

THE FIFTEENTH SERMON

WHICH IS THE FIRST UPON THE THIRD CHAPTER

- 1 O Ye unwise Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth, unto whom Jesus Christ hath heretofore been portrayed out before your eyes, and crucified among you?
- 2 I would know but this one thing of you, received you the spirit by the works of the Law, or by the preaching of faith?
- 3 Are ye so unwise, that when ye have begun in the spirit, ye will now end in the flesh? — ^{<480301>}GALATIANS 3:1-3

WE SEE how God goeth about to win us by gentleness and fair means, till our naughtiness and stubbornness enforce him to deal roughly with us, because we suffer not ourselves to be handled so gently by his hand. For throughout the whole doctrine of the Gospel, God doth as it were stretch out his arms to bring us in unto him and to receive us in his fatherly love: or rather (as he likeneth himself by Moyses) he is as a Hen that spreadeth out her wings to gather her young chickens under them. (^{<021904>}Exodus 19:4; ^{<053211>}Deuteronomy 32:11) Ye see then that God of his infinite goodness allureth us to him, but we be like wild beasts, that will not suffer themselves to be guided by him. And therefore in respect of such our forwardness, he had need to use roughness, and to show us our unthankfulness, to the end we may learn to be ashamed of it. And that is the cause why Saint Paul having showed that all our welfare lieth in Jesus Christ, and that if we will be partakers of his righteousness and of the benefits that he is willing to impart unto us, we must utterly renounce ourselves, and acknowledge that there is nothing but sin and corruption in us: doth now sharply rebuke such as would mingle their own devotions with the grace that is offered them in our Lord Jesus Christ: for they had been instructed faithfully before. If Saint Paul had begun in some place where men had never heard one word of the Gospel afore, he would not have used such roughness: for he would have pitied the blind and ignorant

wretches. But forasmuch as the Galatians had been taught faithfully by him, and he had taken pains to train them to the Gospel accordingly, and they thereupon had shrunk back and suffered themselves to be turmoiled with false opinions: therefore is he so rough with them, according also as he himself showeth, that the reason thereof was, for that *Jesus Christ had been crucified among them*, and that they having seen the treasures of God's infinite goodness laid forth after that manner before them, had none excuse to return again to their pelting trash, in hope to be justified and to purchase salvation by the Ceremonies of the Law. Thus ye see in effect that the thing which we have to gather upon this text, is that if we desire to find a pleasant taste in God's word, we on our side must be teachable and not stubborn. For we must call to mind how it is written in the ^{<191826>} Psalm 18:26, that God will always deal mildly with such as be of a mild spirit, and that he will be rough and sharp towards such as use stubbornness, and cannot abide to submit themselves unto him. All they then which have a neck of brass, and cannot find in their hearts to stoop under the obedience of God, shall find themselves to be matched with too strong an adversary, and that they must needs be bruised and broken in pieces if they will not bow. Furthermore let us mark that when God correcteth our vices, we must: not chafe and storm as many do, who do nothing else but gnash their teeth when they be rebuked, saying that they will not be handled after such a fashion, and that their nature requireth to be taught by gentleness: yea verily, but that their sturdiness showeth the clean contrary. For they that speak after that manner, would very fain [*happily*] be flattered. And although they overshoot themselves into all evil, yet will they not abide to have their galled backs rubbed, but rather that men should wink at them and conceal their naughtiness. But if their faults be laid afore them, by and by they rankle [*fester, conceive bitterness*] against the Gospel: and whereas they showed some good sign of zeal afore, they utter such spitefulness afterward, as a man may perceive there was nothing but venom and bitterness in their heart, and it is a sure token that such folk never wist [*know*] what it is to profit in God's school, at leastwise purely, as Saint Paul saith in another place. (^{<550316>} 2 Timothy 3:16) God's word (saith he) is good, not only to teach, to the end we may know what is for our behoove [*advantage*], and be able to discern betwixt good and evil: but also to rebuke and correct us. For there are many negligent folk, which have need to be pricked forward with

hard strokes of the spur: some had need to be imbeced [*debased, valued lower*] by reason of their overweening [*high opinion*]: and othersome grow altogether past recovery, if they be not overmastered by strong hand.

Thus ye see how all of us must suffer patiently when our Lord useth such roughness, acknowledging the same to be greatly to our behoove. Howbeit let every of us examine his life well, and there is none of us but he shall find that he provoketh God to use such sharpness towards him, as if a father be as kindhearted as is possible to be wished, yet if he have unruly children, so as they be lewd and forward, he shall be provoked after such a fashion, that he shall as it were change his nature, because he knoweth not at what end to begin with them, and is fain [*willing*] after a sort to transform himself. Even so is it with us. For we have a father which in goodness surmounteth all that can be seen among men: but we on our side (as I said afore) instead of yielding obediently unto him as we ought to do, and instead of offering ourselves readily to walk as he commandeth so soon as he doth but speak the word: do nothing but stray. We have our lusts always inordinate and boiling, we have our replies always ready coined: and although our mouth speak not, yet it appeareth that there is no such calmness in our hearts, as to be contented to submit ourselves to God as we ought to do. Seeing then that we be convicted to our faces by experience, that God had need to be so rough and sharp towards us: let us suffer him to do whatsoever he knoweth to be for our welfare. And no doubt but the Galatians were as nice as we, and had as itching ears as we have: and yet were they fain [*willing*] to be rebuked so sharply by reason of their unthankfulness. As for Saint Paul, we know he endeavored by all humility and mildness, to draw all such to the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, as were committed and appointed to his Apostleship. He likeneth himself (and not without cause) to a nurse, which will bear with her nursechild, and not spare anything to show the love that she beareth it. We shall see hereafter that he will say, Be ye as I am, for I am as you be.

(^{<480412>} Galatians 4:12) I seek nothing but to fashion myself unto you, and to bring to pass that we may agree in one. And yet notwithstanding, necessity hath constrained him to cry out as you hear now, *Ye unwise, ye fools, ye indiscreet* or witless as beasts, *who hath bewitched you after that sort? must you not needs be possessed with the Devil?* Here are very hard words, and no doubt but the Galatians were grieved at them at the first sight. Yet nevertheless it was meet for them to feel, that Saint Paul used

not that manner of speech and language without cause. Therefore whensoever we be rebuked, let us blame our own faults for it, and yield ourselves guilty: for we shall gain nothing by checking again. When we have disputed what we can, we may peradventure justify our case afore men: but we shall always be guilty before God. Moreover it behooveth us to mark well the reason that is added here by Saint Paul, when he saith, *ye must needs be bewitched, if ye obey not the truth, saying that our Lord Jesus Christ hath been as it were painted out lively before you, yea and even crucified among you.* In speaking after that fashion, Saint Paul showeth with what force and effectualness he had preached the Gospel. Therefore he likeneth the doctrine which he had brought, unto a picture: and thereunto enlargeth it yet better, saying that the matter which he had preached among the Galatians, ought to avail as much as if they had seen the Son of God crucified among them, and his blood shedded out for the spiritual washing of their souls. Forsomuch then as they had been taught so faithfully, they could no more excuse themselves of their backsliding. But first of all we see here which is the true manner of preaching the Gospel: namely to give knowledge of God's love towards us, in that he spared not his only Son, but gave him to the death for us: according as in very deed all the treasures of wisdom and understanding are laid up in our Lord Jesus Christ, as it is said in another place to the Colossians. (<510209> Colossians 2:9) Sith [*since*] it is so, if we be desirous to profit well in the Gospel, let us learn to acknowledge the grace that is purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ: for without that, all that we have is nothing. Many will brag that they be well learned in God's word: but the true trial to know whither [*whether*] it be so or no, is if we perceive how great need we have, that God should pour out his mercy upon us, to succor us by drawing us out of the gulf of Hell, and thereupon conclude that we cannot be cleansed and washed from any of all our spots, but by the blood of God's son: nor obtain righteousness but by the obedience that he hath yielded: nor have any satisfaction for us but by the sacrifice that he hath offered: nor come in God's favor but by his means: nor open our mouths to call upon him but by his intercession. Therefore when we be thoroughly persuaded of the gracious benefits that are brought us by the son of God: then may we say we have some understanding in the Gospel: but without that, we have nothing but imagination and folly. Mark that for one point. And therewith let us mark, that it is not enough for us to know slightly

that our Lord Jesus Christ hath bought us so dearly: but that we must continue still in the doctrine of the Gospel, till it be thoroughly printed in our hearts, as though his blood gushed down, to apply the fruit that cometh of it to our use: and that is to the end to waken us out of our drowsiness. For we shall see many that take themselves to be very great Clerks, if they understand but three or four words of the Gospel at a glance. And yet the same shall soon be defaced and put out of remembrance, because that whereas we ought to seek to be filled with the benefits that our Lord Jesus Christ hath brought us, they hold themselves contented with a taste of them. God then punisheth the unthankfulness of such folk, and their despising of his goodness. And therefore it standeth us so much the more on hand, to put forth and apply all our endeavor to be well settled in the foresaid doctrine, that is to wit, of knowing whereunto the death and passion of God's son, and the inestimable benefits which we have received, do avail us. Again on the other side we be warned, that our sins are the heinouser before God, if after we have been taught his will, we turn head back again, and sin, not through ignorance, but through contempt and willfulness. For if we shake off his yoke, it is a sure proof that we be loath to be subject to him, and play the wild beasts. True it is that even the ignorant folk in the world are reproved by their own sinfulness, forasmuch as hypocrisy reigneth in all men: but yet if comparison be made between those that never heard one word of the truth, and us that have our ears beaten with it, and are provoked without end or ceasing to come unto God: we be much more faulty than they. Behold, the Turks believe that they worship the God that made heaven and earth: Howbeit forasmuch as they refuse our Lord Jesus Christ, they have but an Idol. The Papists also are deceived in their fond devotions. And yet for all that, they be not a whit the less guilty before God. But what for that? If we that know the way of salvation, which hear God's voice ringing continually in our ears, which are enlightened with the sun of righteousness, (<390402> Malachi 4:2) even with our Lord Jesus Christ, If we (I say) become as good as brute beasts, and discern not between good and evil: must it not needs be that we are (as ye would say) bewitched? For seeing that God is so gracious unto us, as to come to us and to teach us so familiarly: surely he hath just cause to complain of us as he also doth: My people (saith he by his Prophet Micheas) (<330603> Micah 6:3) what can I do more for thee than I have done? Then if God plead against us, and charge us with all the means

which he hath given us to make us wholly his, that he might enjoy us without gainsaying: and we on our side cast a stop in his way, and are loath to bow down our necks to receive his yoke, or else be fickle minded and fleeting to forsake all again today or tomorrow, and had lever [*rather*] to be beguiled by the crafts and illusions of Satan, than to be guided by the truth which is certain: must it not needs be that we are as monsters, that is to say folk, that make utter defiance to nature? Therefore let us learn to look better upon ourselves here: for look what was once said to the Galatians, is spoken still at this day unto us. For it was not for that people's sake alone that Saint Paul wrote: but the holy Ghost quickeneth us up still now, and telleth us that if we have once received the doctrine of the Gospel, and afterward start away from it, so as if a man trace us he shall find no constancy nor steadiness of faith in us: we be so much the more damnable, and cannot shield ourselves with anything: for when we shall have taken all the coverts in the world, we shall abide convicted of such lewdness, as in the end we must needs have our mouths stopped, and God must set us forth as an example of all unthankfulness, insomuch that we shall become odious both to men and Angels, because we made no better account of the doctrine of salvation, which is so precious a seed as we see that the Scripture speaketh of it. (^{<401319>} Matthew 13:19) Ye see then that the thing which we have to bear in mind, is not that the only Galatians are rebuked here by Saint Paul, but that we be taught in their persons, to walk in fear and awe when God shall have been so gracious to us, as to call us unto him, and to show us what his will is. And it is not for naught that he useth so sharp and rigorous words, as to call them *fools and witless*, and consequently to say, *who hath bewitched you?* But we hear how that in ^{<490414>} Ephesians 4:14, concerning the using of the Gospel, he saith that when we have once been taught it, we must not be as little babes that are led to and fro, and made to believe that the Crow is white: but we must be so settled in it, that although the Devil stir up never so many troubles, false opinions and lies, yet we may still hold our own, and keep on our pace, assuring ourselves that God's truth is infallible. Thus ye see that the end whereto the Gospel ought to serve us, is not only to show us what is good for us, but also to arm and fence us against all encounters, and against all Satan's slights, so that if there rise up any heresies or other corruptions, we may still maintain the battle valiantly, and get the upper hand by our faith, and not be piped anymore into the fowler's snare,

according to the similitude which Saint Paul useth. Now then seeing it is so: it must needs be that we be bewitched and possessed with the Devil, if such a remedy suffice us not, after that God hath manifested himself unto us, and we know (yea even fully and assuredly) that it is he which speaketh. If we be not moved by his authority, what will become of it? Again, whereas we have our Lord Jesus Christ shining upon us as it were at high noondays: must it not needs be that we are at defiance with nature as I said afore, if we seek here and there for byways, when the right way is laid before our eyes? So then it is not without cause that Saint Paul speaketh so roughly to that people, which had changed the doctrine, after that God had granted them the grace to have his truth showed unto them. But we must call to mind also, how God upbraideth his people of old time by his Prophet Jeremy. (^{<240210>}Jeremiah 2:10) Go your ways over the sea (saith he) and into the Isles, and into far countries, and ye shall see every nation worship his own Idols without changing. And wherefore then are you so variable? As for those, they know not whereupon they be grounded. They have but a certain opinion, which carryeth them away and beguileth them: and yet notwithstanding they hold on still without turning aside, and stick wholly to it: and why then should you which know what God ye obey, be so fleeting? Now therefore let us mark well, that if we be lightly turned and thrust aside from the doctrine of the Gospel: there shall need none other witness against us at the last day, than the wretched unbelievers which follow their own superstitions: for we see they be wedded to them. Look upon the Turkes and Paynims [*Pagans, Heathens*], look upon the Jews and Papists. They wot [*know*] not what God they worship, they have but a weening [*dream*] instead of faith: and yet notwithstanding a man cannot pluck them from their false fancies, and they be so given unto them as a man can never remove them. Then if we on our side knowing that it is the living God which calleth and teacheth us daily, and that the thing which is uttered by men cometh of him and of his holy spirit, and having record of the law and the Gospel which cannot fail, if we (I say) having such a resting stock for our faith, be afterward unconstant, so as our ears itch to receive every new toy, and men make us to alter our mind in less than the turning of a hand, what else betokeneth it, but that we willfully refuse God's grace, as if we would shut the gate against him that he might not come in unto us? Or else, if after we have once known, that he offereth us so inestimable a benefit in his Gospel, we cast it down

and trample it under our feet: think we that God will suffer his grace to be so lightly esteemed and held scorn of? No. For we cannot despise the doctrine of the Gospel, but we must unhallow the blood of God's son, which he did shed for our redemption: for the one cannot be separated from the other. Whensoever and how often soever God speaketh to us, and offereth us forgiveness of our sins, showing himself ready to receive us to mercy: so often is the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ sprinkled upon us. All the teaching in the world cannot do us any good, except our Lord Jesus Christ be with it, to apply the shedding of his blood unto us. And if we despise the doctrine of the Gospel, it is all one as if we did spit at the holy blood of God's son, which thing is an intolerable traitorousness. Therefore let us look narrowlier to ourselves, and weigh well this text, to the intent we stand steadfast: and forasmuch as God hath called us to so great a good turn, and we do now know that is not by haphazard that the Gospel hath been preached, but because it was God's will to utter the infinite riches of his goodness towards us: let us stand in it, and so stick to it, as nothing may thrust us from it, nor by any means ever shake us down. Lo in effect what we have to bear away in this text. Moreover we be warned also, which are the true pictures or paintings to lead us to God. The Papists say we must have remembrances to teach us, and that images are the books of the unlearned which are not apt to conceive higher doctrine: but hath Saint Paul spoken here but to three or four folk? No. It is generally, and to all Christians without exception, as well to great as small, that he saith that when the Gospel is preached, then Jesus Christ is painted out lively, and we must look upon him, not with the fleshly eyes of our bodies, but with the spiritual eyes of our faith. Then seeing it is so, let us learn that we have no need of Images and puppets to teach us what is necessary for our salvation, nother [*neither*] need we a piece of wood, stone or other such pelting stuff, to put us in remembrance of God, (for in all those things there is nothing but vanity and leasing [*falsehood*]:) but we have need to have God's word preached, and to endeavor and travail to make the same familiar to us, that we may there behold God in his lively image, that is to say in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ his only son, according also as Saint Paul saith in ^{<470403>}2 Corinthians 4:3, where he protesteth that the doctrine which he brought unto them, was not hidden from any but the unbelievers, such as perish, whom the Devil possesseth, and which have their eyes sealed up. And no wonder though they see not

awhit in the open light. But yet in the meanwhile the doctrine is so manifest unto us, as we may easily perceive God's will. For he showeth us it familiarly enough as oft as the Gospel is preached, insomuch that we need not to make much running up and down, not to fetch [*craft, design*] far windlasses [*decoys, snares*]: we need no more to say, who shall sty [*live, lodge*] up above the Clouds? who shall go beyond sea? (^{<053012>}Deuteronomy 30:12) who shall go down into the deep? Have we God's word? at leastwise have we it preached purely? Then is Jesus Christ as it were in the midst of us, and showeth himself as it were hanging upon the Cross, witnessing what he did for us, when he suffered death to reconcile us to God his father. There he setteth us down a sure and undeceivable pledge or warrant, and let us content ourselves with it. For when we have pleaded never so much, it will not excuse us: our case will always go against us, if we be not well assured in our consciences, that we have wholly leaned unto God's word, which (as I said) bringeth us so near unto God, that it is the very union itself, which we have with him in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. And in good sooth [*truth*], we see how God doth as it were stoop to our rudeness and infirmity. For doth he speak in so lofty and dark a style as we can understand nothing? No: but contrariwise he abaseth himself, and thereto thinks it not enough to have spoken, but also addeth Sacraments to his word, which are the true pictures that we ought to have. Like as when we see, it is a picture which showeth us that we be full of filth and uncleanness, till we be washed: and by whom? We must seek our washing from above. Besides this, it showeth us that we must be renewed by the Holy Ghost of God. That then is a good picture. And why? Because it beareth God's mark, and is matched with his word. As much is to be said of Lord's supper. When we see the morsels of bread and the drops of wine. Very well, they be the Creatures whereof we have been wont to take nourishment and sustenance for our bodies: but the same do lead us to the life of our souls, and give us to understand, that we have no life but in our Lord Jesus Christ. And the cause why the wine is added, is to show that he hath such virtue in him, as we need not to seek any part of the things that we want, any otherwhere: but that he serveth us for meat and drink and all. These (I say) are the good images that God hath set afore us: and now if we be still soaring in the air, and gadding [*wandering*] after our own lusts, to say I would fain [*happily*] have more: it is a disdain of the grace that is offered us. So

much the more therefore doth it stand us on hand to mark well this strain, where Saint Paul by the power and in the name of God condemneth, yea and with the power of the holy Ghost thundereth, against all such as have been taught the Gospel faithfully, and afterward do turn aside and slip away from it. And thereupon he addeth, that he would fain [*willingly*] have it known by what mean the holy Ghost is received. For if they had received the holy Ghost by the works of the law: Saint Paul would have granted that there was some righteousness to be had by it. But forasmuch as they had received him by the Gospel: it must needs be concluded, that they ought to have rested upon the record that God gave them so apparently. And for the better understanding of the thing that he meant to say here: let us mark that God's spirit is given in common to all the faithful, forsomuch as they be regenerated and made new creatures. Besides this, there are spiritual gifts, which God distributeth according to such measure and portion as he thinketh good, but yet they redound all to the common welfare of the Church. If we be Christians, we must needs have God's spirit, as we shall see hereafter. For he is called the earnestpenny, and the Seal of the heritage (^{<470122>} 2 Corinthians 1:22; ^{<490414>} Ephesians 1:14) that is promised us, and which we look for. Ye see then that God's spirit must dwell in us, if we be his children. But besides this, there are also gracious gifts: as for example there was in old time the gift of Tongues, the gift of prophesying, the gift of healing, and such other like. And even still at this day, God showeth well that he hath not utterly forsaken his Church. For although visible gifts reign not now as they did then: yet notwithstanding we may see still, that God doth by some mean or other utter his operation among us. Furthermore Saint Paul speaketh here to all men. And therefore (according to the common and ordinary meaning of it) we will take this word Spirit, for the renewment which God worketh in his children, as it is said in ^{<430306>} John 3:6. For inasmuch as we be born of flesh, there is nothing in us but utter corruption, and we tend always towards the earth. No doubt but men glory in their own wisdom, and moreover think that they have a free choice and will of their own, to take the good and [leave] the evil, but those are but dreams. For it is certain that so long as we be let alone in our own nature, we tend evermore unto evil, and the scripture also condemneth us of it, saying that there is not any thought conceived in man's mind, but the same is lewd, (^{<010605>} Genesis 6:5) and all our affections are enemies and rebels against

God (^{<450807>}Romans 8:7). Therefore let us not beguile ourselves anymore with vain flatteries, but acknowledge ourselves to be utterly marred in Adam, so as there is nothing but sinfulness in us. Notwithstanding, God provideth for that mischief, when he toucheth us to the quick by his holy spirit, and so purgeth our hearts as we desire to obey him, and although we be not so perfect as were requisite, yet we fight against ourselves, and go forward still to goodness. And surely when God's spirit is as a bridle to us to hold us backin his obedience, it is a sure token that God dwelleth in us, and governeth us as his flock, and holdeth us for his children. For we cannot be counted Christians, without this record, that God warranteth himself to be our father, and that his holy spirit is as a seal thereof, according as I have already alleged the record of Saint Paul, out of the first to the Ephesians. (^{<490104>}Ephesians 1:4) And now he saith, *that the Galatians had received the spirit of God by the preaching of the Gospel.* Then seeing it is so, it was for to be concluded, that the works of the law could not justify them. And why? For we must always come back to this principle which we have treated of, namely that in the Gospel we be utterly stripped out of all the goodness and virtue which we thought ourselves to have, and that God doth us such shame, as we be fain [*obliged*] to come to him as quite confounded. For although God set our cursedness afore us in the law: yet we perceive it not so well there, as in the Gospel. And we see how the hypocrites do always flatter themselves, and think to perform the things that are commanded them. But in the Gospel there are two things. For God showeth that there is nothing in us but poverty, so as we must be fain [*obliged*] to come to beg his grace, with utter acknowledgement of our baseness, how that we have done amiss, and have not one spark of virtue in us worthy of commendation. Now then, seeing it is so, Saint Paul doth not without cause tell us here, that such as receive God's spirit by the preaching of the Gospel, must be void of all trust in their own merits, and acknowledge themselves beholden all wholly to God's mere and free mercy for their whole salvation. And why so? For they be things that can no more match together than fire and water, that we should be justified by the Gospel, and also justified by the law. What then? Is the Gospel contrary to the law? No: for (as I have declared already) God is author as well of the one as of the other, and there is no contrariworking in him, but the question here concerneth the case of our salvation. God hath given men his law to show them the way to live well,

and thereby intended to bring them to such condemnation, as if he should prefer an indictment against them, and put a halter about their necks. For truly in the law we see nothing but Hell gaping open upon us, that God's vengeance is ready aforehand to encounter us, and that he is armed against us as our enemy. Those are the things which the law setteth afore us. But now is the Gospel given us for a remedy, to the end that when we be so in despair, we should flee to the grace that is offered us in our Lord Jesus Christ, and understand that there is none other way [to do us good] than the forgiveness of our sins, whereby God doth so put away and wipe out our offenses, as they come no more to account before him. The thing then wherein our righteousness consisteth, is that he burdeneth us not anymore with the evil that is in us. And although we see God's intent and determination to be such, both in the law and in the Gospel: yet are we sure that there is no contrariety in it. Besides this also, if we be not justified by the Gospel, how can we attain salvation by the law? It is true that the law is a preparative to bring us to the Gospel: for so long as men be puffed up with pride, God's grace hath no entrance into them. If a vessel be full of wind, let a man labor to put what liquor he will into it, and he shall not get it in, because the wind beateth it back, and hindereth the putting of it in. And we may perceive it even in man's body: for we must be fain [*obliged*] to take similitudes of worldly things to lead us to higher things. If a man be hungry, and yet notwithstanding have his stomach so puffed up as it cannot abide anything: he may well be full: but what for that? All is but wind, he hath never the more nourishment within for all that, but rather the wind hindereth the entering in of any good sustenance to nourish and maintain him. Even so is it with the foolish presumptuousness that is in us. We bear ourselves in hand, that we be well furnished with all things that we have need of: howbeit, that is but wind howsoever we fare, and that wind shutteth out God's grace from entering in. But by the Gospel our Lord bringeth us low and showeth us our wretchedness. And therefore it behooveth us to come to it with a consideration that our Lord Jesus Christ is set forth unto us there, to the end that we seeing that there is not one drop of goodness in us, should seek it in him, yea even all wholly and not by pieces. Thus then ye see why Saint Paul reasoneth, that forasmuch as we have received God's spirit by means of the Gospel, it behooveth us to hold us thereunto, and not go to the Ceremonies of the law, nor to any other thing one or other, but be

contented with that perfection, seeing it is given us and we may enjoy it without gainsaying. For although this matter was written to the Galatians: yet is it common to us also at this day, as well as to them. Let us mark (I say) how our Lord Jesus Christ wrought in us. And first of all let us practice that which is showed us in ^{<470318>}2 Corinthians 3:18: which is, that it behooveth us to be wholly new-fashioned again, and to have God's spirit dwelling in us. So then the true mark whereby we may discern whither we be God's children or no, is God's spirit. But bring we that spirit with us from our mother's womb? Alas no. Nother [*Neither*] cometh it any whit the more by our own deservings, as I have told you already: but because it pleaseth God of his gracious goodness to give us it, thereby to draw us to him. If we have any desire or willingness to walk in the fear of our God, or if we would fain [*happily*] be able to call upon him with a pure conscience: it is a token that God's spirit dwelleth in us. We need not to seek any other witness, nor to make any longer scanning [*examining, searching*] of the matter. But now, have we gotten and obtained this spirit by our own merits? No surely. Then must we needs conclude, that seeing we have it of gift, it was given us by means of the Gospel. For in the Gospel God uttereth his mighty power and working to the salvation of men, as it is said in ^{<450116>}Romans 1:16. Now if the Gospel be the instrument whereby we receive God's spirit, shall we go seek other means? Were not that a renouncing of the power which is apparently known to us? It is all one as if we would willfully leave the way that is showed us of our God, to seek byways after our own fancy. And if the Galatians were without excuse for their turning away from the Gospel to the law: what shall we be in these days, if we will needs be wrapped in the superstitions that men have forged in their own shops? As for example, the Papists think to be justified, not by the Ceremonies that God had commanded in old time, but by the dotages [*senile decay*] and gewgaws [*showy trifle, trinket*] that they themselves have devised. For as for the thing which they do nowadays term God's service, what else is it than a certain hotchpotch, whereunto every man hath cast his own piece and collop [*piece of meat, fold of fat flesh*]? Seeing then that the case standeth so, is it not a despising of God, and a withdrawing of ourselves from him, by rejecting of his grace, to the end he should not have any access at all unto us, when we will needs mingle men's inventions with the pureness of the Gospel? Must we not needs be worse than mad in so doing? Then let

us know at one word, that we cannot be Christians, but the holy Ghost must hold us in such humility, as to make us confess, that all our welfare cometh of God's mere grace, and so cleave to our Lord Jesus Christ, as we not only take him for a piece or portion of our trust, but be fully satisfied with him as having drawn of his fullness, assuring ourselves that he is the full perfection, not only of all wisdom, but also of all righteousness and happiness, and that in him lieth and consisteth all our welfare, which welfare we possess when we have the Gospel and the preaching of faith, and when we be cast down in ourselves, and utterly bereft of all presumptuousness, which keepeth us back from coming unto God. Furthermore let us be so ravished, seeing that our Lord Jesus Christ hath so bountifully given us all that was requisite for our salvation, I say let us be so ravished with it, as all things else that can be laid before us, may be but as smoke to us, and we utterly despise and abhor them, to show how well we have profited in the Gospel, and therewithal be so constant and steadfast in ourselves, as never to be thrust out of the way, whatsoever the devil whisper in our ear. And moreover, forasmuch as we be so weak, gross and heavy, that although God do daily provoke every of us to come unto him, we come but as it were halting and creeping: let us enforce ourselves more and more to beseech God to strengthen us with his holy spirit, and to make us profit more and more in the knowledge of his Gospel. And let us not do as those do which imagine themselves to be come to full perfection at the first day: but let us labor to go forward more and more in the hope of the heavenly life, and to gather such strength as our faith may grow from day to day, till we come to the blessed stop, whereof Saint Paul speaketh in ^{<490415>}Ephesians 4:15: which is, that we cleave fully to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgement of our faults, praying him to make us so to feel them more and more, as the same may cause us both to mislike them, and also to ask forgiveness of them at his hand, that by that means he may be glorified by us, and we so confirmed by his holy spirit, as we may not doubt but that he dwelleth in us, and that as he hath once adopted us for his children, so he will hold us still for the same. And so let us all say, Almighty God heavenly father, etc.