

THE TWENTY-FOURTH SERMON

WHICH IS THE FIRST UPON THE FOURTH CHAPTER

- 1 I say that while the heir is a child, he differeth nothing from a servant, although he be the Lord of all things:
- 2 But is under Tutors and Governors till the time appointed by the father.
- 3 We also likewise when we were children, were kept in bondage under the ordinances of the world.
- 4 But when the accomplishment of time was come, God sent his Son, made of woman, and made under the Law. —
<480401> GALATIANS 4:1-4

IT IS OUT OF ALL DOUBT that there was never yet anymore means than one whereby men might attain to salvation. And whereas many men bear themselves in hand, that they shall by their own merits obtain the thing that they hope for: it is but a mockery and a beguiling of themselves. For (as hath been showed heretofore) we are all of us rejected of God, cursed, and the children of wrath. On our own part we be not able to recover that which we have lost in Adam, but God must of his infinite goodness be fain [*pleased*] to work in that behalf: for all other helps are vain and unavailable. But now hath God established one only mean whereby men may get out of the dungeon of cursedness wherein we be all held. Therefore it must needs be that the fathers of old time were saved by God's mere grace, even as we be, which hope for the like at this day. For it is to be seen in the second Epistle to the Corinthians, (<470119> 2 Corinthians 1:19) that all the promises that God hath given in all ages, were grounded upon our Lord Jesus Christ, and that he is the pledge of them, which maketh them available and giveth them effect and force towards us. Then, to be short, it must needs be, that there is but one salvation common to all the faithful, both which are at this day, and which have lived at any time since the beginning of the world: and it must needs

be also, that God hath gathered us together in one accord, to the intent we should be reconciled to him by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by that mean be counted righteous, and enjoy the inheritance of heaven. Yet notwithstanding, we see great difference between the Church that is nowadays, and the Church that was under the law. For the fathers were subject to many Ceremonies. They were circumcised from their childhood. Besides this, they had their Sacrifices, washings, and such other like things. At this day all those things are abolished, and none of them is in use. How then shall we say that the substance of faith is all one among us and the fathers, and yet that their government was diverse and that God hath utterly changed it? If it be alleged that this diversity proceedeth of God: it would seem that he is variable. And if it be said that it is cometh of men: then must we conclude that we hold two sundry ways, and that there was great odds between them and us. I have answered already to the first objection that may be made: namely that there is no variableness in God, though we have altered the order of government in his Church. For when he sendeth fair weather or foul, heat or cold, and disposeth the seasons of the year diversely, shall we say therefore that he changeth his mind, and that he is mutable in himself? No, but contrariwise we must say that he hath ordained the things that were convenient for mankind, and yet notwithstanding by those changings and turnings warn us that we must not seek our rest here beneath, but pass away as wayfarers, and as they that undertake a long journey to come to the kingdom of heaven. As touching the second objection, Saint Paul showeth that if there be any difference betwixt us and the fathers that lived under the Law, it is not in that our religion is not all one, it is not in that we have not all one God, it is not for that the promises which we receive belong not to us nowadays, or for that our Lord Jesus Christ hath not at all times had the power to make atonement among all men, even from Abel to those which shall be found in the last end of the world: but he saith that the diversity is in the outward government. And the better to express that, he allegeth a similitude which we ought to be well acquainted with. For if a father leave his children fatherless and under years of discretion, he will appoint tutors and governors of them till they come to full age. When the father is deceased, his children shall be under Tutors and governors, without enjoying of the goods that their father hath left them: and yet do the goods belong to them: nevertheless they have not the rule of themselves, but

instead of following their wanton appetite, men give them schoolbutter with a rod. Thus ye see that although the children be heirs, yet have they not liberty at the first day, because they be too weak, and have neither wisdom nor direction. Now according to this similitude Saint Paul saith, that the fathers, (that is to say the Jews which lived under the law) were God's children and heirs as well as we: but that the Church was then as it were under age as a young child, and needed a bridle, and therefore they were in bondage and subjection of the law. Saint Paul then compareth God's law whereby the Jews were held in straight awe under the yoke of Ceremonies, I say he compareth it to a Tutorship. But now is that time past and gone saith he: for God hath sent his only son, insomuch that in our Lord we be men grown and are come to such perfection of age, that the government which was under the law is now superfluous and unprofitable, yea and it should be altogether contrary to God's will, and to the order which he hath established. And so we see whereat Saint Paul aimed. For it is a thing of great importance to know that our Lord Jesus Christ is no newcome thing, as though God had suddenly bethought him to remedy the destruction of mankind. For Christ had that power from the beginning, and it behooved all men to seek their salvation in him, for the faith hath always been one selfsame, as the Apostle allegeth in the Epistle to the Hebrews. (<581104> Hebrews 11:4) And truly Abel's sacrifices were not accepted for any worthiness that was in his own person, nor for any value that was in him: but only by the means of faith: faith was fain [*obliged*] to be his foundation and buttress. In respect whereof also the Apostle saith, that our Lord Jesus Christ which was yesterday, is also today, and shall be still to the end. (<581308> Hebrews 13:8) Therefore we must be well resolved of this point as a thing undoubted and out of all question: namely that we in these days have not any new hope of attaining to salvation, but the very same that hath been at all times heretofore, and that the Gospel is not a newfound doctrine forged within these few years, but the very same doctrine wherein all the righteous men that ever were, have been instructed. And truly it hath been said heretofore, that we be made the children of adoption when we once have our Lord Jesus Christ. For Saint Paul intended to rebuke the folly and presumptuousness that was in the Jews, for that they boasted always of their earthly lineage. He showeth that in this behalf we must have respect of nothing but of the incorruptible seed of God's word, whereby we be begotten new again. Now when God

adopteth us and receiveth us to be his children, then doth he avoweth us to be the spiritual offspring of Abraham. How then can we be Abraham's children, except we agree with him in faith? Ye see then that Paul's handling of this point here is to good purpose: namely to do us to understand, that from all time out of mind, there hath not been any other mean to renew men to salvation, and to bring them into God's favor and love, than by trusting in Jesus Christ, and by fleeing altogether unto him for refuge. Thus ye see why it is said that young children are masters of the house, and that the inheritance belongeth to them, though they do not yet enjoy it by reason of their age. And here we have also to mark further, that it were great wrong to the fathers of old time, to shut them out of the fellowship and onement of the faith that is showed here by Saint Paul. For their life was of all men's most miserable, because God kept them occupied with many afflictions: and the lives of the fathers (specially of those whom God marked out to make them excellent) were all mirrors of invincible patience. For what things endured Abraham? How hard and great encounters did he bear out? What manner of temptations did Isaac and likewise Jacob abide? Again what virtues see we in David? Now if they had set their mind upon this world, they had been in worse plight than the brute beasts. Therefore (as I have said afore) it must needs be that they looked higher: and that did they witness sufficiently, not only by word of mouth, but also by deed. Then let us mark well the point that is set down here: which is, that the fathers hoped for the selfsame heritage that we look for, even by the means of our Lord Jesus Christ. And forasmuch as we agree with Abraham, David and the other holy kings and Prophets in faith: we shall be gathered into the heavenly life with them, and obtain the same crown of salvation with them, which is the reward of faith as Saint Peter termeth it in his first Epistle. (<600209> 1 Peter 2:9) Furthermore whereas Saint Paul saith that the child differeth nothing from a servant: he doth it, always to magnify God's grace towards us, and the privilege which we obtain by means of the Gospel. It is much for us to be called the children of Abraham, but it is much more when it is said of us, that God hath advanced us to a higher degree by the Gospel, then ever Abraham came unto. For inasmuch as our Lord Jesus Christ was not yet come: he was under the yoke of the law. But we at this day are free from it: and so ye see that God hath exalted us above all the Patriarchs and Prophets. And well ought we to acknowledge this grace, and to esteem it

as it deserveth, to the end we may give ourselves to the serving of God with the earnest affection and zeal. But (as I have touched already) we must mark, that Saint Paul speaks not here of any several person. For there is none of us all but he ought to confess himself to be much rawer and weaker in faith, then were the Prophets and Patriarchs: and that doth their lives show full well. Then if we be not come to such perfection as they were, how is it said that they were as little children, and we be nowadays as it were at the state of men? I told you before, how Saint Paul speaketh not of one man or other, but of the common government of the Church. For he speaketh not of the men themselves, but of the fashion that God used in the guiding of those that are his. This will be showed the better by things contrary. Saint Paul upbraideth the Corinthians, that he was driven to give them milk as to little babes, because they were not yet able to brook [*tolerate*] strong meat, (^{<460302>} 1 Corinthians 3:2) and he maketh them ashamed of their dullness, and of their weltering in their untoward affections, for that they had not profited in the faith as the time required. Therefore it was a kind of childishness for them to be always new to begin. Yea and we see how the Prophet Esay condemneth the Jews yet more roughly, when he saith that they were little children, (^{<232810>} Isaiah 28:10) to whom men say A, A, B, B, so as they be still new to begin again, and look what they learn to day, they forget tomorrow, so that they never go forward but with great hardness. This is a vice that is too common in the world. Moreover, Saint Paul in ^{<490414>} Ephesians 4:14, doth generally exhort all the faithful and all such as are well strengthened and able to be teachers of other men, which be as it were antisignbearers to show the way of salvation: I say, he exhorteth them to grow still till they be come to the full age of manhood. It should seem at the first blush that there is some contrariety. For he saith here, that all those whom God hath received into his Church and made them of the household of faith, are already come to full age, yea even the veriest idiots that scarcely understand three words of faith, so they have the principles and as ye would say the gross sum of the power of our Lord Jesus Christ. Saint Paul saith that they be already as good as men grown, and that God will not hold them any longer as children under a master, or as under tutors and governors. And in another text he saith, that not only such as are weak and ignorant, but even the excellentest sort, which ought to carry the torch before others to give them light, must grow still. And how long? Not for a

year or two, but all their life time: so that as long as they live in this world, they must daily acknowledge themselves to be weak still, and that they have need to enforce and strain themselves to go forwarder and forwarder. But all this agreeth very well together. For if every man examine himself what he is, surely even the forwardest [*earnestest*] of all, shall find themselves to be still as little children. For although we endeavor to come unto God, yet we drag our legs after us: and howsoever we be disposed of ourselves, a number of hindrances step before us, and every little straw stoppeth us: or else if a fly do but cross our eyes, by and by we be ready to turn away. And although we had never so great courage in us, yet have we many vices to fight against, and our knowledge is not such but we have need to pray God daily to increase our faith, and correct the remnant of unbelief that is in us. Thus ye see what every man shall find on his own behalf. But if we look upon the fashion that God keepeth in guiding and governing his Church: it is certain that we be fully men grown. And why? For we be no more held in so straight subjection of the law as the fathers were: but forasmuch as we have our Lord Jesus Christ, we resort unto him, when we have sinned. We see well enough how we be bewrayed [*exposed*] with spots and blots before God: but yet is our washing ready at hand, insomuch that by being dipped in the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ by faith through the working of the holy Ghost, we become pure and clean, and God accepteth us into favor. Again we be bound to everlasting death by reason of the faults that we commit daily against him: but yet the amends for them is to be found in our Lord Jesus Christ, for he is ordained the ransom to discharge us. Ye see then that we be no more under the bridle whereto the fathers were subject, namely in respect of God and his governing of us. Therefore although we feel our own infirmities, yet doth not that bar us from being men grown: that is to say, it is no let but that God giveth us greater liberty and privilege, than he did to such as lived under the law. Thus in effect that question is assoiled [*dispelled*]. And it serveth to bring us back to that which I have touched already, namely that we must magnify God's grace towards us, for advancing of us to such dignity. But therewithal we see also, that it is not lawful for men to devise a new government at their own pleasure under pretense that folk are raw, or that many are not yet fit to be led and guided after a higher and wiser fashion. And it behooveth us to mark that well. For when the superstitions that reign nowadays in popery did first enter

into the world: they began not with such devilish blasphemy as they be now maintained with. For look how many Ceremonies there are in the popedom [*papal government*], termed by the name of God's service: so many be their Idolatries and the Illusions of Satan: and to be short, all is abominable before God. Why so? For they imagine them to be things necessary to salvation, that by the means of them they be able to ransom themselves, and to get forgiveness of their sins. Moreover they deface our Lord Jesus Christ and the grace that is brought us by him, because they hope to ransom themselves by their own satisfactions, and by that means usurp and pluck to themselves the thing that belongeth to the son of God. Thus ye see that they be cursed villains. Nevertheless when all their gewgaws [*showy trifles, trinkets*] were first brought into the Church, they were not yet full of so great dotages: but they were crept in under a somewhat more favorable pretense: that is to wit, that men were rude and dull, and unable to comprehend the secrets of the kingdom of heaven: if they had not been handled and dandled after the manner of little children. Now (as I have touched already) it is true that every man ought to humble himself when he knows his own infirmity: but yet doth it not therefore follow, that we should bring up new fashions after our own fancies. We must be contented with that which God hath ordained. A young child must not choose his tutor of his own head: no, he should not be suffered to do so. But his father will appoint him one. True it is that there are other means established by laws: but here Saint Paul hath taken a similitude agreeable to the matter that he deals with. Then if an earthly father have authority to appoint Tutors to his children: why should not God have the same power? A child shall not be licensed nor suffered to choose a Tutor to his own liking. Sith [*since*] it is so: by what right or title will we devise this or that, to say, we be young children, and therefore we must have a fashion meet and agreeable to our slenderness? Yea, and God hath provided one for us: now shall we be wiser than he? Howsoever the case standeth, the very cause why men's wits have been so ticklish to devise store of Ceremonies in the Christian Church, was that they saw so much rudeness among the common people. Yea marie [*def: expression of surprise*] (say they) it is good reason that there should be this and that. Baptism were too simple a thing if there were nothing else to be seen in it but water, and that water would not be sufficient. For there are a great number of lay folk, which are so dull that they understand not what that

mystery meaneth, that is to wit, that we be renewed by our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore there needeth oil and cream to represent the holy Ghost, as it were in a visible figure. Besides this there needed light, and a white Chrisom [*robe*] and salt, and eft [*again*] one thing, and eft [*again*] another. Very well: thus was baptism daily decked, yea in the opinion of men: but all of them are but defilings: for did not our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the incomprehensible wisdom of God his father, know well enough what should be for our profit? Shall men come creeping like little toads, and seek I wot [*know*] not what, and bear themselves in hand that the things which our Lord Jesus Christ hath ordained are unperfect, and that they will take in hand to make them perfect? As much is to be said of all the rest. Specially the Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ hath not only been corrupted and maimed: but also utterly defaced by the devilish abomination of the hellish mass. For they make it to be but an ordinary matter to take a bit of bread and to drink three sips of wine. [God's word willeth us to] look to the promise [namely] that we be made partakers of the body and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we receive his holy Supper with true faith and obedience, and that in him only lieth the food of our souls. But contrariwise men have been fain [*inclined*] to apparel themselves like players in an interlude, and therewithal to use so many murlimewes [*foolish gestures or antics*], as it was a shame to behold them: and what was the end of all? Marie [*def: expression of surprise*] sir, it was a sacrifice for the remission of sins, both of quick and dead. Wherein we see how our Lord Jesus Christ is bereft of his priestly dignity which was given him of God his father, even with solemn oath that he should never have any successor: but yet for all that the Papists make him a thousand thousand successors. And what manner of men I pray you? Surely if they were Angels of heaven, yet ought they to be taken for devils. But their choice is of all the vermin of the world, of all the rascals, and of all naughtipacks [*wicked, dissolute men*]: and shall we say that such a rabble are the successors of our Lord Jesus Christ. And yet nevertheless ye see what the Papists allege for their covert: namely that men must needs have some helps because of their infirmity. And thereof came all the residue of their superstitions: as for example, when they did set up their Idols and puppets, they termed them the lay men's books. But we see that all their malapertness [*impudence*] is confounded here, when Saint Paul bringeth us back to the order that God hath set, because we must all wholly hold us to

it, and there rest. So then, will we not disclaim the heritage of heaven which our Lord Jesus Christ hath purchased for us? Let us follow the government which God hath set down in his Church, and assure ourselves that God will supply all wants. How rude or raw soever we be, he can well skill to draw us to him. Yea, so we keep the beaten way, for as for them that have so mingled and turmoiled things, and piled up such a heap of Ceremonies: they have so little remedied their infirmities thereby, that they have rather estranged themselves quit and clean from our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know that men are of their own natures too much inclined to visible things. Therefore by taking up many ceremonies, men are so entangled, so snarled, and so deeply drowned in them, that afterward they forsake God and our Lord Jesus Christ. If any man allege, why so? Had not the fathers of old time many ceremonies also to help their infirmities? Yes: but all theirs were revealed to them by God. For first it was told them the pattern of all those things was heavenly, as it is said in ^{<022540>} Exodus 25:40. And it was showed to Moyses in the mountain, to the intent they should not muse upon these present and corruptible things. And when God saw they were too much given unto them, we see how he rebuked them sharply by his Prophets, saying: away with your sacrifices, fye [*def: to express disgust or shock*] on them, for think ye that I take pleasure in your cutting of the throats of, (^{<195008>} Psalm 50:8; ^{<236603>} Isaiah 66:3) in hope to pacify me thereby, as though I were an hungered or a thirst? Think ye that I have need of such helps? Ye see then that God did always draw his people from superstition, notwithstanding that there were many ceremonies ordained, which was done for the necessity of the time. For it was requisite that there should be figures and shadows in the absence of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Saint Paul's saying, who telleth us that the fathers of old time were by that means directed to seek Christ: but now that he is come, we have no more need of any such thing. As for example, if a man be away from me, so as I cannot come to the sight of him, and I would fain [*willingly*] have a representation of him to find him out by, I must at leastwise have an Image that may resemble him: but if I see his body present, and may behold him face to face, I need no more any Image or counterfeit to paint him or express him more lively unto me. Even after the same manner the fathers of old time had many figures and shadows, because our Lord Jesus Christ was not yet revealed. But now that he shineth upon us, and showeth himself as the daysun of

righteousness (<390402> Malachi 4:2) so brightly unto us: were in not a willful burying of him again, if we would needs have figures still? And for that cause also was the veil of the Temple rent asunder at his death. (<402751> Matthew 27:51) For nowadays we may enter in familiarly unto God, and offer him our spiritual Sacrifices, that is to wit, our prayers and petitions, and that is because we have the very body and substance as Saint Paul saith in another text to the Colossians. (<510301> Colossians 3) Now then we see that all they which have forged new devices after that sort, have utterly corrupted and falsified the Gospel, and have tied towels and napkins before men's eyes, to keep them from the seeing and knowing of Jesus Christ, as they ought to have done, and as was requisite for their salvation. And therefore it is certain that all they which busy themselves about such gewgaws [*trinkets, showy trifles*], do instead of seeking Christ, throw themselves headlong into damnation by following so their own brain. They be so given to it, as they cannot be plucked from it: they play the little children that are building of some house of oystershells, who are so earnest at their work, that they forget to eat or drink, and are contented to suffer heat and cold, hunger and thirst. And why so? Because their fondness carrieth them away. Again they remove their stuff to and fro, and bring in this and that, and when they once begin to set themselves to it, they can never make an end. Even so it is with men when they will needs serve God after their own liking. Ye see then that we had need to be sober in that behalf, and to content ourselves with the helps and means that are ordained already to bring us to our Lord Jesus Christ. We have Baptism and the Lord's supper: let us hold ourselves contented with them, for our curiosity will always draw us into evil, unless we yield to God's appointment, and give over all our own speculations and fancies. Yea and let us understand that it is a blasphemy against God, when men say [of their own heads] this or that is good for us. I tell you plainly, when soever men say, we must have this, and we must have that, or we must have our Church or religion of this fashion or that fashion: It is as much as if he should say, God was not well advised how we should be governed, he wist [*knew*] not what was meet for us. As for example, it seemeth to them to be too slender a matter that there should be no more but only water in Baptism: and they must have somewhat else to give it a greater grace and majesty. Therefore they have tapers, and salt, and cream, and all the rest of the pomps of their own making. Lo how men will always be adding of

somewhat unto God's commandment: which doing is a cursed blasphemy, as I said afore. And it riseth of this, that they had not an eye to the principal, but gazed still upon the appurtenances. The principal is the promise: for all the Ceremonies of the world are not only vain and baggagely, but also devilish illusions, except God's word be printed in them, and that that be the thing whereat they look, and the mark whereat they aim. As how? If we had no promise for baptism, nay knew to what end it was ordained: what a gewgaw [*showy trifle*] were it? It were much better for us to forbear it. Again, if we knew not what the Lord's Supper meaneth, it were better that the remembrance of it were utterly buried. But when God's word goeth with it, so as we have the promises to warrant us that we be washed and cleansed from all our spots by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ: then lieth all our trust there. And moreover it is said that there we be renewed by the holy Ghost. Lo how baptism leadeth us to the promises, and the promises lead us to Christ, as to the party that is contained in them. Thus ye see what we have to bear in mind, when Saint Paul exalteth us in degree above all the Patriarchs, and those that lived under the Law: namely, that it is not for that there was not more perfection, constancy, and faith in them, than is nowadays in us. And therewithal (as I have erst [*earlier*] said) we be still confirmed in this point, that there is no new mean of salvation set forth unto us, but that God gathereth us to him for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, in likewise he hath in all ages called his chosen, and those whom he listeth [*chooses*] to cull out, and whom he vouchsafed to make partakers of the adoption that is imparted to us at this day. For if it might be said, that men have had the mean to be justified, and to come in favor with God, but only since Jesus Christ came into the world: what should become of those that lived afore? Our faith should be but weak, and it would cast us into such a maze, as we should not wot [*know*] where to become. How now, would we say? Hath not God been the father of his creatures in all ages? Was there no salvation till Jesus Christ came into the world? Yes, but whereas it is said that the salvation is manifested unto us by the Gospel, yet was it also already before: and although there was a veil in the Temple, and other shadows, yet nevertheless the fathers had always an eye unto Jesus Christ, unto whom we be led at this day. Thus you see how they might walk freely and without doubting, and how that at this day also there is not anything that can shake us, if we keep on our way to our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing

that by his means we be all called to the heritage which he hath purchased for us. And therefore we ought so much the more to abhor these Devils, that bear us in hand and strain themselves to prove, that the fathers of old time were like brute beasts, as though they had known nothing of the spiritual life. Behold a blasphemy mete to deface all the religion of the world. Of which number was that creature that was punished here according to his deserts, I mean that dog which durst be so bold as to write, that Abraham never tasted nor knew of the heavenly life, nor never worshipped God but imaginatively, and that the reporting of him to be the father of the faithful is but a mockery, and that his faith was but a shadow of faith, and finally that he never knew of Jesus Christ, nor of his coming. Behold, (I pray you) the blasphemies wherewith his books were stuffed. But let us in these days abhor such plagues of Satan. For it is certain that the said Champion of the Devil was purposely bent to bring to pass, that there should be no more faith in the world. For inasmuch as the Devil transformed himself, and showed not his horns at the first, it was very dangerous when he came after that fashion, as it were too dig down the foundation of our faith, as it were under the earth. And Saint Paul warneth us expressly hereof, to the end we should stand upon our guard, and keep good watch that we be not taken tardy. Then let us mark well, that whereas it is said here, that to be made the heirs of God, we must be made the members of our Lord Jesus Christ: thereby the holy Ghost intendeth to confirm us, to the end we should be so much the better disposed to go on forward continually unto God, and to hold out in the hope till we have overcome all the battles of this world, to be brought into the spiritual rest which we look for. Also we have therewithal to mark well, what is said concerning the fullness of time. For according to men's unmeasurable inquisitiveness, it might be demanded here, why and how so? Why hath God driven it off so long, seeing we were forlorn and damned in Adam's fall? How happeneth it that he hath not remedied it rather? Surely Saint Paul doth not altogether satisfy men's appetites, but cutteth it quit off by the waist. And in good sooth [*truth*] if God meant to content us, he should be fain [*happy*] to feed us with many needless things: but he intendeth to try the obedientness of our faith. And Saint Paul also doth bar us of that thing, in saying, that the fullness of time was not yet come. And what meaneth he by the fullness of time? He meaneth the time that God hath appointed in his own purpose, and not according as men might have

judged of it: for they be no competent judges of that matter, but must submit themselves to God, and allow of that which he hath established. Thus ye see what Saint Paul meant by saying, that the full time was then come, when God sent his only son into the world. Therefore let us learn that our chief wisdom is this soberness of submitting ourselves unto God, to accept for good and rightful whatsoever thing he doeth, knowing that on our own part, though we have never so much understanding, it is but folly for us to think ourselves aught [*anything*] worth, or to take upon us the skill of anything: and that we must learn to humble ourselves to our God, and not do as many men do, who are so hasty as to say, What? I think thus, and thus is mine opinion. For there is not anything more contrary to God's doctrine, than when men presume so much upon themselves as to say, thus must the matter go, and so and so do I think or suppose. Truly it becometh us to be held as captives, as Saint Paul saith in the second to the Corinthians. (<471103> 2 Corinthians 11:3) Let us hold ourselves in such awe, as we may not once lift up our heads to dispute against God, nor make any estimation of ourselves as though we were of some ability. Let us hold us contented with the liberty he hath given us, and not abuse the grace he hath granted us, in preferring us before those that were as Angels in this world, and yet notwithstanding were not advanced to the liberty which we have by the Gospel. Furthermore Saint Paul doth here bring us back to the thing which we ought to consider above all others: which is that our being at the time of full age in these days, is not in respect of any virtue that is in us, but in respect of our Lord Jesus Christ. The difference between us and the fathers of old time, is (as I have said already) that they were led as under law, and we be now set free into grace and liberty. And why are we so? Is it because we be of more value than they, or for that there is any worthiness in us? No: but because it pleased God to honor us with the presence of his only Son. Will we then enjoy the liberty of the Gospel? Let us go right forth to our Lord Jesus Christ, who as he is glorified in himself, will also bring us into the heavenly glory, whereinto he is gone before us. This is the thing that Saint Paul meant purposely to tell us. As touching that it is added that he was made of woman, and put under the Law: it cannot be dispatched at this time, and therefore we will reserve it till another time. And now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying him to make us so to feel them, as we may mourn and be sorry for them with true

repentance, and go thither as he calleth us, that is to wit, be so rightly bereft of our flesh, and of all the corruptions thereof, as we may come to the joy whereto he daily calleth us, and unto that uncorruptness wherein it behooveth us to go forward all the time of our life. That it may please him to grant this grace, not only to us, but also to all people and Nations of the earth, etc.