

THE TWENTY-SECOND SERMON

WHICH IS THE EIGHTH UPON THE THIRD CHAPTER

- 21** Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid. For if the law were given to justify, truly righteousness should come by the Law.
- 22** But the Scripture hath shut up all under sin, to the intent that the promise by the faith of Jesus Christ should be given to those that believe.
- 23** Now before that faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up to come to the faith that was to be revealed.
- 24** By means whereof the Law was our schoolmaster to lead us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.
- 25** But now that faith is come, we be no more under the Schoolmaster. — ^{<480321>}GALATIANS 3:21-25

WE HAVE ALREADY this morning dispatched this point, that the Law was not given in vain, though it could not bring us to righteousness to make us acceptable to God. Secondly, it was showed you that God's giving of his Law, was not to the intent we should seek our righteousness and salvation there, as though his grace had been weak and insufficient: but for a far other respect, that is to wit, to give men such knowledge of their sins, as they might be ashamed of them in themselves: for otherwise they could not be touched to the quick, to flee to our Lord Jesus Christ for refuge, as we see too much. And now Saint Paul moveth another question: namely, whether the law be against the promises. For surely when it is said that the law promiseth us salvation, upon condition that we deserve it: and the promise of the Gospel telleth us that we shall be taken into God's favor without any deserving: a man would think there were some contrariety in the matter. As if a man should offer me a house, so I would pay well for it, and did set me a price of it: and another man should say unto me, no, thou shalt have it for nothing. There is great contrariety in these sayings. And it

seemeth that in speaking after that fashion, God unsaith that which he had spoken in his law, where he saith, Serve me, and keep my commandments, and you shall not miss of your wages. For in the Gospel he speaketh another language, saying, I require nothing of you, for ye be so wretched that can give me nothing: but I receive you into my kingdom frankly and of mine own free goodness without any desert of yours: your heritage is assigned to you, even because it is my good pleasure to do it. Hereupon Saint Paul declareth, that although God speak after another manner and fashion in the law than in the Gospel: yet notwithstanding when we have well considered the mark that he shooteth at [we shall perceive] there is no contrariety in the matter. For (as I have told you this morning) God's promising of reward to our works is not to beguile us, but to stop our mouths that we might not repine against him, as we see that the world doth, which is always ready to carp at him with devilish malapertness [*impudence*] when he handleth them not after their own will and liking. God then cutteth off all occasion of grudging, when he telleth us that we shall not be disappointed of our wages for our well serving of him. Furthermore let every of us examine himself well, and he shall find that that is not the match whereby we must obtain salvation: for there is none of us all but he may condemn himself by his own life, if he judge without flattering. But after that God hath spoken after that fashion, he offereth us remedy in the Gospel, and telleth us that forasmuch as we be damned, and cannot hope to obtain any salvation by our works: he himself offered it us of his own free goodness, because it pleaseth him so to do. And for that cause Saint Paul answereth, If the law had been given to justify, I could well enough grant that righteousness should be given us by it. But let us see whether God meant that or no. It is certain he meant it not. Then sendeth he us to God's purpose: as if he should say, that the Hypocrites which are so puffed up with pride and overweening [*high opinion*], that they think they be able to justify themselves, and to win heaven, are ill expounders of God's law, yea and falsifiers thereof. For men must always have an eye to the intent of the speaker. Now God meant not to set men agog with any trust in their own wit and deservings: for we be too much given to that of our own nature. We see it hath been a common error through the whole world in all ages. Therefore we need no schooling to persuade us that we be able folk, and that we can bind God to us by our virtuous doings. But contrariwise God hath given us his law, to the intent

we should be wounded with it as with a sword, and the stripe be so deadly as we might be constrained to flee to him for succor. Seeing then that God's will is to slay us by the Law it is not given us to make us righteous. And therefore they that seek their life and welfare there, beguile themselves: and there is no reason why they should allege for themselves, yea? how so? God hath promised me it. No, but they must consider to what end he saith so. Now we see how Saint Paul hath discussed this question, that there is no contrariety between the Law and the Gospel, though God alter the manner of his speech at the first blush. Now he addeth afterward, That the Scripture hath shut up all under sin, that we might obtain the promise by the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. When he saith that the scripture hath shut up all under sin, he showeth that men are too too blockish, to think that God meant to assign them a due wages or hire, when he did set them down this condition. He that doeth these things shall live in them. Let them read the whole law, let them search the contents and substance of it, let them look well upon the whole holy Scripture: and they shall find that it accuseth and condemneth all men from the most to the least, without any exception. Now if we be all condemned, even by the law: what would we more? Must it not needs be that we be too too much blinded with hypocrisy, when we will needs bind God to us after this sort, notwithstanding that we be far wide from all righteousness, and he hath told us that we cannot compass it in his sight, but that we must be utterly overwhelmed? Saint Paul allegeth not here any text to show that the Scripture hath shut up all under sin, but taketh it as utterly certain and which ought not to be doubted of anymore among the faithful. And for proof thereof we see, that even from the creation of the world, we be all of us corrupted in Adam. His sin condemned not himself only, but also all his whole offspring, and all of us are fallen in that fall of his. And thereupon it is said, that all our thoughts are rebellings against God, and there is nothing but naughtiness in us. (⁰¹⁰⁶⁰⁵Genesis 6:5) What then is man's wit? A warehouse of all wickedness. And seeing that God hath avouched it to be so at a word, what shall we gain by challenging this or that to ourselves? For all our startingholes shall but increase our misery, because that in so doing we spite God, and kindle his wrath so much the more. For whereto served all the sacrifices, but to show us to our faces, that all men are utterly accursed so long as they continue in them? And although there were no sacrifices at all, yet very experience showeth it. Let

every of us enter into himself, let him consider what manner a one he is, and let him view himself in the perfection which the holy Scripture requireth at our hands: and he shall well find that there is no way for him but to embrace the promise of God's mercy which he maketh unto us, when he saith that our iniquities shall be wiped out, (<234325> Isaiah 43:25) and that there is no way for us to come to him, but only by his love. And doth he not hereby still bewray [*expose*] our sins? specially seeing he setteth down Jesus Christ for our righteousness? But if any man list [*wish*] to have a larger and certainer discourse hereof, let him add that which Saint Paul setteth down in <450319> Romans 3:19, where he setteth forth the thing largely which is touched here briefly: and then shall he see yet better how the scripture hath shut up all under sin. For there Saint Paul allegeth the texts that serve to bewray [*divulge*] man's nature till God's have drawn him back, changed him, and fashioned him new again. Like as when he saith that God looked down here below, to see if he could find any soundness and all were corrupted, yea and festered in their naughtiness, and there was not so much as one that sought after God. (<191401> Psalm 14:1) Now it is certain that there, there is no speaking of two or three, but generally of all men in whom God hath not wrought to govern them by his holy spirit. Therefore it is all one as if David did show us in a painted table, what manner of ones we be by birth and heritage. Afterward he addeth that which is written in the fiftieth Psalm, and in all the residue, and finally allegeth Esay also, to show that God was fain [*obliged*] to serve his turn with his own arm, when he purposed to redeem men. (<235908> Isaiah 59:8, 16) What is it (saith he) that men have done in that behalf? For they do but run forward, and cast themselves headlong into all cursedness and transgression. They do but wander: they love shifting, subtlety, falsehood, and lying: to be short, when God had looked that men should have helped to bring themselves to salvation, they were rather a hundred thousand times more in danger of perishing. Saint Paul therefore allegeth all those things. Now let us flatter ourselves as much as we list [*wish*]: yet cannot the things be called back which God hath pronounced upon us. And as oft as we read the said texts, and hear Saint Paul's expounding of them in the forealleged chapter: (<450301> Romans 3) it is for us to cast down our heads, and to receive the shame which we deserve: namely to be bereft of all glory, and to seek at God's hand the things that we want. And thus ye see how the scripture hath shut up all

under sin. In the ^{<451132>}Romans 11:32 he saith that God hath shut up all under sin, to the intent to have mercy on all. But there he riseth yet one step higher. For he speaketh not of the things that are told us in the law and the prophets, but of God's secret judgment, in that it was his will that all of us should be as good as drowned in destruction, to the intent that there should be no salvation but only by his goodness. Then if it be demanded why God hath suffered men to fall into so miserable plight: it is because he will have us beholden to his only mercy for all things. Truly this will seem strange to many fantastical persons, which would fain [*willingly*] restrain God to their measure, and are so rash that when God's determinations pass beyond their fleshly reason, by and by they condemn him for spiteful and cruel. Yet for all that, Saint Paul will have us to rest upon this saying, that God hath shut up all under sin, that is to say, that he could well have created us much steadfaster and perfecter than he hath done. He could hath preserved us as he doth his Angels. He could have given us such constancy in the person of Adam, that we should have entered into the heritage of heaven without dying. Yea and he could have made that no more should have fallen in the person of Adam, but Adam alone. But he listed [*chose*] not to do so. If it be demanded why the mischief spreaded out further: is it not because God would have it so? Therefore we must in this case, as it were bridle and imprison ourselves, and receive the doctrine in such wise as Saint Paul hath uttered it: namely that God hath put us all under sin, to the intent we should resort to him for mercy. But it is not enough that God hath determined it in his secret purpose: it is requisite also that the determination should be published and known. For until such time as men perceive themselves to be condemned: they will still be weltering in some vain self-trust, and boast of themselves, as we see too much. The Scripture therefore must be fain [*obliged*] to bring us to this understanding, that every of us may condemn himself for a sinner, as it were with his own mouth, yea and that we do it unfeignedly [*genuinely*]. And why? Because it is by believing, that we obtain the promise, that is to say the righteousness that is freely promised us. In the said text of ^{<451132>}Romans 11:32 which I alleged even now, Saint Paul saith, to the intent to show mercy upon all: but here he showeth that it is not for all men to be partakers of it in general. For we know that the greatest number persisteth in their sins, because they refuse the remedy that is offered them in the Gospel. And why then doth Saint Paul speak of

all? It is as much as he should say, there is none other help for but us only God's looking upon us with pity, of his own mere goodness, that pardoning our offenses and receiving us into his favor, he take us for his children, to bring us to the heritage of the kingdom of heaven. We see then that Saint Paul did not without cause say that God will have mercy upon all: not that every man is comprehended under that word all, but to exclude and put away all self-righteousness of man. Moreover we see how the mean is expressed here: namely that we must obtain the promise by faith, according as Saint John saith that God so loved the world, that he spared not his only son, to the end that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have life everlasting. (<430316> John 3:16) Will we then enter into the treasure that is showed to us here? Faith must be as a key to open us the door. For God calleth us to it, but it is not enough for us to be called only: it behooveth us to answer according to this saying, you are my people: yea Lord, and thou art our God. (<232509> Isaiah 25:9) When he saith, you are my children: let us answer, Lord we come to thee as to our father. (<236316> Isaiah 63:16) But surely we cannot answer so of our own proper motion: it must be given us of the holy Ghost. Howbeit the question is not here whither faith come of men's selves or no. Saint Paul doth no more but declare that to be quit before God, and to be drawn out of the dungeon of cursedness wherein we are all of us plunged, we must not bring anything of our own, as though we would go about to bind God, and that it were meet for us to imagine any desert of our own: but come to crave his favor which is offered us freely without any duty to usward, and set our trust there, so as we hope not for any welfare otherwise than because God showeth himself merciful towards us. I have declared already wherefore this serveth. Surely men would always fain [*willingly*] cloak themselves with some presumptuousness, as we see that Adam did: who though his own sin upbraided him, so as he was afraid of God's majesty, did nevertheless seek fig leaves to cover himself withal. At the same point are we. Howbeit, it is but a beguiling of ourselves to come before God, like whitelimed walls, and to think to be accepted at his hand: for he hath an eye to the soundness of the heart, which is not to be found in any man. For so long as he letteth us alone in our own kind, we be naughtworth, how fair a show soever we make to the worldward. Again, when he hath reformed us, and given us a good desire to walk in his fear, which thing all the faithful must needs have: it doth not follow therefore, that our

affection is full and perfect: no, it cometh far short of it. And yet, that which we have, we hold of his mere grace, so have we not anything to glory of or to rest upon howsoever the world go: we cannot ground ourselves upon our own deservings. True it is that the faithful must seek to give themselves wholly unto God: for we cannot be members of our Lord Jesus Christ, except we be sanctified by his holy spirit, as we shall see in time and place hereafter. And our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be divided nor cut in pieces as infinite as he is. Although our sins be forgiven us by his death and passion, and washed away and cleansed by his blood, and that the same washing be given us to fashion again the image of God his father in us, so that we must be made new creatures in him: yet notwithstanding howsoever we fare, it is not for us to preach boldly before God, as though we were worthy to be received, or as though we brought him anything wherewith to bind him. For if we presume to allege one thing or other to him, first and foremost all that we have cometh of him. Again on the other side we be convicted of a hundred thousand faults, and when we go about any good work, we shall no sooner have done it, but it shall be infected with some spot or other, so that if it be tried rigorously, it shall always be subject to condemnation. Then must we needs keep our mouths shut: so that if we will have God favorable and merciful to us, we must bring nothing with us but only faith, no, but only faith. Nevertheless it is not meant that every man should take the bridle in his neck to do evil (as I have declared already heretofore:) it is not meant that we should be void of God's spirit, nor that we should welter in all wickedness: no, but here the case concerneth only our trust whereupon we may ground ourselves to call GOD our father, that we may be sure of the eternal heritage. If we go to our own works (as hath been declared afore) there will be no certainty at all. For why, it is not a work or twain, or three that is required, but a perfect obedience, which was never yet found in any mortal creature. Truly if the Angels should come to account before God, they could not answer to that perfection of righteousness: and much less were it possible that we which are but worms, and which suck up sin as a fish doth water, (as Job saith) (¹⁸¹⁴¹⁸ Job 14:18; 19) should be so found that God should receive us for our worthiness. To be short, we must quit and clean give over the trust of our own works, and acknowledge that there is nothing but condemnation in us, if we mind to have the promise performed towards us. Thus ye see in effect what Saint Paul meant to

declare in this text. And now he addeth immediately, that before faith came, we were kept under the law, and as it were shut up till the faith was revealed. Here the words Law and Faith would be somewhat darksome, if they were not opened more at large. For sometimes when the scripture speaketh of faith, it meaneth all religion, and comprehendeth all the instructions that are given us in God's book. Sometime it meaneth the certainty of belief which we ought to have when we come to pray unto God, because we may not step to him at all adventure, but accept the grace that he offereth us. Then inasmuch as God's promises dependeth not upon our deserts, but is altogether freely and frankly given unto us, and we are made partakers by our Lord Jesus Christ: if we embrace the same, and so doing is called faith, and so hath Saint Paul taken it hitherto, and likewise in his Epistle to the Romans, and in all other places where he discourseth or treateth how we may be justified before God, or how we may come in his favor, for they be both one thing, as I have said afore. But in this text the word Faith hath yet a more peculiar signification, which is, the revelation [or discovery] which we have by the Gospel. For it is very certain that the forefathers had the spirit of faith or belief, according as I have showed you already that Abraham was justified because he believed God, and that we also must be fashioned like to his example in that behalf, as whereby we be made his children to come to the kingdom of heaven. Then had faith his full strength at all times, and there was never any other means to set God and men at one: but yet was not the faith revealed in Abraham's time, because our Lord Jesus Christ who is the very pledge and substance thereof, was not yet come into the world. Thus ye see how we be justified freely at this day, and without any desert of our own. And why is that? For he that believeth that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and is risen again for our justification: hath all the whole. And it is said in another place, (^{<451010>}Romans 10:10) our believing in our heart maketh us righteous, and our confessing with our mouth maketh us safe. But now had Abraham had our Lord Jesus Christ discovered unto him as we have him at this day, (insomuch that he is as good as crucified among us as Saint Paul hath said heretofore:) his faith had been all one with ours. But it was yet after a sort overcovered, that is to say, although Abraham trusted in Jesus Christ, hoping for salvation at his hand, and although he utterly distrusted himself, knowing that there was virtue in him that might go for payment before God: yet was he held still under shadows, and was fain [*happy*] to

look at Jesus Christ afar off. For he was not yet named the daysun of righteousness, as he is called in Malachie. (<390402> Malachi 4:2) Now then we see what Saint Paul meant by saying that faith was not yet come: namely that the convenient time of the revealing of it to the world as it is nowadays by the Gospel, was not yet come, so that the fathers were shut up under the law. So therefore, here is some piece of difference, and some piece of likeness: insomuch that if it be demanded what the state of the fathers were that lived under the law: it is to be answered, that partly it differed from ours, and partly was all one. How were they both one? In this, that God had showed himself merciful to our father, howbeit for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake: and that Abraham perceiving how it stood him on hand to put his whole trust in the mere grace of God, gave over himself, and so his believing was reckoned to him for righteousness, as we have seen afore. In like case was it with all the Patriarchs and Prophets. So then their taking [*plight*] was all one with ours, in that they grounded themselves upon our Lord Jesus Christ, and boasted not of anything save of God's mercy, and had the promise of the inheritance of the heavenly life, as we have. Yet was there also a diversity, because they were fain [*obliged*] to have Sacrifices, washings, and such other like things, till the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And when the law was given, so as there was a Priest that entered into the Sanctuary to be an intercessor, and the people stood aloof a great way off, and a vail or Curtain was drawn in the midst of the Tabernacle to make a darkening of things: ye see they were things wherein the state of the fathers differed from ours: for during the absence of our Lord Jesus Christ, they had Ceremonies and figures, whereas we have the very body and substance of them, as saith Saint Paul to the Colossians. (<510217> Colossians 2:17) For God biddeth us not to offer anymore Calves, Sheep, or Oxen to wipe out the spots of our sins. But he telleth us that we must be sprinkled with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, through the power of the holy Ghost, and that in our Lord Jesus Christ we shall find all that is requisite for our salvation. Ye see then that as now faith reigneth in full power: that is to say, whereas the fathers had but a little taste of it according to their measure: it is fully and openly revealed unto us. And for this cause Saint Paul saith, that the fathers were after a sort restrained or shut up: so that he likeneth the law to a bondage, and in very deed so was it, and he will hereafter show what manner of bondage it is. It is not meant that the fathers obtained not the everlasting

life which we hope for, or that we shall not be crowned altogether at the last day: but that God was fain [*willing*] for a time to weeld [*handle*] them like little babes. And for that cause also doth he use the similitude of a schoolmaster, and will again set down a third similitude of Tutors and governors. Howbeit forasmuch as this shall be handled in his due place, let it suffice us as now to understand, that whereas Saint Paul likeneth the law unto a bondage, it is to show far greater favor to us, than he did to the fathers that died before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, because he useth us now after a freer fashion. And the second similitude doth yet better express that the Jews were as children, and we now are as men grown. For this word Schoolmaster betokeneth a master of children, he saith then that the law executed the office of a Schoolmaster, to train up the childhood of the people in old time. And hereupon it may be concluded, that the faithful which believed in Jesus Christ before he was manifested to the world, were God's children as well as we. And if they were children, then were they also heirs. Herein we see that we must not make them like brute beasts, as some fantastical heads do, which think that the Jews contented themselves with the possession of the plentiful land that was promised them, and cared for no more but to be well nourished and fed there: for that is too cursed a blasphemy. But Jesus Christ serveth not to fill men's bellies and to feed their paunches: he serveth to bring us to the heavenly life. It is said that Abraham saw his day: (<430856> John 8:56) that then was the thing whereon he rested his conscience. And we see how David did always look up higher than the world: and Jacob at his death even though he was giving up his last gasp, and looked not to live any longer in the world, said he would trust in the salvation of God. (<014910> Genesis 49:10) The ancient fathers then were not little children after such a sort, that they were not marked with God's holy spirit, nor called by him to the inheritance of the endless life: but only in the measure of faith, which was the difference between them and us. And how was that? Even because the law which they had was yet wrapped in figures and shadows: whereas now Jesus Christ leadeth us right forth to heaven. And whereas I said that they were inferior to us in the measure of faith: I mean not that Abraham, David, and other like had a weaker faith than we: for seek we never so narrowly through the whole world, it is not to be presumed that any one creature is to be found at this day, which hath the hundredth part of the faith of Abraham or David. And the excellency of

their faith appeareth in this, that although they had not the promises so apparent as we have, but very darkly, yet notwithstanding they overcame all such temptations as would have overthrown us a hundred thousand times. If any of us were put to the enduring of the encounters of Abraham or David, what would become of us? For Abraham was a wayfarer all his life long in a strange country, where men grudged him water to drink, though he himself digged the wells. (^{<012125>}Genesis 21:25) He was put to as many plunges as could be. Finally God exercised him in so many encounters, that he seemed to be minded to throw him into the bottom of hell: and yet nevertheless his faith abideth still unvanquished. As touching David, he was driven a long time from place to place. Being hunted out of the whole realm and having no succor to retire unto, but either among the infidels and enemies of God, or else into dens and among wild beasts: he was moreover put to such reproach, that every man cursed him as the veriest villain and caitiff [*despicable coward*] in the world: and yet for all that, he held out still, he called still upon God, and he never fell to any murmuring or blaspheming, but rather glorified God in those his extremities and distresses. So then we see that their faith ought to make us all ashamed. And when every of us shall have looked well into his own conscience, we shall find that we scarcely have any little piece of the faith that they had. But the greatness of their faith must not be measured here by the constancy and ableness that every of them had to trust in God. Whereby then? By the outward object of their faith. As for example: Although Esay was an excellent teacher, so that his like is not to be found in the world: yet the least preacher that setteth forth the Gospel purely, shall be preferred before Esay, as is avouched by the mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. (^{<401111>}Matthew 11:11) And why is that? Because that although Esay was as an Angel, and spake with such authority yea, and majesty, as were able to touch the hearts to the quick which are most fallen asleep in this world, insomuch that even God himself seemeth to have opened his own holy mouth in him, and his words were not the words of a mortal man: yet did he hold but the manner of teaching that was convenient for that time: that is to say he did set forth the land of Canaan as a pledge to those whom he taught, and keep them to the Sacrifices, washings, figures, shadows, and all other like things, whereunder he showed what the happiness of god's children is. As for example, we see how he likeneth the church to a palace builded of gold and

silver and precious stones. (<235411> Isaiah 54:11; <236017> Isaiah 60:17) Ye see then that his manner of dealing was fashioned unto the darkness of the law. But now our Lord Jesus Christ is set forth unto us, although a simple man preach the Gospel, which hath nother [*neither*] great eloquence or authority: yet shall he as it were point at Jesus Christ with his finger, he shall show us how we be in the time of fullness, and therewithal he shall assure us that our sins are forgiven us in the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, insomuch that God's wrath is pacified, and victory obtained for us over death. Thus ye see that the diversity is in the doctrine, and not in the quality of the faith as it is in every man's heart. For although Abraham had a wonderful faith, and such a one as we shall not find nowadays in the world: yet was it always hemmed in with the said Ceremonies and shadows. David was an Angel and mirror of all perfection: and yet for all that, he was fain [*pleased*] to be subject to the same order that the common people were, and to use all the Ceremonies that were then in use, and his looking at Jesus Christ was but a far off, because there was the said Curtain before him, which letted [*restrained*] him that he could not behold his glory as it is showed us nowadays in the Gospel. And although we know not the hundredth part of the things that were disclosed to David and Abraham, to make them invincible against all temptations, and to make them fight so manfully that god might be glorified in them, and to make them bear out all brunts: yet had they not that which we have: that is to wit, they had not the pledge Jesus Christ delivered unto them, as we have, to the end we might call upon God his father, because we be members of his body, and he is our head, assuring ourselves that he and we are all one, with condition that his goods become ours, and that we have full enjoyment of them at this day. Thus ye see that our faith is greater than Abraham's was, not in respect of our persons, nor yet in respect of any steadfastness and firmness that is in us: but in respect of the doctrine or teaching of it, which we term the object of faith, that is to say, the thing that is set before us from without. And so ye see why Saint Paul saith that the fathers were held in ward as it were under a Schoolmaster, till the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we for our part have cause to magnify God's goodness, according also as our Lord Jesus Christ exhorteth us, saying: blessed are the eyes which see that which you see, and the ears which hear that which you hear. For many Kings and Prophets have desired the like, and have gone without it.

(^{<401316>} Matthew 13:16) Behold, Abraham was called God's friend.
 (^{<590223>} James 2:23) Behold, David is reported to have been found according to God's own heart. (^{<441322>} Acts 13:22) And yet for all that, he was fain [*pleased*] to look aloof at the promises which are now as it were cast into our laps, and whereof we have our fill. They sought Jesus Christ then absent and hidden, and they waited for him. But now that our Lord Jesus Christ hath come down into the world and been conversant here, he hath given us a sure warrant that all is performed as he himself declared at his death. (^{<431930>} John 19:30) What a lewdness then is it, if we nowadays be not much the more inflamed and quickened up to follow the promises of the Gospel, where God communicateth himself so familiarly unto us? So then on the one side we have cause to yield unto God his deserved praise, for that he hath vouchsafed to exalt us, I say us miserable creatures to so high dignity, as to prefer us before all the holy kings and Patriarchs that lived under the Law. Howbeit herewithal let us take good heed, that this benefit and prerogative turn not to our double condemnation, for our unthankfulness in not making account of so great a good turn so offered unto us. Now although Abraham were still held under after the manner of a child (as I have said already:) yet forsook he both his kinfolk and native Country, and went as a poor wayfarer into a strange land, where he was hunted and tossed from post to pillar in continual languishing. And if he had repented him, could he not have returned into his own Country again? Yes: but the Apostle in the eleventh to the Hebrews telleth us, that he had such a trustfulness and so constant a faith, that he held out even to the last push: insomuch that he showed by effect, that his mind was wholly set upon the kingdom of heaven, and not entangled with this world: and yet notwithstanding, for all that both he and the rest of the holy fathers walked after that manner before us: yet tarry they still for us at this day, and received not the promises which are manifested to us in the Gospel. For while they lived they had but a small taste of that which is revealed to us nowadays, and which is laid open before us. Woe be to us therefore if we be not warned and inflamed to receive God's offer, when he uttereth the infinite riches of his goodness, to win us and to draw us in such wise from this world, as we may come to yield ourselves freely unto him. Then if such gracious dealing move us not to come unto him, now that we be men grown, notwithstanding our rawness and infirmity, and to take the yoke which he layeth upon us, and to suffer him to govern us under his

obedience, yea and to take courage and stoutness to us to defy Satan, and the whole world, and all the allurements thereof: say if we overmaster not all these conflicts: surely we shall pay right dearly for the grace that is offered us in the Gospel. And therefore let every of us bestir himself, and take opportunity while God allureth us, and while the time of salvation, and day of favor is present. And seeing we be so feeble that we do but drag our legs after us, let us pray God to strengthen us, and to redress our laziness and coldness. Also let every of us strain and enforce himself: and sith [*since*] we be so hemmed in with the snares that Satan hath laid for us, let us walk so much the more in the fear of God, that we may overcome all Satan's letts [*hindrances*] and wiles, and go forward in the way that God hath set us in, and follow the fathers that are gone afore us, which tarry still for our company, that we might be gathered up all together into the heavenly life, at the blessed coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying him that we may so mislike of them, as we may not only be sorry and seek forgiveness of them, but also be renewed by true repentance, and go forward and be confirmed in it more and more, till we be clean rid of all vices, and be so fashioned like to his Image, as his glory may shine forth in us, even till we enter into the full possession of the inheritance that he hath promised us. That it may please him to grant this grace, not only to us, but also to all people, etc.