised in the law, the same was a greater evidence against them, and bound them straitlier to subjection unto God's judgment, and eternal death, than the Gentiles were. And so we see how Jesus Christ was not a bringer in of sin, but a discoverer of sin. For the Jews thought themselves well shrouded under the Ceremonies, and made a shield of them to fence themselves from god's displeasure, esteeming all other Nations unholy, upon opinion that there was nothing but uncleanness in all the world besides, and that all holiness was in themselves. Lo what their bravery was. Yea, but when Jesus Christ came and put them in order: he showed them that they should be fain [*willing*] to show other men by their own example, that their salvation was to be sought elsewhere than in their own merits, and that it behooved them to come to him with such humility, as to confess that they on their part brought nothing with them but utter cursedness. And by that means our Lord Jesus Christ discovered the mischief that had been hidden before, like as diseased persons shall oftentimes not perceive the festering of some sore that will breed some deadly disease, till the Surgeon find it out, who cannot do his duty in curing it, till he have searched the sore to the bottom which was unknown before. Even so was our Lord Jesus Christ fain [*willing*] to bewray [*reveal*] the wretchedness that was in the Jews, to the intent they should return unto him, and confess that they had not anything in them worthy of God's favor, nor any other refuge than unto his mere mercy. Thus ye see in effect what we have to consider for the solution of the question and doubt which Saint Paul putteth forth here. Likewise in these days, if a man speak of the Gospel to such as think they serve God, and hope to win heaven by their own deserts: they be grieved at it, because that that gate is shut against them by the presumptuousness

which they have conceived aforehand, saying: What I pray? Shall I have lost my time when I have been so devout all my life long? As for the man that shall have heard a Mass or twain, or mumbled up a sort of prayers, or gone on pilgrimage, or lashed out his money and substance (without sparing) upon pardons, indulgences, and such other things: if one tell him that we be all wretched, and that there is none other thing for us to lean unto but the mere grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that all that ever we are able to bring unto God is but filthy and loathly, he will storm and reply, Is it possible that God should have no regard of so great pains as I take to serve him? Must not all of it pass in mine account, and be allowed me to my salvation? They would fain [*willingly*] accuse God, yea and we shall see many that will not stick to rail upon him with open mouth, because they be loathe to lose that which they have done. Although the Hypocrites perceive much lewdness in themselves: yet would they fain [*willingly*] hide all under their cowles [*monkish hoods*]. For they break out after this manner. One says I have gone woolward [*def: wearing wool next to the skin as penance*]: another, I have risen at midnight to serve God: the third, I have forborne the eating of flesh: and another, I have been shut up in a Cloister as in a prison, and finally I have been dead to the worldward, and shall all this be unprofitable to me, so as God will have no regard of it? Such murmurings as these we shall hear daily. But let us see if they can make their case the better for all their replying? For when they have well examined what is in them, they shall find that all their doings are but as a painting to overcast things withal, like as a man that intendeth not to repair his house, leaveth the holes unmended within, and doth but daub them over on the outside to the end they be not seen, and afterward white limes them, so that finally it is nothing else but a pargetting [*plastering*] or white liming, according also as our Lord Jesus Christ useth the same similitude against the hypocrites that did no more but blanch things. (<402327> Matthew 23:27) Howbeit in the meanwhile God regardeth not the outward appearance, as it is said: in the first of Samuel, (<091607> 1 Samuel 16:7) but searcheth men's hearts and the truth, and [*layeth open*] the things that were hidden afore, according also as it is said in Jeremy. (<240503> Jeremiah 5:3) Sith [*since*] it is so: then all such as allege or set forth their own devotions, may peradventure have some fair show before men: but surely, before God all is but leasing [*falsehood*]. And as soon as God doth but blow upon their painting and starch, it shall scale off like the

painting of harlots that take great pain to starch their faces, and yet the Sun doth no sooner shine upon them, but a man shall see the filthy scales fall off, and their foulness is discovered to their shame. In like taking are all hypocrites when they will needs color things after that manner before God: their shameful lewdness must needs be brought to light. Wherefore let us mark, that our Lord Jesus Christ in condemning the whole world, by showing that none can be saved but by the free goodness of God his father, the which he offereth and imparteth unto us: bringeth not sin (for we have that already in us,) but uttereth and bewrayeth [*exposes*] it, to the end we should be convicted of it, and all the pride wherewith we were made drunken afore be laid down, and nothing remain in us but lowliness to confess unfeignedly [*genuinely*] that we be undone, and that there is none other shift for us, but that God utter the infinite treasures of his mercy upon us. Ye see then that all mouths shall be stopped, and men must not beguile themselves anymore by surmising to find any righteousness in themselves. And furthermore Saint Paul useth here a double answer, to show that it is nothing so. Howbeit before he answer, he setteth down a precise word, saying: *God forbid*. As if he should say, it is an horrible blasphemy to intend to lay the blame of our sins upon our Lord Jesus Christ. *For* (saith he) *if I pull down the thing that I have builded up, there shall be a contrariety* [in me.] And in speaking so, he bringeth us back to the common doctrine of the Gospel. For our preaching of the end whereunto God hath sent his only son, is to show that he hath brought us righteousness, and is come to put away sin, which holds us as it were under Tyranny, till we be delivered and set free from it by the grace which was purchased for us in the death and passion of the Son of God. Now then seeing it is so, we see that our Lord Jesus Christ is not the bringer in of sin, but is come to destroy sin (as Saint John saith in his Canonical Epistle) (^{<620308>} 1 John 3:8) and we also do see it to be so. For what else doth the Gospel teach us, but that we be full of all wickedness, and must be fain [*obliged*] to be made clean by him that is made the Lamb without spot, and also that he hath brought us the spirit of holiness? Forasmuch then as men, so long as they be cut off from Christ, have nothing in them but cursedness, so as they be utterly rotten and saped [*steeped*] in their sins, and that Jesus Christ is the party that maketh them pure and clean by the shedding of his blood to wash them withal, and by bringing us the spirit [of regeneration] to renew us with, that we might give ourselves to

the serving of God, have his Image repaired in us, and walk in truth and uprightnes: forasmuch (say I) as it is said so: we see that our Lord Jesus Christ is not the bringer in of sin. And why so? For let us consider what we be, and we shall find that there is a gulf of all manner of wickedness in every one of us, and in all mankind. But our Lord Jesus Christ cometh to remedy it. Ye see then that the sin was in us before: but our Lord Jesus Christ is fain [*pleased*] to uncover it. What harm doth a Physician by letting blood? Behold, a wretched man hath a disease that is not perceived: his blood is altogether corrupted, and yet it is not seen to be so as long as it lieth within the veins. But be he once let blood, it will appear that it was no blood, but filthy corrupt matter. Again what filthiness voideth out a man's body when he is purged for some disease? Now shall the Physician be blamed for it, or the medicine that was given him? It is well known that the purgation serveth to deliver the body that was half rotten afore. So then if our Lord Jesus Christ do by the light of his Gospel bewray [*expose*] the spiritual diseases that were in us, and the filthy uncleanness which is loathly before God, and shameful before men, and do purge us quit and clean thereof: ought he to be charged with any blame or reproach for his labor? What an unthankfulness were that? Therefore here is a sufficient answer to beat back the blasphemies and grudgings of the enemies of the Gospel, which burst for pride and cannot endure to be tamed. Let them allege what they can to prove that they have some righteousness and holiness: and yet shall it always be found that there is nothing but uncleanness in them, which they wist [*know*] not of, and yet it showeth itself continually. Mark that for one point. And secondly Saint Paul addeth a more large and easy declaration, when he saith, *that he is dead to the lawward by the law itself: and that he was crucified with Jesus Christ, to live unto God*. Now when as he saith that he was dead to the lawward by the law: it is in way of mocking such as pretend to be justified by keeping the law. For I have told you already how all his disputing and striving was against such kind of folk. They were but deceivers which went about to mingle Jesus Christ with the law of Moyses, yea even to get righteousness. For it is certain that our Lord Jesus Christ is not contrary to the law, but rather his Gospel taketh witness of the law, as it is showed in ^{<450102>}Romans 1:2. Nevertheless, when the matter concerneth Justification, that is to say, when men come to scanning [*examining, searching*], to know how and by what means God taketh and

accepteth them for innocent, pure, and without spot, then must the law be separated from Jesus Christ. And why? For the law bringeth nothing in it but cursing: and Jesus Christ bringeth the remedy of it. Therefore the enemies of the Gospel against whom Saint Paul doth now dispute, would have mingled the law with it, and have made men believe, that although they were justified by our Lord Jesus Christ, yet notwithstanding they should mingle the Ceremonies with him as a part of their salvation, and that by means of them they should purchase grace and favor before God. But Saint Paul cutteth off all this gear, and saith that there is none but only Jesus Christ [that can do that] and that men must seek none other helps in that case either one way or other, but simply content themselves with his grace, and not give the law any room in that behalf. For he saith, as for me I am not dead through the Gospel. As if he should say, will ye make me believe that I can get God's favor by means of the law? Nay, I tell you contrariwise, that it is not the Gospel which hath condemned me, it is not the Gospel that hath showed me my filthiness, to make me ashamed of it: it is not the Gospel that hath bereft me of all hope of salvation: but it is the Law, which hath showed me that I am stark dead, that I am damnable before God, that I am undone and damned: This cometh not from elsewhere than from the law. And would ye have me to seek righteousness there? It is all one as if ye would give me a poison to eat, to the end I should take nourishment of it. Howbeit (to say truth) that inconvenience is not to be wited [*blamed*] upon the Law, for it should redound to the dishonor of God, from whom the Law came. But howsoever the case stand, considering the corruption that is in us, the Law cannot but kill us, as we have seen in ^{<470307>}2 Corinthians 3:7 and as Saint Paul declareth more fully in ^{<450709>}Romans 7:9. For he saith, that when men believe themselves to have life: that is to say, when they believe themselves to be righteous, and to stand in the grace and favor of God: it is a sign that the law is dead to them, that is to say, that it hath not the power and strength to show them that which else it should do. For to what end was the law given? To set the rule of good life before our eyes, and that rule is called the righteousness which God alloweth. Mark that for one point. Secondly the law ought to be as a looking glass to us, wherein to behold our own deformities, blemishes, foulness, filthiness, and iniquities, so far out of all order, as we may be as it were swallowed up in despair at the sight of them. Now before we have the law, we see none of all these things: that is

to say, we know not what manner of ones we be, nor what evil is in us. But when God setteth his demands before us, and we perceive the same thoroughly: then are we at our wit's end, and utterly out of hope. The Law then is dead: that is to say it is as it were thrust under foot and as good as buried, so long as we think ourselves to be alive, and conceive any foolish imagination of being righteous, and of obtaining heaven by our own good works. But when the law liveth: that is to say, when God giveth it power to touch us, then are we dead, then is it as a sword to thrust us to the heart. Therefore we must needs receive a deadly wound, so soon as we have perceived what the Law containeth. After that manner speaketh Saint Paul in the text which I have alleged. And now following the same matter, he saith, *that he is dead to the Law by the Law*: as if he had said, Come not hither to slander the Gospel, as though it were the cause of our damnation, or an entrance unto us to be cursed before God, to have the knowledge of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in us. No no. But it is certain that the Law (when it doth his office, and we read it in such wise as becometh us) doth always kill us, and we lie as it were plunged in despair, till our Lord Jesus Christ have reached us his hand to lift us out of it. Thus then am I dead unto the law, that is to say, I can have no life, I can have no assurance of soul health, I can have no comfort, rest nor contentation, and to be short, there is nothing in the law whereby I may come unto God: but clean contrariwise, it shaketh me off, it thrusteth me back, it banisheth me from the kingdom of heaven, it cutteth me quite off from the hope of salvation, it maketh me a poor cursed, and wretched creature, and to be short, it sendeth me to the bottom of hell. Ye see then what I have won by abiding in the law. And Saint Paul speaketh of himself, rather than of any other body, to the end that the things which he speaketh, may be the better received, as of a man of experience. And it is after the same manner that he speaketh in the forealleged ^{<450709>} Romans 7:9. For there he setteth not forth this man or that man for an example, but saith, I myself was sometimes alive: that is to say, at such time that he was a Pharisee, and accounted an holy man, yea even for one of the excellentest in all Jewry, insomuch that he was a mirror of all perfection, and as a little Angel: (then saith he) I was alive, howbeit but by hypocrisy. For he made himself to believe wonders, and he was so puffed up with pride, that he held scorn of Jesus Christ. Lo in what blindness Saint Paul acknowledgeth himself to have been. (^{<450708>} Romans 7:8) And he addeth anon [*at another time*]

after, that he wist [*knew*] not what was meant by, Thou shalt not covet. It might be thought strange that a man which had not only been at school, but also been a great teacher of others, and thereto a very zealous man as he himself affirmeth, should be so dulled as not to know his own faults. But Saint Paul showeth the reason of it. For (saith he) I looked no further than to the outward honesty, that there might no fault be found in me before the world, nor any man know any evil by me. But when I understood what this saying, Thou shalt not lust meant, and perceived that God condemneth all the affections and thoughts of men: then I perceived that the worst was behind, as the common Proverb saith: for it is the last commandment of the law, wherein God maketh so lively and deep a search as nothing can be excepted from it. Whereas it is said in the law, (⁰²²⁰⁰³Exodus 20:3) Thou shalt not have any strange gods: Thou shalt not make any image to worship it: Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: Thou shalt keep holy the day of rest: Thou shalt honor thy father and mother: Thou shalt not kill: Thou shalt not commit adultery: Thou shalt not steal: All this is well (will we think) we must abstain from all whoredom, violence and extortion: we must abstain from deceit and robbery: we must live soberly. Hereto, we must abstain from blasphemy, and we must honor God. All this will easily be granted. But there is a back nook that we perceived not, which is, Thou shalt not covet or lust: that is a privy nipper. Truly it seemeth not to be very big or great: but yet for all that, it is such a stinger, as passeth all the rest in biting. For by the end and winding up of his Law, God searcheth out all that ever is in man. He setteth down that commandment, to try out the things that were hidden: and when he saith, thou shalt not covet, it is a piercing even into the marrow of men's bones. So then Saint Paul confesseth that he knew not what sin meant, till he understood what was meant by the commandment that forbideth men to covet or lust. Therefore in this text he chargeth not the Gospel but the Law with it. Wherefore let us remember upon this text, that all they which deceive themselves by any opinion of their own merits never tasted what the Law of God is, nor what it meaneth: I speak of the greatest doctors that are in most estimation, as (in good faith) it is to be seen in the Popedom [*papal government*]. For even those that are taken to be the pillars of the Church, (notwithstanding that they profess Divinity) know not one word of God's law, to apply the same to his true and natural use. For they have nothing in them but

hypocrisy, and they bear themselves in hand, that they shall please God with a rattle, as if he were a little babe. They do but toy with him, and yet ye shall see them stand so much in their own conceits, as they cannot abide to be condemned. And if a man tell them that we must seek our salvation in Jesus Christ: yea say they? and what shall become then of our freewill? What should become of our own merits and satisfactions? To their seeming it were much better to pluck the sun out of the sky, yea and God out of his seat too, than to bereave man of that prerogative, or of the thing that he can bring of himself to compound with God: and yet for all that, it is certain that there is nothing in them but stark filthiness. For men see that there is neither fear of God, nor uprightness, nor equity, nor aught [*anything*] else [that good is] in their life. They be so full of pride that they be ready to burst again, and they be full of envy, rancor, and all manner of looseness. And yet for all this, they will needs hold God bound unto them: but that is because they never knew the law. So then, when our Lord teacheth us, and showeth us how we ought to walk in this world, let us learn to lay the doctrine that he setteth forth and our life together, and there we shall find the right perfection of the law, and that in ourselves there is nothing but horrible confusion: we shall see hell ready prepared for us. By that means it will be easy for us to give over all the deserving which we shall have fancied in ourselves, so as it shall be soon beaten down, and our mouths stopped, and we become like poor dead folk without any breath, because we shall perceive well enough, that we cannot come unto God, but God must needs thunder against us, if we bring any foolish imagination of our own deservings. Lo how the law slayeth us. But when we have passed through such death, that is to say, when we be already rightly humbled and utterly dismayed: then here is a remedy, which Saint Paul setteth down, saying: *I was crucified with Jesus Christ, even to live unto God.* Now he showeth here that our Lord Jesus Christ not only bringeth us remission of our sins, but also sanctifieth and regenerateth us by his holy spirit, insomuch that whereas there was nothing but stubbornness in us before, now we be given to serve God, and to please him. And for the better understanding of that which Saint Paul telleth us, let us mark that we receive two principal graces of our Lord Jesus Christ: The one is the forgiveness of our sins, whereby we are assured of our salvation, and have our consciences quieted, and whereupon it behooveth us to be grounded, so as we call upon God as our father. Who giveth us the

boldness to lift up our heads to heaven, and to call God our father? Again, what maketh us so bold as to glory that we be companions and brothers to the Angels? It is because our sins come not to account: for we must always have record to the washing of them away, which was done by the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ye see then that our righteousness is that God accepteth us, howbeit not in respect of our own worthiness, but in respect of the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby all our misdoings are wiped out. That is the first benefit which we have by our Lord Jesus Christ. The second is, that whereas we be forward of our own nature, and all that the Papists term by the name of freewill is but frenzy, and that how great accompt [*account*] soever men make of themselves, all is but naughtiness, and we be full of vice and corruption: instead of being so, our Lord Jesus Christ giveth us the grace to be sorry for our sins, and to labor to do good: for so long as we abide in our own nature, every of us sootheth and flattereth himself in his evil. But when we have once tasted the inestimable love of our God, and perceived what our Lord Jesus Christ is: then we be so touched by his holy spirit, that we condemn the evil, and desire to draw near unto God, and to frame ourselves to his holy will. We be sure of that once, and although we go halting, yet do we continually fight to see our own imperfections and infirmities, and perceive full well how it is the spirit of God that moveth us thereunto, when our chief desire is to forsake the sinfulness that is in us, and cometh of our flesh, so as we wish nothing else but that God should be glorified in all our life, and faithfully obeyed in all things. That is the second benefit which our Lord Jesus Christ bringeth us: and they be two things knit together by unseparable band, so that like as the light of the sun cannot be separated from his heat: so these two graces (that is to wit our righteousness, and the remission of our sins) are unseparably matched with our renewal, which is done by the spirit of sanctification. Thus ye see two graces inseparable: and like as when we say that the Sun is whot [*hot*], it ceaseth not to shine also, and yet notwithstanding the light of the sun is not heat: so when we say that we be justified by the remission of our sins, it is not meant that our Lord Jesus Christ doth therefore suffer himself to be mocked and despised, but that we have need to be thoroughly cleansed, so as we may learn to renounce the world, and ourselves, to the end to stick unto him with true obedience. Howsoever the world go, the thing that Saint Paul speaketh in this text, shall always

be found true, namely that he was crucified with Jesus Christ, to live unto God. Then if any man accuse the Gospel that it giveth liberty to do evil and to sin: we may always answer, how so? By the law we be always dead, for there we see our own cursedness which will leave us dismayed in despair. But in the Gospel, although we be crucified, that is to say, although there be a spice of death in the Gospel, yet is that death a quickening death, and the cause of life. For so long as men live to themselves, they be dead unto God: they be wretched carcasses full of rottenness. But when they die in themselves, they live unto God. And for that cause Saint Paul in the ^{<451201>}Romans 12:1 calleth us living sacrifices, where he telleth us that we must be transformed, and utterly give over our own reason and our own will, to yield God such service as is meet for him to have. He saith, Offer up yourselves as living sacrifices. So then, in the Law there must needs be a deadly death, a death that leaveth us utterly overwhelmed and sunken even down into hell. But in the Gospel there is a quickening death. And why? For we be crucified with Jesus Christ, to live unto God, that is to say, our old man (as Saint Paul termeth it in ^{<450604>}Romans 6:4) and that which we have of our own nature, is done away, howbeit not at the first day, but little by little. But howsoever the case stand, we shall perceive that our Lord Jesus Christ mortifieth all that was in us of our own, or of the world, so as we be not so greatly given to nestle here below, because we see it is a miserable state to live here, and our very care is to stick unto God. Thus ye see how we may be crucified with our Lord Jesus Christ. But what is meant by that crucifying? Verily it is a certain kind of death. Howbeit, that death bringeth us to life, which thing the death which the Law bringeth doth not. Now then we see the very intent of Saint Paul, and the natural meaning of this text. Therefore nowadays when the enemies of the truth blaspheme the Gospel, we have here an answer to stop their mouths. And if they hold on still, let them bark like dogs, but they shall not be able to bite, do what they can. See here what the Papists flush forth when we preach that men are justified through God's free goodness. O (say they) are they so? That were the next way to give every man the bridle to live after his own liking, and to cause that there might be no more remorse nor scruple of conscience, so as every man might have leave to do what he lusted. That is the common blasphemy of the Papists. Again when we show them that they cannot bind us by their traditions, and that it is but a tyranny which they have

usurped in robbing God of his right, and that the liberty was purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ, to the end that we should not be tied to the things which men would lay upon us of law and necessity in matters concerning the spiritual government of our souls. O (say they) see what comes of it: their desire is nothing else but to wallow in all pleasure, and to lead a loose life. Surely we may easily answer to all this. For the doctrine that we bring, serveth not to stir up men's lusts, nor to give them too great and lawless a liberty: but to the clean contrary. But howsoever the case stand, it ought to suffice us, that if we should abide in the quagmire [*shaky, unstable ground*] of the Papists, surely there would be nothing but death for us. For were they not too fast asleep and utterly dulled, undoubtedly they should be tossed with such unquietness and heartbitings, as they should needs see that that is not the thing whereupon we must rest. But behold, they be so rooted in their ignorance, that they have not any feeling of God's justice at all. But as for our parts, forasmuch as we know we have such a freedom purchased us by our Lord Jesus Christ, and are sure of our salvation because God doth freely forgive all our faults, and do feel already by the working of God's holy spirit, that he draweth us to him, and are mortified to live unto him: Let us go forward with a cheerful heart. And although there be never so many infirmities in our nature, yet notwithstanding let us not doubt but God accepteth us, for all our imperfections. But the Papists cannot have so much as one good purpose to serve God, saving that they be utterly bewitched [to believe so] through vain self-trust. And why? For they ground themselves upon their own merits, and (to their seeming) that is the mean to purchase grace. But now what is it that they can do? Put the case that they brought a hundred times more with them than they have to bring, and that God governed them by his holy spirit, so as they had some manner of feeling of the Gospel, though it were but half a feeling: yet should they come far short of discharging their duty, yea or of the hundred part of it towards God. But in the mean season, it is well known that all that ever they do is but pelting trash: and as for the law of God, it is nought worth with them, and yet in meanwhile they busy their heads about their own inventions. Howbeit let us still put the case that they endeavored to walk in the fear of God, and that they had learned aright to do the things that God commandeth them: yet for all that, they could not make their boast that they were come to the perfection of that righteousness which God

requireth of us. And when they had tormented themselves never so much, how should they be able to serve God with a cheerful courage, unless they knew themselves to be in his favor, notwithstanding that they be so blameworthy before him? But as for us, we on our side are able to serve God with a free heart, notwithstanding that our consciences find fault with us, and we know that there are many sins in us. And why? For we ground not ourselves upon our own merits, but upon God's mere mercy: and thereby we be taught, that God receiveth our works though there be much faultiness in them, and that we be in his favor although there be many vices and blemishes in us. And that is the cause why he saith by his prophet, (³⁹⁰¹⁰⁶ Malachi 1:6) that he will accept the service which we do unto him, as a father accepteth the service of his child. Ye see that a child is willing to obey his father: and when his father saith to him, do this: his father taketh his doing in good worth, though the child know not what he doth, yea and sometimes though he mar a thing, yet his father is contented to lose the thing when he seeth that the child was willing and desirous to serve him. But if a man take a servant for wages, he will look to have him do his task. And why? For he looketh for his wages: and a man will not abide to have him mar the work that is put into his hands: yea and if it be not well done, he will not be contented with it. Now our Lord speaking of the grace of the Gospel, saith he will receive our services as a father receiveth the obedience of his child, though all that ever he doth be nothing worth: that is to say, he passeth not a whit for the perfection that is in them, for he shall find none at all in them, but he beareth with us of his goodness. He showeth himself so kind and freehearted towards us, that whatsoever we do, he taketh it in good part, although it be not worthy, nor do we deserve it. Ye see then that the way for us to have a free courage to serve God, is to assure ourselves that he blesseth all our works, because that whatsoever spottiness is in them, is cleansed away by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. To be short, whereas God showeth himself pitiful towards us, and useth inestimable mercy: let us understand that he doth it not to the end that every of us should run a scoterloping [*wander aimlessly*] and take the bridle in his teeth, and play the horse that is broken loose: no no, but contrariwise it is to the end, that the sword of God's word should strike us to the heart, and make such a search there, as we might be rightly humbled to crave pardon at God's hand. Not that we should have the heartbiting which the Papists have, which would pluck us

back and hinder us from coming unto God, making us to say, wretched creature what dost thou? What canst thou tell whither God love thee or no? Let us have no such nips [*sharp biting comments*], but let us be fully resolved that God beholdeth us with pity, and taketh our works in good worth: not for any desert or worthiness that he findeth in them, but because we be joined to our Lord Jesus Christ. Now therefore we see what Saint Paul meant to say. Also we see how that doctrine served not for that time only: but that the same is as profitable and needful for us at this day, as ever it was [for any heretofore]. For inasmuch as God's enemies fight against the Gospel, and spew out their blasphemies: it standeth us on hand to have wherewith to resist them: and not only them, but also Satan, who hath at all times had the slight to make us believe men, that they could live of themselves and by their own deservings: but that is but to lull us asleep in death. And therefore let us assure ourselves, that it is better for us to die to the law, than to live to it: that is to say, let us assure ourselves, that if God should enter into account with us, we should be utterly undone and damned. And being so dismayed, let us suffer ourselves to be crucified with our Lord Jesus Christ: and sith [*since*] we know that he hath reconciled us to God his father by the sacrifice which he offered, let us also suffer ourselves to be governed by his holy spirit, and to be renewed by him in such wise, as being dead in ourselves we may live truly unto God, giving over all overweening [*high opinion*] of our own righteousness, and fighting against all the lusts of our flesh, and withdrawing ourselves from the world.

And now let us cast ourselves down before the majesty of our good God with acknowledgement of our sins, praying him to make us so to feel them, as it may be to pluck us back from the filthiness wherein we be plunged, and to join us so unto our Lord Jesus Christ, as he may draw us to God his father, and make us come still nearer and nearer unto him, till we be fully joined unto him. And so let us all say, Almighty God heavenly father, etc.