

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SERMON

WHICH IS THE FOURTH UPON THE FOURTH CHAPTER

- 11** I am afraid of you lest I have spent my labor in vain upon you.
- 12** Brethren I beseech you be ye as I am, for I am as you are. Ye have not hurt me at all.
- 13** Ye know how I have earst preached unto you through infirmity of the flesh,
- 14** And ye neither despised nor hid scorn of the trial of me such as it was in my flesh: but received me as an Angel of God, yea as Jesus Christ. — ^{<480411>} GALATIANS 4:11-14

I HAVE DECLARED heretofore, that although Saint Paul at the first blush bring not any reason that seemeth to be of great weight or importance: yet notwithstanding it is not for naught that he doubteth lest his labor be lost, and all the fruit of his travail among the Galatians be perished, seeing they observed the holydays and other Ceremonies of the law. For we must not look upon the day itself, or upon the kind of meat, or upon such other like things: but we must consider to what end men forbear the eating of any kind of meat, or why they keep certain days, and so of other Ceremonies. Now I have told you that by that means the light of the Gospel is after a sort damned, or rather utterly quenched. For the end why all those things were ordained in old time, was that the fathers might be foaded [*encouraged*] and maintained in the hope of the redeemer, who was not yet come among them. But now that our Lord Jesus Christ is come into the world, and hath finished and performed all that was requisite for man's salvation, it were an utter derogation to the full perfectness that is in him, if men should still busy themselves with figures. It were all one as if a man should draw a Curtain before him that he might not be known as he is. Furthermore, there goes a binding with it: and when a thing is commanded

under pain of deadly sin, men's consciences are made subject to such tyranny, that God foregoeth his authority and dominion over us, for he will not have us so make conscience of anything that is not commanded by him. And truly the thing wherein he will be discerned from his creatures, is that he have all sovereignty in ruling our life: that the thing which he commandeth be accepted as good and needful without any gainsaying: that the things which he forbiddeth be omitted, and that men make no reckoning nor conscience of them. But in observing the Ceremonies and in thinking to deserve at God's hand for so doing, there is yet a further matter: namely that we renounce or give over the thing that is purchased for us by the death and passion of the son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath discharged us of all debts due unto God his father. Not to give us liberty to do evil, but to the end we should flee unto him alone when we have done amiss. If we find ourselves to have transgressed God's law, and that our own conscience upbraideth us: there is none other remedy for us but to put ourselves into the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may be quit before God, and washed from all our sports by the merit of his death and passion, and by the shedding of his blood. To be short, Saint Paul showeth here, that men run astray when they seek means of salvation anywhere else than in Jesus Christ, insomuch that they become forlorn and utterly past recovery. Now then seeing that God hath set us forth but only one way of salvation: they that turn aside from that, do cast themselves willfully into destruction, and Satan reigneth over them for their unthankfulness sake in despising the inestimable benefit that God offered them. What a bountifulness is it that God calleth and allureth us to his favor and love, notwithstanding that we be his deadly foes? Again seeing that he appointeth not the Angels to be our mediators, but vouchsafeth to join himself unto us in the person of his only son: if we be so miserable that that will not suffice us, but we will needs of a devilish covetousness seek other means: is it not a shaking off of our Lord Jesus Christ? Then let us learn, that to profit well in the Gospel, we must forsake all that is contrary to the trust which we ought to have in our Lord Jesus Christ: and stick wholly to his righteousness, to seek all perfection in him. Let that serve for one point.

Also therewithal let us look to ourselves: for sometimes we shall think we commit but some small and light fault in swerving aside: but [in the end]

we shall wonder how God hath given us head, so as we shall be utterly strayed from him. And that is the cause why so few hold out to the end. For men do easily bear with themselves, under the foresaid pretense, bearing themselves in hand that it is nothing, and so every man giveth himself liberty. But God punisheth such recklessness, and giveth us over to it, so as Satan carrieth us away. Wherefore let us walk in fear and wariness: and when God hath once given us the grace to taste of his Gospel, let us endeavor to be confirmed in it day by day: let us beware in any wise that we step not aside from it, and let every of us be watchful in that behalf, lest we make a deadly fall when we think we do but trip: finally, let us keep the way that our Lord Jesus Christ teacheth us. It is true that though we swarve aside, yet will he pity us, as we see by experience. For he must be fain [*pleased*] to raise us up again, not three or four times in our whole life: but a hundred times every day. For we be fickle and never leave reeling to and fro. Nevertheless let us not tempt him, nor so harden ourselves that the Devil lead us away or draw us one way or other: but let us labor to make the seed of life available in us, seeing that God will have us to yield forth fruit to his honor in all our thoughts, words, and deeds. Let us beware that we endeavor ourselves hereunto. Now hereupon Saint Paul addeth, that he would fain have the Galatians fashion themselves like unto him, because that he on his side laboreth to apply himself unto them. It should seem that this saying differeth far from that which we heard even now: for it was as a stroke of some tempest or thunderclap when he said, I am afraid lest I have lost my labor upon you: I will let you alone like folk past amendment. It grieved him to see that the doctrine which he had preached was so ill received, and now he useth a gentle and friendly manner of speech. To bring them back again unto him, he calleth them brethren, and afterward protesteth that he desireth to join with them, and to frame himself to them as much as is possible for him, seeking nothing but that they should yield the like unto him.

And herein we see what measurableness they ought to keep which have the charge to preach God's word: that is to wit, they must not foad [*encourage*] men's faults by flattery, but rebuke them sharply, to the intent that such as are beguiled by Satan's illusions, may be wakened and as it were scared at God's judgments. For when men are given to any evil, they lie weltering in it still, unless they be plucked out of it as it were by

force. Yea and it grieveth and spiteth them if they be wrung by the ear too hard, or if they be made to scratch where it did not itch, as the common proverb saith. The more then that men bear with themselves, the less are their faults to be spared, for else it were a betraying of them. That is the cause why Saint Paul used so great vehemence, in saying that he was sore afraid, lest he had lost his labor, and there leaveth the Galatians as it were in despair. But yet for all this, he intendeth to cheer them up again, that they may come to repentance. And so he seasoneth his sharpness with sweetness, and showeth that the gate is still open for them, if they will submit themselves unto God. Thus ye see two things that are requisite when we will have our exhortations to be profitable. The first is, that there be a liveliness in us to prick forth such as have done amiss, that they may be thoroughly touched with the knowledge of their sins, and mourn and be sorry for them before God: for if they have not that sorriness, they will never yield to follow God. True it is, that to outward sight men may well alter their lewd dispositions: but howsoever they pretend, they shall still be full of stubbornness and malice, till they be ashamed of themselves and feel what they have deserved. So then the true preparative to repentance, is to be pricked so nearly as we may feel the evil that is in us, and condemn ourselves for it: yea and that we be full of anguish, finding no rest till God have received us to mercy. But yet must we not lie still in such perplexity: for that would make us to shun God's presence, and to go about to estrange ourselves from him forever, insomuch that we would fain [*happily*] have him plucked out of his seat, that he might no more be our judge, if we were not well persuaded that he will be pitiful to us, and that we shall not be disappointed of our expectation in seeking of him: according as it is said in the Psalm, (^{<19D004>} Psalm 130:4) that there must be mercy in God to draw men unto him, or else they will never be brought to stand in awe of him. For as for all the fear of the unbelievers, it is but a terror that dismayeth them, making them to gnash their teeth against God, and to fret and chafe and play the madmen. And such enforced fear hath no reverence at all in it. But when we have once tasted the goodness of our God, and see how all his seeking is to be at one with us, and to have us come unto him without feigning [*pretending*], yea and that his touching of our hearts is to the intent we should conceive sure confidence, and thereupon offer ourselves to his Majesty, assuring ourselves that we ought not to be afraid of it, seeing it is the thing whereunto he calleth us: I say,

when we be thus assured, namely that our sins are wiped out: then may we be bold to preace [*press*] unto our God, and that is the order which Saint Paul keepeth here, and which it behooveth us to keep in all our rebukings. In that place then he did beat down the Galatians, because they exalted themselves, and did as it were set up their bristles [*show fight*] against God, through their lustiness. And now he reacheth them his hand, and lifteth them up again, and telleth them that after they have once felt and perceived their faults, they must not yet for all that think themselves utterly shut out from God, and from all hope of salvation. But this cannot be done except we have a carefulness to draw sinners to salvation. For many men will be vehement enough, and they shall have just cause so to do: but yet in the meanwhile their rigorousness will be so excessive, as it shall shut up men's hearts, and make them take such stomach against the bitterness that is used towards them, that they shall cast themselves utterly out of order, yea and conceive a hatred against God and his word. Howbeit, they that are so oversharpe will say they have just cause. Yea, but yet for all that, they which rebuke sin in the name of God, must always have a care and desire to bring those to salvation, which were in the highway to destruction. When they be so minded, no doubt but they will labor to win such as were out of the right way, and to make them perceive that they seek their welfare, and that although their rebukings be grievous, yet they fail not to be for their behoove [*advantage*]. Nevertheless, on the other side, let such as are handled so sharply, understand that they have need of such medicines: for what shall they win by rankling against God? But yet we see many which can well enough make countenance to be great Protestants, and to burn in zeal of the Gospel, which yet notwithstanding will not abide to be touched. So long as they be borne withal, they will confess whatsoever ye will have them and all that is spoken to them, yea and more too. Ye would think that the Gospel was made even for their turn: but if a man find fault with them, then they begin to play the wood beasts. And what gain they by it, saving that first they betray their hypocrisy before men, and secondly set themselves in battle against God?

Now it is certain that in fighting against such an adversary, they shall not be the stronger party. Therefore let us suffer ourselves to be rebuked sharply when need shall require. And if we wist [*know*] not of the evil that was in us, we ought to mistrust ourselves so much the more, and not seek

startingleaves to defend ourselves withal, but rather enter into examination of ourselves, and every of us become his own judge, that by means thereof we may not enter into account with our God, nor he be compelled to cite us to hear the sentence of damnation. Thus ye see how we ought to receive the chastisements that are put to us, and that we must not be too much grieved at them, because they prepare and dispose us to humility, but let us in the meanwhile wait for the coming of the sweet that followeth afterward. For the thing that keepeth many men from receiving the warnings that are given them, is that they be fully resolved of the matter aforehand: so that if a man speak a word to them that misliketh them, they stop their ears at it, or else their hearts are so hardened and dulled, as they cannot by any means afterward conceive what is put to them for their welfare and profit. A man may talk to them of God's mercy, and protest to them well enough: and a man may well enough (as ye would say) show them with his finger that his seeking is nothing else but to bring them to salvation, but they be utterly deaf: and that is because they be fully bent of themselves to reject God's word. Therefore let us be patient and modest, when men step to us upon the sodaine [*suddenly*], to assail us roughly by showing us our faults: let us be quiet at it, and tarry till he have spoken the last word. And so let us interlace and knit these two things together: that is to wit, the rigor which we must take hold of that we may have a true and lively feeling of our sins, to be sorry for them, and to ask God forgiveness, and to be abashed in ourselves: and then let us assure ourselves that God will always be merciful to us: and when we have so indited ourselves, let us also hope to be quitted at his hand, and that the more he condemneth us by his word, the more he intendeth to bear us up, to the end he be not enforced to come against us with armed hand, and with his sword in his fist. Thus ye see in effect what we have to remember in this text, where we see Saint Paul on the one side so sharp and vehement, and by and by afterward to call the Galatians his brethren, and to pray them that there may be good conformity between him and them, and one accord and tunable consent among them. Now as touching that he saith, *I beseech you be like unto me, for I also do apply myself unto you*: as we have seen already, it is not to soothe them in their vices, nor to cloak their filthiness, nor to use any flattering of them: but to try all the ways to the wooded to win them unto God, according as we shall see hereafter how he will use the similitude of a woman with child, which longeth to see her

child born into the world, and although she endure pain, yet will not wreak herself upon her babe by strangling it, but be more chare [*careful*] of it than of her own life. Saint Paul will use the said similitude. So then he meaneth not here to strike sail (as they say) to please such as had need to be rebuked: but rather advanced himself as far as he could to win them, according also as he will say, that he hath prattled with them as a Nurse doth with her child: and that might well be done without hardening men in their sins. Not that they should be too much borne withal: for when a Nurse stoopeth to teach her young child to go, whom she holdeth by the hand, her intent is not to make him to tumble, nor to teach him to halt, nor to make him such a Cockney: that he should not be able to go when he cometh to man's age: but contrariwise, when she intendeth to stay the child's arm, she will take him by the hand, or by some other part of him.

So then we see after what manner we must fashion ourselves to such as are weak. It is not to harden them in their naughtiness, but rather to amend them: nevertheless we must go by measure, having always an eye to our own ability. And truly it is not for naught that Saint Paul in another text (<451401>Romans 14:1; <480601>Galatians 6:1) exhorteth the stronger sort, and the forwarder [*earnest*] sort, to apply themselves to such as are yet raw and weak. For if a man had never so great and excellent virtues, that he were as an Angel: yet surely if he be so rigorous that he will have every man to be as perfect as himself, all his virtues will be but smoke. Why so? For the mildness and gentleness which God commandeth us, serve to give as it were a taste and favor to all virtues. And the better that a man knows himself, the more will he bethink him of the vices that are in him, which have need to be borne withal, and therefore that he must also bear with others. Again he will consider to what end God hath advanced him, namely to show other men the way, and finally he will bear with himself least of all men. And hereby may a man have a good inkling to discern whether the admonitions proceed of pure love, or whether they proceed of too much sternness. For if in rebuking other men, a man take not heed to himself, and flatter not himself, ne [*nor*] cast forth his choler to find fault with this man or that man's vice, but in the meanwhile is utterly stained himself, and would feign [*assumingly*] be plunged in it overhead and ears: it is certain that all is but hypocrisy. But when a man reineth himself short, and desireth not to be more borne withal than his neighbors: if therewithal

he be rigorous, it is to be acknowledged that he hath the zeal of God, and of his holy spirit in him, and that he procureth the welfare of all men. Thus ye see in effect why Saint Paul saith here, that he intended to fashion himself to the Galatians. Now he addeth further, *that they had not hurt or offended him in anything*, meaning thereby that he undertook not any private quarrel against them. For the very things that mar all when doctrine and Admonitions come to be put forth, are that either we be of opinion that the party which speaketh is not worthy to be heard, or that we bear some hatred or pritch [*grudge, offense*] towards him in our hearts. For it is impossible that we should take anything in good part at his hand, when we shall have conceived any such opinion or fancy of him. I see a man that speaks as an Angel: now if I surmise that he hates me, and seeks to bite me, or that he goes about to discover my shame, surely I shall not take any profit by hearing of him. But this cannot excuse us: for it is a lewd fault: and although it were true that a man hated us, and that he rebuked us upon malice and spite: yet ought we to learn to be conformable. The very Heathen men could well enough say, that our foes did us sometimes more good than our friends. For why, they that love one another will wink at many things, and overpass all without thinking amiss. But their enemies keep watch to take advantage of them whom they dislike, and when they spy any fault, they miss not to blaze it abroad, as saith Solomon: (<202624> Proverbs 26:24) yea and sometimes when they would feign [*assumingly*] fall out with a man, they gird at him under pretense of giving him warning. Nevertheless when our enemies do so, surely God giveth us a mean to bring us back again: for the Devil may now and then serve the turn of a Physician towards us, according as we have seen how Saint Paul saith (<471207> 2 Corinthians 12:7) that he was buffeted by the same Messenger, that is to wit, of Satan, which thing was done to beat down all pride in him. Therefore when our enemies come to sift us after that fashion, and seek nothing else but to find faults with us: God doth by that means waken us, because we were asleep before in our own flatteries: and if we were wise and well advised, surely our enemies should oftentimes do us more good than our friends, as I said afore, and as the Heathen men knew well enough. And it is a great shame for us, that the blind wretches which were plunged in darkness, should see more clearly than we that have the light of salvation, and that we should not know the thing which those silly deceived souls perceived. And yet notwithstanding it is as (ye would say)

a piece of our nature, and men make an ordinary rule of it, that if they have once taken any lewd conceit that a man hateth them, they be so eager and forepossessed with it, that they cannot abide to receive any correction at his hand. For this consideration Saint Paul protesteth here, that in reproving the Galatians, he dealeth not with any case or quarrel of his own. We (saith he) have been friends heretofore: I might perchance be despised to the worldward, my coming unto you was not with any great pomp, I was no painted fellow: but I brought you the pure doctrine of the Gospel. And although I was a man without any great gayness, so as I was not accounted of to the worldward: yet notwithstanding, you received me as an Angel of God, yea even as Jesus Christ himself: and whereof cometh now this alteration? I hold on still in doing my duty: and why then are you so alienated from me? See if ye can allege any other thing, than that you hate God's truth and cannot abide it. And what a shame is it that ye should so hate God's truth, that ye should disdain it in my person because I am the Minister of it? Now then we have to gather upon this Text, first that such as have the charge to teach and to carry abroad the doctrine of the Gospel, must above all things eschew quarrels and contentions, (at leastwise if they intend to have their preaching to prevail and be profitable) I say quarrels and contentions for their own peculiar matters. And so ye see how we must abstain from all quarrels, lest the gate be shut against us, and we be disbarred of all liberty of rebuking men when need shall require, that we may protest with Saint Paul that we deal not with them for any desire of revenge, enmity, or evil will, but only for desire of their welfare, let us be sure of that, to the intent it may open us a gape, and give us a way to all manner of rebukings. Mark that for one point.

Again, let us also be well advised, that if our vices be touched, we cast not a block in the way by conceiving and surmising this false opinion in our heads, that it is done of hatred: for that is the policy of Satan. Although men be inclinable to think that other men do bite them and nip them of hatred: yet let us not think that they do it of their own mere motion, but by the Devil's means, who snarleth them after that fashion. If we be rebuked when we have done amiss, whencesoever the same cometh, surely it is a message sent of God, because he will not have us to perish, but would have us to return unto the right way, notwithstanding that the party which findeth fault with us do it not of a good and pure affection,

but seeketh only to spite us, or to wreak his teen [*malice, ill-will*] upon us: for yet doth God nevertheless reach us his hand, to the end we should not perish. But behold Satan on the contrary part stoppeth us from receiving of the medicine, and putteth us in the head, that the rebuking of our faults cometh not of good will, but that there is a pad in the straw, so as we be either too much sifted, or too sore bitten, or else that there is some other secret grudge lurking unseen. All these imaginations doth Satan mingle with men's admonitions, to the intent we should be out of love with them, and refuse them, and by that means rebel against God. Wherefore let us bear well in mind what is said here, to the end that when we be warned of our faults, we may consider, that God, to the intent he would not be our judge himself, appointeth as it were attorneys and solicitors in his name, to come and charge us with our offenses. When a mortal man rebuketh me for my misdoings, it is God's will he should do so, and he hath appointed him in his place. And to what end? That we should not come before his Majesty to yield an account of them: for it were better for us to be drowned a hundred thousand times. God then doth pity us, when he sendeth us mortal men to be our judges, yea even to be our judges to put us to some shame, and thereby to stir us up afterward to return again into the right way. Therefore whensoever God is so merciful unto us: let us profit ourselves by such grace, and beware that we envenom [*embitter*] not ourselves with opinions that come incontinently in our heads, as that the party hateth us, that he seeketh us, that there is some heartburning, that there is some enmity, and that there is I wot [*know*] not what. Let all this geer [*whimsical mockery*] be trodden under foot, and let us accept their warnings if they be true. To be short, if any man blame us, we cannot do better, than to consider what our own conscience telleth us of it. Mark this for a special point, that we must not look what the person is that speaketh, nor pass whither there be any grudge or enmity in him: but only what our own conscience judgeth of the matter, and then must we needs conclude, I am rightly reprov'd. It is a marvelous thing, that they which do so chafe and storm and grind their teeth when they be rebuked, should nevertheless condemn themselves continually whither they would or no, if they entered into their own consciences, and yet had much lever [*rather*] to play the mad bedlams against God, and to spite him by all means possible, than to humble themselves in acknowledging their offenses. Ye see then that the way which we have to keep when we be found fault

with, is to hearken unto such as may make us to enter into account, and specially to have an eye to that which is in us. And where shall we find that? Even written and engraven in our consciences. And although we perceive it not thoroughly: yet let us mistrust ourselves, for no man is a competent judge in his own case as they say. True it is that God doth already make us judges in part: but yet must we rather receive the condemnation which we perceive not, than carp against it before we have well and thoroughly weighed whither we be faulty or no. But there are a number that are well apayed [*content, satisfied*] to shut up, or rather to seal up their eyes, that they might not see their own shame: when a man comes to provoke them to amendment, they fall to skirmishing at the first push, with, did they overshoot themselves so? And then all is dispatched, they will hear no further of the matter, let a hundred things be proved against them, and all is nothing with them. They do but wring their mouth awry [*away from, in opposition*] at it. For they would always clear themselves, and although they be a laughing stock even to little children, they pass not for it, but glory still of the hardening of themselves in their own lewdness and filthiness. Therefore let us keep ourselves from falling into such willful stubbornness: and in judging unfeignedly [*genuinely*] of our vices according to truth, let us also be lowly minded to humble ourselves and to beat down all pride in us, to the end that nothing may let us from acknowledging freely that we have done amiss. This is the effect of that which we have to remember upon this text. Now a man might think it strange that Saint Paul should say, *that the Galatians had received him as an angel of God, yea or rather as Jesus Christ*. For what perfection of holiness soever was in him, yet could he not match with the Angels, as we see how he speaketh in the seventh to the Romans, where he acknowledgeth himself to be wretched, and showeth that he is as a poor captive and slave of the world under the bondage of sin. Although Saint Paul had an earnest desire to serve God: yet notwithstanding he knew he did but drag his legs after him, and that he had many infirmities to pluck him back. And here he saith that he was received as an Angel: yea and he stayeth not there, but addeth further, as Jesus Christ, who (as we know) is the very Son of God, and highest King, which hath sovereign power over all creatures. But here the case concerneth not Saint Paul's life, nor any worthiness that he pretendeth in himself. He hath an eye only to the doctrine. It is said first, that he was received as an Angel of God. (³⁹⁰²⁰⁷ Malachi 2:7) And why not? For the

same title hath been given to all such as have had charge to bear abroad the doctrine of the Law, and of much more reason ought to be given to the publishers of the Gospel: for there God uttereth his majesty and power, much more than he did in old time under the Law. Forasmuch then as God appointeth mortal men to speak in his name and authority: it is requisite that they should be acknowledged to be his Angels, that is to say, Messengers or Ambassadors, for the word Angel betokeneth none other thing. And in good sooth [*truth*] to what purpose were the doctrine which we hear, if it came not of God? It were much better that we [preachers] were dumb and speechless, and that the hearers were deaf and blind, than to stand hearkening to a man that were not sent of God. For the chief honor that God requireth at our hands, is that we should be whist and hearken to his word, yielding him all authority, and holding ourselves bridled and captive as under the royal scepter whereunto he will have us to submit ourselves. Now if a mortal creature should usurp this to himself: what a thing were it? So then let us mark well that Saint Paul doth justly compare himself with an Angel, as in respect of his doctrine. And why? For he knew well enough he had not forged it of his own brain, but had received it of God. And that also is the cause why he addeth, *as Jesus Christ*. For surely our Lord Jesus Christ will have us to receive such as he ordaineth to be his ministers, as if he himself were here in visible shape among us. He that heareth you (saith he) (^{<421016>} Luke 10:16) heareth me. But nevertheless it is certain that he meant not to make idols when he ordained his Apostles and such as should be ministers of his word. He meant not that they should be worshipped in his stead: for out of all doubt, that pre-eminence is not to be given to the very Angels of heaven: and what shall be done to us then, which are but dung and rottenness? Howbeit, our Lord Jesus Christ regarded not what manner of ones men are, but meant to advance his own word, to the end that all men should submit themselves to it. Although then that we be but as brittle earthen pots, or rather already broken, so as we be nothing worth: yet must not the treasure of the Gospel which we bear abroad be therefore despised. For when God's word is preached purely unto us, it is all one as if he dwelt among us, and appeared personally unto us, and it behooveth us to give a proof of our fear, love and obedience towards him, by receiving his word though it come out of a mortal man's mouth. And furthermore if we hold scorn of the Gospel, under color and pretense that they which speak

unto us are neither Kings nor Princes over us: let us assure ourselves that that rebelliousness of ours heaveth at our Lord Jesus Christ. He that despiseth you (saith he) despiseth me: and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me. And this is well worth the marking. For we see nowadays that God's word shall be so lightly esteemed under pretense of men's persons, as it is dreadful to behold. And all such as are loath to be rebuked, will by and by have this answer in their mouth: who are you, Sir? who made you my Prince? As who should say, that God had not superiority over us, nor might speak to us by the mouth of his servants. A Prince may well enough send his officer or some such man as he listeth [*wishes*] to choose, and although the person be of no countenance, yet will he have him received without doubting, and men do so. And when God who hath sovereign dominion over us, and sole pre-eminence over all the kingdoms and principalities of the world, sendeth us his servants whom he avoweth, and will have us to give them the hearing: if we nevertheless do disdain them, and in respect of their persons make none account of the message that he sendeth us by them, and therewithal allege, how now, is this fellow a God: what a presumptuousness were that? If a man carry abroad God's word faithfully, and tell men that whosoever despiseth it setteth and advanceth himself against God: what (say they)? this fellow makes himself God. As who should say, that God might not speak by those whom he hath appointed to be his instruments: for as I have said heretofore, cursed mought [*def: past tense of may*] we be if we bring our own inventions. It were much better that we were drowned a hundred times, than that ever we should go up into the pulpit, if we should not utter God's will faithfully, and stick to that which he commandeth us, and draw it out of the clear fountain of his holy word. Should not these things be declared? Think we that God can be bereft of the thing that is peculiar to him, that is to wit of his truth? No: he and his truth can never be separated. So then let us abhor the blasphemies of these naughtipacks [*wicked, dissolute men*] which say, O, he that speaketh will make himself a God. If he require men to hear him without gainsaying, namely when he is sure in himself that he bringeth not anything which is not of God, it is good reason that he should commend the authority of his master. So then let us not have any acquaintance with these worldlings: but let us yield such reverence to our God, that although such as speak in his name be of no estimation, yet we may not cease to obey the things that they set forth, with a true and lowly

faith. Yet nevertheless, we must also discern between those that pretend God's name falsely, and make a vain cloak of it, and those that be faithful dealers of his word which he hath committed unto them. Look me upon the Pope with his whole kennel [*establishment for dogs*], who are not ashamed to say that whosoever heareth them heareth Christ, and that he which rejecteth them rejecteth Christ: for they allege that saying of Christ's, he that heareth you heareth me and to authorize themselves withal. But they that will be received as Angels, must do the duty of Angels, that is to say, they must be true messengers of God in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath sent them, and they must hold all of him, so as they serve him truly, and seek not sovereignty to themselves, but that he may always be the shepherd of the church, and that the sheep of his flock may hear his voice, and follow him whithersoever he calleth them. And as for them that be falsepackers, perverting the truth, and usurping superiority to deface God's word: it is meet that they should be taken for such as they be indeed: and this hath been showed by that which I said at the beginning: that is to wit, that whereas our Lord Jesus Christ hath told us that he will have us to hear those that come in his name, as if he spake in his own person: he meant not thereby to make them idols among men, to the end that such as have charge to speak in his name, should be exalted to have any tyranny: but he meant that his word should be received reverently and without gainsaying. And whereas Saint Paul saith here that he was received as an Angel, or rather as Jesus Christ: it is as much to say as he came not in his own name, but endeavored to preach God's grace purely, and to make men to follow Jesus Christ, and to frame themselves wholly unto him, that he might have his due pre-eminence, that the Gospel might be received without gainsaying, and that it might bring forth such fruit as it ought to do: that is to wit, that it might be the power of God to the salvation of all believers, as it is said in the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans. (^{<450116>}Romans 1:16)

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 be moved more and more to amendment, and that it may please him to bear with our infirmities, till he have rid us quit and clean of all, and so renewed us according to his own image, so as all may be pure and clean in us, and his glory show itself there, and we more and more fight in such

wise against our own sinfulness, as it may be utterly emptied out of us, and he so fill us with the grace of his holy spirit, as we may draw others thereunto, so as all of us may with one common consent endeavor to serve to his glory and give over ourselves wholly thereunto. And so let us all say, Almighty God heavenly father, etc.