

THE THIRTY-FIRST SERMON

WHICH IS THE FIRST UPON THE FIFTH CHAPTER

- 1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and put not your selves again under the yoke of bondage.
- 2 Behold, I Paul do tell you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing at all.
- 3 And again I protect to every man that is circumcised, that he is bound to keep the whole law. — ^{<480501>}GALATIANS 5:1-3

WE HAVE SEEN heretofore, that to have a state of continuance in the Church, we must be grounded upon our Lord Jesus Christ. For many do boast themselves to be God's children, who notwithstanding are not begotten of the true seed, which maketh the difference whereby God avoweth and acknowledgeth us for his children. Therefore if we will be truly knit to our Lord Jesus Christ, we must hold fast the doctrine of the Gospel, that he as our head and mediator may join us to God his father. Therewithal I have declared that the cause why Saint Paul speaketh so of bond and free seed, is for that they which seek their righteousness in their own virtues, do alienate themselves from our Lord Jesus Christ, and from his grace. For by that means they bind themselves to an impossibility, that is to say, to satisfy God in keeping his commandments. But there is such weakness in us, as none of us is able to perform the least point of the law: and therefore much less can we attain to the perfection that is shown us here. And for that cause Saint Paul concludeth now, that we must stand fast in the freedom which our Lord Jesus Christ hath purchased for us. It is certain that he treateth here of the ceremonies of the law: but yet must we always resort to the wellhead and chief point. For if the matter concerned no further than the keeping of a holy day, or the forbearing of some kind of meat: it were not of so great weight, that such strife should be moved for it in the Church. But Saint Paul poured not upon a matter so

slight and of so small importance. He had an eye to the doctrine: he considered that if men should be tied to do this thing or that thing of necessity: it were an excluding of them from the hope of salvation. For if I must needs perform a thing under pain of deadly sin: then if I fail, I am become a transgressor, and there is no shift for me because God is my judge, and I must be fain [*obliged*] to come to account, and there is no means to redeem me. Now it is certain that all of us are subject to the keeping of the law: but yet notwithstanding, there is a remedy for it, which is to run unto our Lord Jesus Christ in all our needs, who was made subject to the law to purchase us freedom, and bear our curse to discharge us of it. Now if any necessity be laid upon us again, to say that the doing of this or that is sin, then cannot our Lord Jesus Christ stand us in anymore stead as I said afore: by reason whereof we must needs be plunged in our own cursedness, without any manner of relief. Therefore it is not without cause that Saint Paul exhorteth the Galatians to hold their own, and not to suffer themselves to be brought into bondage. For by that means he saith that they shall be bereft of inestimable benefit, even so far forth as they shall be fallen quite away from God's grace or favor, and utterly separated from our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom lieth all our welfare and happiness. Now, that we may the better conceive Saint Paul's meaning, and also reap the fruit that is offered us in this text: Let us mark, that by this word *Liberty or freedom*, it is meant that we may walk with full confidence before God, and that he will always be favorable, so that although we be guilty of many offenses, yet we shall be quit of them for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake: and moreover that it is not in man's power to bridle us or to hold us in bondage: but that it ought to suffice us to yield ourselves obedient unto God, howbeit not after a slavish and constrained fashion, but as children yield themselves subject to their father, knowing well that their father will not handle them roughly. Thus ye see what is meant by the word liberty or freedom which Saint Paul useth.

Nevertheless to the end that this shortness be not darksome: I will declare it more at large. So long as we be in doubt whither God do love us or hate us, there will always be trouble and inquietness in our consciences, and we shall be as it were locked up in prison. So then there will be no freedom in our minds, till we know and be thoroughly persuaded that God is at one with us, and that he receiveth us into his favor and grace, though we be not worthy of it. But it is impossible for us to have any certainty of it, except

we have our quittance always before our eyes, which was made us in the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Why so? For as I said afore, we be indebted unto God many ways, yea infinite ways. For we be bound to keep the law, and we break it a hundred times a day, yea even or ever we think of it. Again we offend even in gross faults. But howsoever we deal, we cannot assure ourselves of God's love, unless we be discharged against him of the obligation of everlasting death wherein we stand bound. Now we attain that benefit when we be persuaded by the Gospel, that the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed to wash away all our spots, and that his death is a sufficient sacrifice to appease God's wrath, and to wipe out the remembrance of all our offenses and iniquities. Ye see then that the way to set us free, is to know that God receiveth us to mercy for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and that our faults and sins shall not hinder us to find favor always in his sight, or to have familiar access unto him, as children have unto their fathers. Secondly we must not be wavering to and fro, to make conscience of everything that men devise of their own heads: but walk steadfastly according to god's word, knowing moreover that our consciences are free, and that whether men command or forbid anything, it is nothing to us, I mean as in respect of the spiritual regiment of our souls: For we talk not here of civil policy nor of the common life of men, but of our salvation. So then, all things ought to be free unto us when they be not forbidden us by God's own mouth. Yet is it not enough that we have God's word for our guide without mingling anything at all with it: but (as I have touched already) we must therewithal know, that God accepteth our affection when he seeth us willing to obey him, and that although there be much faultiness, and over many infirmities in us, and that we come halting unto him, and finally that all that ever we do were but trifling toys if he listed [*wished*] to examine them with rigor: yet nevertheless, he taketh all in good worth. And why? For he beareth with us as a father with his children. That therefore is the freedom wherein we must stand, except we will be separated from our Lord Jesus Christ. For (as I have said already) if we believe not assuredly that God loveth us, though we be unworthy of it, and that his loving of us is because our sins are buried by the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ: what will become of us? what shall Jesus Christ boot [*profit*] us? Again if we be in doubt and inquietness, not knowing whether God accept our service or no, and therewithal be bound to the keeping of this or that at men's appointment, the entangling of

ourselves in so many debatings will never suffer us to have any rest. Neither is it without cause that Saint Paul having exhorted the faithful to continue in the freedom that was purchased them so dearly, addeth, *that Jesus Christ shall not profit them at all*, unless they know the thing that he hath purchased for them, *and suffer not themselves to be in any wise bereft of it by men*. Now we see here, that the freedom which Saint Paul speaketh of, is not to give us leave to do what we ourselves think good, as though he laid the reins of the bridle upon our neck: and that will he also protest in place convenient. Then intendeth he none other thing than that we might serve God quietly without grief of mind without constraint, and without any continual tormenting of ourselves with diversity of debatings and doubtful scruples as we see the unbelievers do, namely such as have not their trust wholly settled upon our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore besides that which hath been said already, we have to mark further, that the end of that freedom is, to be able to carry a cheerful and quiet mind before God. For without that, we shall never have the heart to obey him, but we shall always be in trouble, and not be able to call upon him, which is the chief service that he demandeth and alloweth of. We see then that this matter concerneth the chief point of our welfare, if it be well understood. When we speak nowadays of Christian liberty: the Papists say we go about to abolish all the ordinances and traditions of the Church, and that we pass not what cometh of it, so every man may live as he listeth [*chooses*], to eat flesh on all days alike without let, and to despise all other such ordinances. But their saying so, is because they never knew, that it is no obeying of God, unless it be done with an unconstrained will. For let the Papists be thoroughly sifted all the pack of them, yea even the devoutest of them: and it is certain that they chafe upon the bit, when they tire and overlabor themselves most to serve God. For all that ever they do is but unwillingly: and if they could pluck their heads out of the collar, they would full fain [*happily*] do it. Furthermore when they have toiled after that fashion in their fond devotions, they bear themselves in hand that God ought to like well of it. And if a man tell them that they cannot do anything that God should accept, and furthermore that although their works were good, yet they deserve not aught [*anything*] before him: ye shall see them spew out their poison (as they do) and fall to blaspheming of God unless ye believe them that they be able to work wonders by their own merits. Howsoever the case stand, they are never able to know and to

taste what it is to obey God. For why? they understand not what it is to be quiet: namely that it is an unconstrained offering of their doings unto God with a free heart, and an assuring of themselves that he accepteth the same, even because he handleth them gently, and beareth with them as with his children. The Papists know not this, and therefore it is not to be wondered at, though they think it strange that we should strive for that freedom, for they wot [*know*] not what it meaneth. But yet doth not Saint Paul speak it without cause: and by those words we see how precious that liberty is, and that it is not a thing to be despised. For Jesus Christ did not jest in his death and passion when he offered up himself unto God his father: but wrought a work that in excellency and worthiness passeth the creation of heaven and earth. Now if Saint Paul bring in this liberty for an excellent fruit purchased to us by the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ: it must needs follow that it is a high and precious thing. And to the intent we may conceive what the nature and power of it is: we must learn to gather in ourselves unto God when we be spoken to of it. As for example: if we be commanded or enjoined of necessity to do such a thing or such a thing: very well, the doing thereof to the worldward hindereth not our freedom before God: for the things that concern common policy may be bidden or forbidden, because that otherwise they might turn to the hurt of the commonweal [*welfare*], or else such things may be expedient, and then must one of us serve another's turn in common. Therefore let us have a regard of the things that concern the policy, because it behooveth us to be knit and united together, and to have such a onement among us, that every of us serve his neighbor's turn, and none of us be addicted to himself. But when the case concerneth the spiritual liberty: then must every of us draw home into himself, to consider the nature and property thereof. Every of us (say I) must draw home himself as it were before God. For our account is to be made to the heavenly judge, and therefore it behooveth us to enter into ourselves, to say thus: How may I present myself before God's judgment seat? If my life come to be tried by the law: woe worth me. For I am guilty after so many sorts, yea even without number, that if I should suffer a Million of deaths, it were too little for the offenses that I have committed. Nevertheless God will be favorable to me, and take me to mercy for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and when I resort to him, I may come with my head bolt upright, as having my quits eft [*again*] and clear discharge, which was given me in the sacrifice that he

offered up for us, because that therein he hath made full satisfaction for me, and set me at full liberty. Mark this for one point, that I must serve God, and it is good reason that I should dedicate my life unto him. But at which end shall I begin? I cannot bring such perfection as is requisite, no nor the hundredth part of it. Yet for all that, God beareth with me, and ceaseth not to take the things in good worth which are unperfect and weak, yea and sinful too. And why doth he so? Because he admitteth me as one of his children for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. After this manner (say I) must we come before God, if we will conceive and understand the fruit of this liberty or freedom that Saint Paul treateth of. Now whereas he addeth, *that we should not wrap ourselves again in the yoke of bondage*: thereby he showeth, that before we be come to the faith of the Gospel, and do know what benefit is brought us by the death and passion of the son of God, we be all held in strait bonds like prisoners, and have not any freedom or liberty at all. And in very deed, were it not that Jesus Christ maketh intercession, and is a mean between God his father and us: it is certain that our minds should be in continual torment and unquietness. For there is none of us all but he is convicted to be more than guilty, and therefore we should needs stand at a stay as drowned in despair, till we were succored by our Lord Jesus Christ and knew that God will be favorable to us, and thereupon could find peace and assurance to call upon him, as knowing that Jesus Christ will be there aforehand. On the other side, if we know not that God hath so received us into his favor, as he is contented with our willingness to obey him, and with our coming towards him, though it be with infirmity: we see yet another halter that serveth to hang us withal. But yet so is it with all unbelievers Saint Paul therefore doth purposely warn us, that until such time as the Gospel have taught us that God loveth us, and of his own free goodness taketh us as his children, and moreover will not have us to be overtrodden by men's tyranny, and specially that he delivereth us from the bond and rigor of the Law: we are all of us drowned in bondage, and that when Jesus Christ hath once set us free, it behooveth us to maintain well such a benefit. Now let us come to the reason that he addeth, *Verily* (saith he) *I Paul, yea even I do tell you, if you be circumcised, Jesus Christ shall profit you nothing at all*. It is a very sore saying that circumcision should cut men off in such wise, as they should have no part in the salvation that is purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ. But first of all we must mark, that when as Saint Paul

speaketh here of Circumcision, he looketh not at the thing in itself, but unto the end of it, because the deceivers that had perverted the pureness of the Gospel among the Galatians, made them believe that they ought to be circumcised, to the end to keep the Law. Saint Paul standeth upon that point, and saith, that if we do so constrain and bind ourselves before God, or enter into such covenant with him: Jesus Christ shall profit us nothing at all. And this is well worth the noting. For when as we nowadays do say, that is a hellish Tyranny for men to command the keeping of a thing under pain of deadly sin, or to forbid a thing because themselves like not of it: (as the commandment of keeping the Lent, or the shriving of men's sins once a year:) if we strive against such things, the Papists (as I said) cast forth their desperate rage, without considering of the cause that moveth and constraineth us to stand upon that point and ground. For why? they look no further than to the outward thing. But it behooveth us to go further. For when the Papists command a thing under pain of deadly sin: it is a binding of us in such wise as we may not have God's favor but upon condition of doing our duty in that point. And he that shall have so done his duty, he I say shall have as it were bound God unto him, yea truly after the devilish opinion that reigneth in popery, which is that we must earn grace by our own deserts, and also that we must pacify God's wrath and wipe out the remembrance of our sins and offenses by making amends. Whereby it appeareth well, that if we can so discharge ourselves, then is Jesus Christ made unavailable to us, and he shall profit us nothing at all. For why? Jesus Christ cannot be our righteousness, except we seek the forgiveness of our sins and the sacrifice of his death, and therewithal be well assured that God is our father, to the end we may call upon him with quiet consciences, because he hath adopted us in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is true that the deceivers which had beguiled the Galatians, could well have found in their heart that Jesus Christ should have been acknowledged and called the Savior of the world. And they did so mingle the law with the Gospel, as yet notwithstanding Jesus Christ should have had his titles still. But they made a coparcenary [*joint heirship*], that men on their side should deserve, and that by that means God should be appeased. As if they had said, that Jesus Christ supplied men's wants: howbeit after such a sort, as the wretched consciences were always out of quiet. The like dealing is at this day in the Papacy. And the Pope with all the rabble of his Clergy, differ nothing at all from the cozeners [*deceivers, frauds*] against

whom Saint Paul encountereth here, saving that those cozeners [*deceivers, frauds*] did put forth their own inventions and would have had them to prevail under the shadow and authority of Moyses' Law. They then against whom Saint Paul disputeth, said, we must keep still Circumcision, we must needs be circumcised still. And to what purpose? to the end we may discharge ourselves towards God, and be accepted at his hand for doing of our duty. Whereto then shall Jesus Christ serve? He shall serve for to fill up a void room: for he is not utterly unprofitable: but when men have so discharged and cleared themselves, then if there be any want, Jesus Christ shall supply that. After that manner did those Cozeners [*deceivers, frauds*] speak, which were Saint Paul's adversary party. And what says the Pope? He saith that in stead of the Ceremonial law of Moyses, we must keep his ordinances, and the things that are decreed by Councils, or by this man or that man: and that the same bindeth us upon pain of deadly sin, so that if we offend God, we must make him amends for it by our own satisfactions, and not by the things that God hath commanded. For the amends that we must make is not any of the things appointed by God's law: but an addition of an overplus of our own device besides, and so are we discharged to Godward, and God must needs take it a worth. We see then that the Pope holdeth the same devilish foundation which those Cozeners [*deceivers, frauds*] labored to bring in. Howbeit that this is yet worse, that whereas they enforced the law of Moyses which ought to bear some sway: the Pope bringeth in his own inventions, and the forgeries of his own brain. But contrariwise Saint Paul saith that Jesus Christ shall profit us nothing at all: when we will needs indent with God after that fashion. And why? For it is all one to pull Christ in pieces, and to give him but the one half of that which belongeth fully and wholly unto him alone. He is given us to be our righteousness, and he is called our peace, (^{<490214>} Ephesians 2:14) and what betokeneth the word Righteousness? (^{<460130>} 1 Corinthians 1:30) That God accepteth us freely for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Now then if we say that we win God's favor by our own deserts, and that Jesus Christ is but a supplier of wants: is it not a rending of him in pieces, and a dismembering of him as much as in us lieth? But that cannot be done nor suffered. Moreover, our Lord Jesus Christ is given for our satisfaction or amends-making: for there is none other means to set God and us at one, but by knowing that we be quit and clean discharged, and freely quit of the bond of endless death. For if we think to

ransom ourselves by our own deserts, and say that if there be any want in us, Christ shall make it good as a small matter: it is a flat mockery, and that is in no wise to be borne with. We see then that the cause why Saint Paul telleth us that Jesus Christ shall profit us nothing, is that men should not beguile themselves in devising a new Jesus Christ, that should do but half his duty: for we must receive him in such wise, as he is given us of God his father. Now he is given us with condition that we should rid ourselves of all self-trust, and resort wholly unto him, and furthermore that it should suffice us to have him to be our head, and thereupon serve God his father, offering him all that we have, and assuring ourselves that although the same all be nothing, yet notwithstanding howsoever we fare, it faileth not to be taken in good part, because the adoption that is gone afore, and grounded in our Lord Jesus Christ, maketh us and our works to be always accepted of God, us (I say) that are nothing worth, and our works that are but pelting trash, and yet notwithstanding God taketh them in good worth, because he looketh not what we be, or what we do, nor upon the quality or quantity of our works: but only looketh at this, that we come unto him as members of his only son, resting wholly upon the sacrifice whereby he hath redeemed us. And therefore Saint Paul for a larger confirmation addeth, *that he protesteth and witnesseth, that he which is circumcised is a debtor of the performance of the whole law. For* (saith he) *Jesus Christ is unavailable, when folk will needs justify themselves by that mean.* We have a declaration clear and easy enough of the things that Paul hath said: and we must mark it well, because it is hard to persuade men that Jesus Christ is utterly unavailable, when they go about to make him unavailable in any part. For although the Turks and other Heathen folk never knew what Jesus Christ is: yet have they had an opinion fully like the Papists, and a man shall find them to be both of one stamp. For there were never yet any heathen men in the world, which have not been of opinion that they could not satisfy God: and yet they have gloried in their own works, believing that their salvation or welfare proceeded of them.

The Heathen men then did always bear themselves in hand, that they were able to purchase grace, and to deserve somewhat at God's hand. And thereupon they offered Sacrifices, knowing not that the same were a figure of Jesus Christ, but yet howsoever the world went, they thought to make

some satisfaction or amends. Even so also did the Jews, when they had once marred and corrupted the true meaning of the Law. As much also do the Papists at this day, fully resolving that God accepteth their doings, and that he is in a manner bound to them so to do. Let them then bargain with him to allow of their doings, though they do amiss. For they be sure enough that they cannot make satisfaction to the full, nor in all points: but yet on the other side they say, that they can do more than God hath commanded, and that that shall serve for recompense and payment. Now forasmuch as it is so hard a matter to persuade men, that Jesus Christ will not serve their turn by halves: it standeth us on hand to mark this Text so much the better, where Saint Paul saith, that whosoever is circumcised is a debtor of the performance of the whole Law. When Saint Paul speaketh after that sort of Circumcision, we must mark that he talketh not according to God's first instituting of it: for to what purpose did God give it unto Abraham? He gave it him as a seal of the righteousness of faith, and so doth he himself say in ^{<450411>}Romans 4:11. Therefore the Circumcising of Abraham, was not to make him a debtor of the performance of the whole Law: but contrariwise, to assure him of the forgiveness of his sins, and that God accepted him for one of his children, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Ye see then that Circumcision did set our father Abraham at full liberty. Why then did he take it? Because God gave it him as a record and Sacrament of his free goodness. But contrariwise, those against whom Saint Paul reasoneth, took Circumcision as a meritorious work, and thought thereby to deserve at God's hand: they entered into a kind of bargaining with him, as if they should say, very well, I am beholding to you for such a thing, and I have done this or that in recompense of it. Therefore whensoever we fall to indenting after that sort with God: we become debtors of the performance of the whole Law. As if he should say, ye must not bargain in this case: men must not bear themselves in hand that they can partly bind God, so as he should of right be in their debt, and bound of necessity to take them into his Paradise for doing this or that for him. No, no (saith Saint Paul) we must go more substantially to work, we must not fall to bargaining with God, to say that he bindeth us to perform the whole Law, and that we bind him to give us everlasting life. If we come to that point, we be debtors of the whole Law. To be short, Saint Paul striveth here against the devilish error that reigneth in the Popedom [*papal government*]. They term it a parting righteousness, that is to say, a

righteousness that cometh partly of god's grace, and partly of meritorious works. And why so? For it is well known that there was never yet man in this world, that performed God's Law, and that doth experience show too much. Forasmuch then as the Papists (as shameless as they be) do know well enough (as I said) that it is too manifest a thing, that men are not able to keep all the Law: they say, we maintain not that we be fully righteous in all points, but we say that Jesus Christ is partly our righteousness and redeemer, and that we ourselves do partly deserve well by our own works. Fie, fie, saith Saint Paul, whosoever falleth to indenting after that fashion, to say that he will earn aught [*anything*] at God's hand, or make him any recompense, so as he will play the hireling with him, and make him as it were his debtor, as if he would say, I have done this, and therefore thou shalt pay me that: he maketh himself a debtor of the whole, and they be but fond imaginations wherewith men deceive themselves, thinking that God must be fain [*obliged*] to take what they will give him, and to release them all the rest. As for example, if a man be bound to pay a hundred Crowns, and must needs pay and deliver them, and yet notwithstanding imagineth that his creditor ought to content himself if he bring him but four florins, and say unto him here sir, take this upon further reckoning, and afterward bring him half a dozen or half a score more, and (to be short) do with much ado make up the third or fourth part of the principal, and believeth that he is by that means quit and clean discharged: is it not (think you) too lewd an unthankfulness? For behold, his friend opened his purse to help him in his need, and spared not himself to succor him: and yet for all that he will be discharged for bringing I wot [*know*] not what, and for saying, here sir, take this in full payment, whereas all that he bringeth is not a quarter of the whole sum. Men see well that this were but a mockery: what then shall become of such as will needs enter into account with God to deserve at his hand? For God avoweth that whosoever performeth not all the things that are contained in the law, shall be cursed, and Saint Paul hath alleged the same text. Whereto then doth god bind us in his law? To perform it to the full. And who is able to do that? There is no man that is able to fulfill any one point of it with such perfection, but that there shall always be somewhat amiss. And now what do these hypocrites which think themselves to have some worthiness in their own works? They bring this and that, and will needs be righteous in part. But God accepteth no such dealing, for he will not unsay this definitive sentence

which he hath uttered with his own mouth, Cursed be he that fulfilleth not all. (^{<052726>}Deuteronomy 27:26) Thus ye see whereupon Saint Paul standeth here, when he saith that whosoever is circumcised, is a debtor of the whole law. As if he had said, Let not men beguile themselves anymore, for God walketh not two ways at once, he hath told us in his Law, that if we discharge not ourselves fully towards him, we shall be cursed. But there is not any man that dischargeth himself, therefore ye see we be all accursed. Wherefore there is none other remedy but to resort [wholly] to our Lord Jesus Christ. For if we think to make Jesus Christ available in part, and therewithal to hold still somewhat of our own doing: it is a deceit: for we must needs confess that there is nothing but cursedness in us, till our Lord Jesus Christ have released us, and that we had need to seek our wants in him, in such wise, as we may acknowledge all our own works to be nothing worth, no nor any better than filth before God, till he receive us for his children, that we may walk in freedom of conscience, knowing that our sins are forgiven us by virtue of the satisfaction that is purchased for us, so as God imputeth not our sins and misdoings unto us, because he looketh upon us in the person of his only son. Thus ye see how Saint Paul proveth that which he had said afore: that is to wit, that Jesus Christ shall not profit any of all those which are circumcised. For why? If they seek the hope of their salvation in their own works, they must discharge themselves thoroughly and wholly towards God, and not pelt him out with gobbets and morsels as they say, but fulfill the whole Law without missing any one jot of it. And who is able to bring that to pass? For take me the holiest and perfectest man that ever could be found, and he cannot do the hundredth part of that which is commanded him. Ye see then that men are disappointed of the hope of salvation, if they come not void and altogether empty of all their own merits, and give themselves in such wise to our Lord Jesus Christ: as they acknowledge that they cannot be justified by him and by his grace, except they have first renounced all that ever may hold them back in the trust of any other thing. And furthermore, whereas Saint Paul speaketh here of being circumcised: he meaneth the error which the deceivers did set forth, in thinking to bind God to them, and to fulfill the whole Law. As if it should be said nowadays, that all such as keep the Pope's ordinances, do overthrow the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not that a man is damned for not eating of flesh upon Fridays, or in Lent time: but if he forebear the eating

of flesh for superstition's sake, and think to merit by so doing: it is certain that he renounceth our Lord Jesus Christ. For Christ is given us to be our Advocate, so as we be reconciled to God his father by his means, and he hath so set us free, as he will not have us to be oppressed anymore with the traditions of men. But they which keep the Pope's traditions, bearing themselves in hand that it is deadly sin to taste flesh upon any such day, and that in forebearing it they deserve too well at God's hand, and that they be good satisfactions, yea and that Jesus Christ is well honored by doing of this or that: I say if they acknowledge that, they do also believe that the gate of Paradise should be shut against them if it were not opened them by that confession, and they think it to be the mean to make their atonement with God.

Now in making themselves to believe that, it is certain that they make themselves debtors as I said afore, and forsake the grace that was purchased by our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we see how we must profit ourselves by this doctrine: namely first of all we must understand that God hath told us by his Gospel, that [we shall be welcome] as oft as we come to him, conditionally notwithstanding that we be not overcumbered by wavering to and fro like wind-shaken Reeds, but be able to call upon him freely, and with open mouth, as upon our father which hath adopted us to be his children. Secondly we must understand that the mean to be in his favor, is to have him to forgive us our sins. And why? Because Jesus Christ hath made satisfaction for them, and utterly discharged us of them. Thirdly, we must understand that this is not done to the intent to lay the bridle loose in our neck, that we might fall a scoterloping [*wander aimlessly*], and play the wild beasts, so as God should not tame us: but rather to the intent we should repair unto him with a good courage, to obey him freely. For if we were not sure that he taketh us for his children, and beareth with us so gently, that the things which are nothing worth are taken in good worth at his hand, for the fatherly love which he beareth us: surely we shall do nothing but gnash our teeth when we intend to serve God. But if we be persuaded that God casteth such a favor towards us, that although we be full of infirmities, and cannot do anything that may deserve to be well liked at his hand, yet he accepteth us for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake: must it not needs give us courage as though our sail were set up, and we had the wind on our stern. Therefore it is certain that our

hearts must needs run swiftly as a ship that hath the full wind upon her sails, when we know that we are in God's favor, and that he accepteth our works, and intendeth not to bind us to any bondage, but is contented to take us for his children, and accepteth our willingness to obey his. Now then, when we be once sure of that: we may serve our God with the better courage, and because we be grounded upon his grace, it will cheer us in such wise, as we shall offer him the sacrifice of praise and prayer, assuring ourselves that he will hear us, and thereupon yield him thanks for that so great and inestimable benefit, which he communicateth unto us every day.

Now let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying him to vouchsafe to make us so to feel them, as it may humble us truly, and make us yield ourselves wholly to our Lord Jesus Christ, and that when we be once come unto him, we may persist in the faith of his Gospel, without swerving aside in any wise, and that he may so sustain us in our infirmities, as we notwithstanding may be touched with true repentance, to sigh and groan before him, till he have taken us out of this mortal body, wherein we be held in prison under the bondage of sin. And so let us all say, Almighty God our heavenly father, etc.