

## THE NINETEENTH SERMON

### WHICH IS THE FIFTH UPON THE THIRD CHAPTER

- 13** Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law in that he was made accursed for us: (for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on tree)
- 14** To the end that the blessedness of Abraham should come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the spirit by faith. — <sup><480313></sup>GALATIANS 3:13-14

WE HAVE SEEN already, that if we hope not to be saved by some other means than by discharging our duty, we should all of us be accursed, because we be all guilty before God [in that we are found] to have transgressed and done amiss many ways. For there was never yet any of the holiest men so perfect, but that there was always some blemish, yea and store of infirmities in him. Therefore it is to be concluded, that if God should call us to account, we should be all damned and forlorn. Lo in what plight men be, though they set never so much store by themselves. But now it standeth us on hand, to have some means to scape this cursedness. Else what shall it avail us to have our ears beaten daily with God's word? For his will shall serve but to plunge us still deeper in eternal death. To the end therefore that God's word may be profitable to us and available to our salvation: it lieth us upon to get us out of the said sentence of damnation, which is given and proclaimed upon all mankind. And Saint Paul showeth us here the mean, namely *that Christ hath redeemed us, even by becoming accursed for us*. He showeth us that our Lord Jesus Christ was not hanged upon tree in vain: for he was fain [*pleased*] to bear the cursedness of all such as were to be called to salvation. Ye see we are all accursed, as I have declared already: and therefore was our Lord fain [*pleased*] to receive in his person, the thing that was due unto us. Now it is written in the Law of Moyses,

Cursed shall he be that hangeth on tree.  
 (<052123> Deuteronomy 21:23)

When our Lord commandeth the body to be taken down, he added that it is a cursed sight to behold a man so disfigured, [and therefore] let it be taken down, saith he. And at such time as God pronounced the said sentence, that he which should be hanged on a tree should be as it were accursed and banned: he knew well enough what he had determined of his own only Son. For our Lord Jesus Christ suffered not that kind of death by chance, nor at man's pleasure or appointment. It is true that the unbelievers crucified him: but that was because God had so ordained it (<440223> Acts 2:23; <440418> Acts 4:18) by his own purpose, according as it is said, (<430316> John 3:16) that God so loved the world, that he spared not his only begotten Son, but delivered him to death for us. And in good sooth [*truth*], if only Judas' betraying of our Lord Jesus Christ had been the cause of his death, and that he had been haled [*hauled*] to that kind of death by only violence: it could not be the foundation of our welfare. It behooveth us to note, that God had appointed the matter after that sort aforehand: according also as Saint Peter treateth thereof more fully in the fourth chapter of the Acts, (<440428> Acts 4:28) where he saith that our Lord Jesus was so crucified by the wicked, as they attempted not anything, but that which had been determined aforehand in God's purpose.

Now then, whereas it is said that our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, we must come to this point, that all was done for our salvation, because it was God's will to reconcile us to himself by that mean: and that when he pronounced this sentence, cursed is he that hangeth on tree so as it was his pleasure to have it registered in the law of Moyses: he was not ignorant what should happen afterward: for he had already determined and ordained it. Then must we match these two things together: that is to wit, that God with his own mouth said determinately that whosoever hung upon tree should be accursed: and yet for all that, that it was his will therewithal, that his own Son should be hanged on tree. And why so? To the end he should bear our burden, according as he is our pledge, and ordained to be the principal debtor in our behalf. To the end then that we might be set free from the curse of the Law, Jesus Christ became accursed. Now at the first sight it might seem hard and strange that the Lord of glory, he that

hath all sovereign dominion, and before whose majesty the very Angels of heaven do tremble and are abashed, should be subject to cursing. But we must go back to that which Saint Paul hath treated of in the first to the Corinthians, (<sup><460118></sup> 1 Corinthians 1:18, 23) namely that the doctrine of the Gospel is foolishness to mankind, yea even to the wisest of them: and that it was God's will to humble us after that manner, because of our unthankfulness. For we should have a good instruction to lead us unto God, yea even in wisdom, if we could profit ourselves by the things that are showed us in the whole order of heaven and earth. But forasmuch as men are blind and set their eyes against this wisdom that God setteth afore them: therefore he is fain [*pleased*] to take a new way to the wood, and to draw them to him as it were by folly. So then let us not judge after our own mother wit, of the thing that is declared here, which is, that the son of God was put under the curse: but rather let us be ravished at such a secret, and give the glory unto our God, seeing he hath so loved our souls, as to pay so inestimable a price for the ransoming of them. And so little ought this thing to imbase [*debase, value lower*] the majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ, or to deface that which is given him in the holy Scripture: as we rather have cause to glorify him the more for it. And for proof thereof, our Lord Jesus Christ (as saith Saint Paul) (<sup><500206></sup> Philippians 2:6) committed no robbery when he showed himself in his infinite glory. And yet notwithstanding he abased himself willingly, and not only clothed himself with our nature, and became a passible man: but also submitted himself to a death that was both shameful before men, yea and accursed before God. Then must it needs be that we were very dear unto him, seeing he yielded himself to such extremity for our redemption. If we could taste the meaning hereof: surely we would give ourselves wholly to the magnifying of that grace, which cannot be sufficiently expressed by words, and surpasseth all wisdom of man. Seeing therefore that we comprehend it not, nor can utter the hundredth part of it: let us yet be as it were astonished at it in considering so much of it as we be able to comprehend. But here we see still the lewdness and forwardness of men, in that whereas Saint Paul saith that our Lord Jesus Christ became accursed for us, it passeth and slippeth away from us. Yea and there are some so lewd, that they take occasion of stumbling and flinging out of the way, and of estranging themselves quit and clean from the Church, when they hear this manner of our redeeming set afore us. What (say they) was it of necessity that the

son of God who is the fountain of all goodness and ought to make us all holy, should be cursed? It seemeth to them that God in so doing meant to pervert all order and reason. But (as I have declared already) it is certain that God condemneth men's unkindness, by bringing them to such a kind of foolishness, because they came not to him by wisdom when he showed them that way. Never the later howsoever the case stand, needs must our wits shrink and our reason be utterly confounded, so as we may honor God's secrets and wonder at them though they be hidden from us. And again, whensoever it is said unto us that the son of God became accursed for us: it would become us to enter into the examination of our sins. In so doing we shall perceive how loathly we be before God, till our sins and offenses be washed away by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Had all the Angels of heaven undertaken for us, it had been no sufficient bail. Then was there none other satisfaction than the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. And he came not into the world to discharge us of the bond of everlasting death wherein we were bound, by his divine and heavenly power. How then? By weakness. And not only so: but also he was fain [*pleased*] to be counted accursed, or else we should have lien still overwhelmed with the burden, and have perished all of us in that gulf. Therefore when we see that the son of God who not only is the unspotted Lamb, and the mirror of all righteousness, holiness and perfection, but also the very wellspring thereof, was held accursed for us: ought we not at the sight thereof to conceive such a terror for our sins, that we should be as good as swallowed up with despair, till we be plucked back again by the infinite grace and goodness of our God? So then let us mark well, that when it is told us that we were ransomed from the curse of the Law, God intendeth thereby to bring us to true humility. But that cannot be, unless men be utterly confounded in themselves, so as they be ashamed to look upon themselves, and therewithal also afraid and dismayed, knowing that God's wrath waiteth ready for them, till our Lord Jesus Christ do remedy the matter. Thus we see that our whole life is loathsome before God, and there is no way for us to come to atonement with him, till our Lord Jesus Christ take upon him the cursedness that is in us, and bear it in his own person. And therefore as oft as we read this text, let every of us awake and set himself before God's judgment seat, that we may feel there as it were a gulf to swallow us up quit and clean, and thereat be abashed for very shame of ourselves: and [on the other side] so much the more magnify the

grace that is purchased for us in the person of the son of God, and keep ourselves warily from diminishing his dignity, in that he is said to be accursed: and rather thereby be the more provoked to yield him his due and deserved praise for that he hath showed himself to esteem our welfare so highly. Furthermore let us make our profit of that pledge of our salvation and of the love that God beareth us, so as we doubt not but that God liketh well of us when we come to him, seeing he has bought us so dear, that (as Saint Peter telleth us in his first canonical Epistle) (<sup><600118></sup> 1 Peter 1:18) it was nother [*neither*] gold nor silver nor any corruptible thing, but it was our Lord Jesus Christ himself that was paid for our ransom. Therefore let us not doubt but that mercy is ready for us, as oft as we seek it in his name, for if we should come with any opinion of our own deservings, what were that worth? But when we know how dearly the Son is beloved of the father, and how precious his death was: that is the thing wherewith we have full certainty that God will always hear us, and that we shall find him merciful and favorable towards us, namely if we rest wholly upon that which is told us here: which is, that our Lord Jesus Christ forbear not even to become accursed for our sakes. Herewithal let us mark how Saint Paul saith, that by that means the promise of the spirit came unto the Gentiles, as it had been given unto Abraham. Now by naming Abraham here, he showeth that the promise belonged first and foremost to those that came of his race. For the Jews had as it were a peculiar interest in the heritage of salvation, till such time as God opened the gate to the whole world, and published his Gospel to the end that all men should be made partakers of the redemption that was purchased by our Lord Jesus Christ. Now then, although the said promise belonged to the Jews, and was after a sort peculiar to them: yet was it after them made common to the whole world. And why? For it consisteth in spirit and not in Ceremonies. By this word Spirit Saint Paul meant to deface all the false opinion of those deceivers, which mingled the Law and the Gospel together. He showeth that all these things, namely the Sacrifices, Circumcision, and such other things are now superfluous. Not that there is no profit for us to gather by the Ceremonies in reading the Law: but because the use of them is abolished. Ye see then that the cause why the promise is at this day called spiritual, is for that we have no more need of the old shadows and figures, but are simply called and guided to our God, so as we may call upon him with full trust, and being so adopted by him

rest wholly upon our Lord Jesus Christ, as the only foundation of the Gospel, and seek all our wants in him. That in effect is the thing that Saint Paul meant to say in this text. And hereupon he useth another reason, to show that we have our salvation perfectly revealed in the Gospel, and need not any other doctrine than that, and also that we be justified by the free mercy of our God. For the Law (saith he) was given four hundred and thirty years after the promise of salvation. Now when any covenant is made, thought it be but between men, yet ought it to be kept, if it be once thoroughly agreed upon. Therefore it followeth, that the Law was not given to disannul the covenant that God had made with Abraham, chiefly in the behalf of his lineage, and finally in the behalf of the whole world. True it is that at the first blush this argument of Saint Paul's may seem very weak: for we know that second covenants do always repeal former covenants: insomuch that although men have made any bargain, yet they may advise themselves better, and thereupon change their minds, and so the first bargain shall be as good as buried. As much is to be said of Laws and Statutes. For a former Law may well be repealed and disannulled by a second Law. But Saint Paul presupposeth the thing that is to be considered in this matter: which is, that when a man has once promised, yea and solemnly bound himself he will not go back again, but be as good as his word. Howbeit if both the parties agree to change the thing that they had consented on, and be both of one mind: then may it be so. But it were no fit similitude to take men that are fickle minded and changeable through lightness, or by better advice: but Saint Paul presupposeth a covenant to be made by a man that will stand to it, and not fall to scanning [*examining, searching*] afterward how to shift it off by any means at all. For if any of the parties should do against the former covenant, it were a falsehood that were not to be borne with among men, because the things that are inregistered so solemnly, ought to be stood to and performed without any gainsaying. Now then shall there be less steadfastness in God, than in men which are nothing but vanity? The Gospel therefore must continue unimpeached, notwithstanding that the law came in after the making of the free promise. This would be still dark if it should not be declared in order. I have showed heretofore what comparison Saint Paul maketh between the Law and the Gospel. For whereas God promiseth salvation in his Law: it is upon condition that men serve him and do their duty towards him. But that is not done: and therefore we are shut out from all hope of salvation

as in respect of the Law, not that God is not faithful on his side, but because we keep not touch with him in performing that which he requireth. It is all one as if a man should say, I am ready to sell you this thing, so you bring me money. Now if a man bring neither money nor money's worth, he cannot be put in possession of the thing [that he would have]: for the condition is that he must first pay for it. So then, God promiseth us the heritage of salvation, when we shall have served him: but we be never the better for it, because it is but upon condition that we perform that which he requireth of us, and we be fraughted [*loaded*] with all iniquity, and have not anything in us but uncleanness and filth, insomuch that we be justly odious to him. And so are we all condemned in the law: howbeit God receiveth us of his free goodness in our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom he offereth us the forgiveness of our sins, and will have us so to embrace his offered goodness, as we should hold ourselves wholly to our Lord Jesus Christ, and utterly renounce ourselves. But now (saith Saint Paul) let us see whither went before other in antiquity: the free promise of salvation, or the law. We know the diversity that is betwixt them. Then if the law were the ancients, it might seem that that ought to be sticked to, because God doth never unsay his words nother [*neither*] is variable. But if the free promise were the elder, and were made before the law was published: it is to be concluded, that God repented him not, ne [*nor*] called back his promise at that time, ne [*nor*] meant to disannul the said covenant: for it were too great a diminishing of his bounty and mercy, if we should say that he had first bound himself of his own free goodness, and promised men salvation without their desert: and afterward intended to restrain it, as though he meant to enrich himself with our good works. It were an auk [*awkward*] thing to talk after that fashion. For Saint Paul showeth that the free promise was given afore the law: and therefore it followeth that the law came not in to diminish or alter any whit of it, but that it continueth still in his own fullness, nature, and force. True it is that our Lord Jesus Christ had not yet showed himself to the world, when the free promise was made to our father Abraham: nevertheless it sufficeth that he was ordained to be our mediator, that by his means men might be reconciled to God. Now if any man allege, that it should seem then that the law was more than needed, or else that there was some change and variableness in God's purpose, seeing the law came in: Saint Paul discusseth the same in place convenient, and we must not huddle up things

together, for all cannot be uttered at once, neither in an hour nor in a day. Therefore it is enough for us at this time to have this point made plain and clear, that the promise whereby God hath chosen us into the number of his children, was before the law: and also that the same promise had not any respect to our deservings, nor to any worthiness that was in our persons: but to God's mere goodness and mercy, which moved him thereunto without looking for anything in us, because he saw well enough there was nothing in us but utter misery: And finally that the said promise was grounded in our Lord Jesus Christ, who had already done the office of a mediator to make us way unto God his father. This being granted, we must needs conclude that the promise hath abided and shall abide forever, even to the world's end. And that is said expressly because the Jews gloried of their ancience. But Saint Paul telleth them that their father Abraham had not the law, but was contented though he used sacrifices and such other like things. And although he was circumcised in the end: yet when he received the promise, there was not as yet then any law written, no nor any circumcision at all. For Abraham was uncircumcised when he received the promise, and yet nevertheless was justified before he was circumcised, and all that was by faith. Saint Paul therefore showeth that the Jews were greatly overseen, to shole [*shovel*] out themselves after that manner from the rest of the whole world, and to rest continually upon the figures of the law, seeing that Abraham their father and the chief patriarch of the Church was justified the selfsame way that we must be at this day, that is to say, by God's mere mercy, because he knew himself to be a wretched sinner, and therefore accursed and damned in Adam, and that there was no blessedness to be hoped for, other than that which was promised him for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Thus ye see what we have to bear in mind. And for the same cause Saint Paul exhorteth us here to weigh well these words when it was said unto Abraham, that all nations of the earth should be blessed in his seed. (<sup><011203></sup> Genesis 12:3) Now there are here two principal points. The one is, that the blessedness is promised not only to Abraham's fleshly offspring (as I have told you already) but also to all the world in general. We therefore are made partakers thereof, we I say that are issued of the Gentiles, that is to say, of such that were heathenfolk and banished from the kingdom of heaven. Although then that we were not of that holy lineage which God had chosen at the beginning yet not withstanding it behooved salvation to be extended unto us. And why so?

For it had been promised before, that all Nations should be blessed. Seeing it is so, shall we say that God hath cut off the greatest part of his bounteousness, and will have no more but the said lineage of Abraham, considering that he hath already told us that he would be the savior of the whole world, and show himself a father in time convenient? Ye see then how the first point is, that the making of the said promise unto Abraham, was not for his lineage alone, but for all men: howbeit that it were not fulfilled at the first dash. For the time of fullness was not yet come as we shall see in the Chapter following. The second point is, that the blessedness which was promised to Abraham was for his seed's sake. For Saint Peter saith that God spake not of seeds in the plural number as of more than one: but of only one seed: which must be concluded to be Jesus Christ. Here it might be supposed that Saint Paul busied his head about a needless matter. For the word Seed importeth a lineage or offspring, that is to wit, not some one man or ten, or forty, but a whole people. Therefore the Seed of Abraham is the people that came of him, which were so many in number, that it was justly said of them, that they should be as it were twelve Nations. For when mention is made of a people: it will be thought enough to have a hundred thousand of them together: and there were many more in the only tribe of Judah. So then it should seem that Saint Paul did not sufficiently consider what God meant by the word seed, when he said it is but one only man. But we must weigh well the things that Saint Paul presupposeth here as fully certain and resolute: and then shall we perceive his arguments to be utterly infallible. Abraham had not one son alone: but after Ismaell, he had Isaac also. And what became of his eldest son? He was cut off from his house, as we shall see within a while, that is to say in the Chapter following. Behold then, Ismaell which had the birthright in Abraham's house, is nevertheless put out and made an utter stranger, yea and as a rotten member, insomuch that it is said of him, Cast out the son of the handservant, for he shall not inherit in my house. (<sup><012110></sup> Genesis 21:10) Afterward, Abraham had other children: but every of them had their portions given unto them, and were sent away. (<sup><012501></sup> Genesis 25:1) Thus was only Isaac left at home unto him. Anon [*at another time*] after, Isaac had a couple of children, and they were twins of one womb. (<sup><012522></sup> Genesis 25:22, 23) Esau the firstborn, which ought to have had the preferment, was likewise cast off, so as he was not counted for the lineage of Abraham, nor yet was made partaker of the promised blessing. There

was no more left but Jacob. Yea and although the father blessed his son Jacob (<012737> Genesis 27:37) through ignorance and mistaking: yet he declareth that it was not in him to revoke, or change the thing that he had uttered with his mouth, because he was the instrument of the holy Ghost. Now then if we take the seed of Abraham for all those that came of his race: The Ismaelites or Agarenes (as they be called) and such other like, and moreover the Edomites also should be of his household. But the heritage is taken quit and clean from them. Therefore the seed of Abraham must be considered after a peculiar fashion. Let us go forward with the whole process. We see that without faith there should be no bond to knit any Church together, nor any assurance whereby to know which is the seed of Abraham, or to discern it from the rest of the world, but by resorting to the head, that is to wit our Lord Jesus Christ. Ye see then that the union of the body dependeth upon the head, that is to wit upon the Redeemer. Seeing it doth so, not without cause does Saint Paul say that it was not spoken of many seeds, but that we must come to one man, if we will have the spiritual people that is to say, if we will have the Church of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, must be the mark that we must begin to look at, and we must be gathered unto him: and those that are of his body and cleave unto him by faith are the folk that are reckoned for God's children and household, and are verily the seed of Abraham, as he discourseth more at large in the Epistle to the Romans, (<450906> Romans 9:6) where he saith that all they which come of the seed of Israel after the flesh, are not therefore Israelites. And why? For there was but one promised child, which was Isaac. So then we must come to our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all God's promises are Yea and Amen, (<470120> 2 Corinthians 1:20) and in whom they have their substance. For without him there is nothing else but scattering. And therefore is said in the first Chapter to the Colossians, (<510120> Colossians 1:20) that our Lord Jesus Christ's office is, to gather together all things that were scattered, as well in heaven as in earth, and that without him all should go to wreck. But now we see more clearly how Saint Paul's meaning is, that before the law was published to the world, (whereunto was put and added this condition, that it behooved us to fulfill all that is contained therein) God had yielded a record of his will beforehand: which was, that because he saw mankind damned and forlorn, he intended to draw out a chosen sort to himself, and to be merciful to them. And that was not for one lineage alone, but for all

nations as the scripture expresseth. And thereof the foundation was laid in our Lord Jesus Christ. Forasmuch then as our Lord Jesus Christ was already in the time of Abraham, ordained to be a mediator to make atonement between God and us, so that if we go in his name to seek favor, it is ready for us, and we cannot be disappointed of our hope: seeing it is so established, there is no change, but we must assure ourselves that God accepteth us at this day, so we rest wholly upon our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that it was no uncertain covenant which was so ratified in his name, but that it shall endure forever, and be always of force. Ye see then that we may come freely before God and call upon him as our father, because he hath adopted us for his children, which thing he hath not done in respect of any worthiness that was in us, but of his own mere mercy, and because we be made one with out Lord Jesus Christ by faith. And by the way, like as we must reject all opinion and imagination of obtaining favor at God's hand by our own deservings, and of assuring our own salvation: so must we look well to that which is told us here, namely that we cannot be partakers of such a benefit but by faith. Now (as I have said afore) faith importeth an embracing of God's mercy, which thing cannot be done except we be touched earnestly with our own wretchedness: for it is not for naught that our Lord Jesus Christ setteth our cursedness before us as it were in a glass, by taking upon him to be accursed for us. Faith therefore cannot be without repentance, for it is impossible that we should seek our own welfare in God, or desire mercy at his hand, till misery touch us to the quick, and make us to mislike of it. And so these scoffers which mock God, weltering still in their vices, and being as it were sotted [*dulled, made stupid*] in them, must not look that ever Jesus Christ should reckon them in the number of his, for they cannot by any means come at him, neither doth he call any other, than such as are so overloden (<sup><401128></sup>Matthew 11:28) and forwearied as they can no longer hold out, and lie groaning under the burden of their sins. Thus ye see how it behooveth us to resort to our Lord Jesus Christ, and although we cannot bring any desert unto him, and that all the Ceremonies of the law, and all the proffers that we can make unto him, do nothing at all further our salvation: yet we must be prepared to such lowliness, as we may perceive our state to be right miserable, till God have taken us to his mercy: and we must be so beaten down in ourselves, as we may feel the curse that should light upon us, if we were not ransomed with so high and excellent a price,

as I have declared heretofore. Ye see then that by faith we receive the promise of the spirit, and thereby are linked to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the spiritual seed of Abraham. For although we be not born of his lineage: yet it is enough that we be made at one with him by faith. For then are we begotten again of that incorruptible seed whereof Saint Peter speaketh, (<sup><6001223></sup> 1 Peter 1:23) that is to wit of God's word such as it is contained in the Gospel. And being so begotten again, we know that God avoweth us to be of the body of his only son. And although we come of the Gentiles: yet fail we not for all that to be joined to the Church, whereunto there needeth no more but only faith: and as for all merits and virtues of men, they must utterly cease in that behalf, and men must acknowledge that they cannot bring anything but confusion, so as they must be fain [*obliged*] to seek all at God's hand, and that by the means which he himself hath appointed. Now sith [*since*] it is so, let us learn to leave our wandering here and there as we see lightheaded men do, which are never contented with that which God telleth them, but are ever adding somewhat of their own device. Let us beware of such mingling as shall be treated of more at large after dinner by God's will. And let Jesus Christ alone suffice us, seeing that our welfare dependeth upon him alone, and we shall want nothing if we be partakers of him, as we see how Saint Paul bringeth us back to that point. Furthermore let us learn also to hold us to God's truth, assuring ourselves that he cannot abide to have any adding unto it, because that were a marring, reversing, and falsifying of his covenant, wherein our welfare consisteth. But when we have once embraced our Lord Jesus Christ, let us abide fast in him, and let him suffice us for all: and then may we call upon GOD with full mouth, knowing well that although we be of the race of cursed Adam, yet notwithstanding forasmuch as we be blessed again in Jesus Christ, he acknowledgeth us always for his Children, because we be grounded upon the free adoption, which not without cause he willed to be published through the whole world, to the intent we might have the gate opened and the way made easy for us to come unto him.

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 we may in such wise mislike of them, as we may labor and endeavor ourselves to honor and serve him in true obedience all our life

long: and whereas we cannot do it to the full (for that is impossible considering our frailty) that he will hold us up till he have rid us of all the corruption of our flesh, and clothed us again with his own righteousness, the which he beginneth in us already as now, and giveth us certain firstfruits of it, to assure us that he will perform the thing that he hath begun. And so let us all say, Almighty God heavenly father, etc.