

## THE THIRTY-FOURTH SERMON

### WHICH IS THE FOURTH UPON THE FIFTH CHAPTER

- 11** My brethren, if I preach till the circumcision, why suffer I yet persecution? [For] then is the stumblingblock of the cross put away.
- 12** I would to God that they which trouble you were cut of.
- 13** For you, my brethren, were called unto liberty: only make not your liberty an occasion to the flesh, but serve ye one another through love.
- 14** For all the law is fulfilled in one word, which is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self. — <sup><480511></sup> GALATIANS 5:11-14

IT IS SEEN THAT men are so given to their own profit in all their doings, that always they bow crookedly and overthwartly without respect of equity and uprightness. For men's covetousness, and the respect which they have either to their profit or to their ease, doth so blind their eyes, as they can discern nothing. Specially when God's word is to be carried abroad, then if a man forget not himself, and shut not his eyes against the things that may turn him away in this world from walking purely before God: surely he shall never hold on his course, but be still starting out, now on the one side and now on the other. By means whereof God's doctrine is oftentimes corrupted, because that they which ought to bear it abroad, are inclined either to hatred or favor, and are afraid of purchasing themselves some displeasure, or of provoking some anger against them. Therefore it is impossible to serve God purely in our state of calling, unless we be fully resolved, yea even with an invincible constancy, not to be grieved if we be driven to suffer for the doctrine which we bear abroad: but to fight lustily under the standard of our Captain Jesus Christ, knowing that we cannot come to the glory of his resurrection, but by suffering aforehand with him after his example. The faithful must be fain [*obliged*] to fashion themselves unto that. But the case of such as should teach and have the office of

preaching God's word, is more particular: for it is certain that the Devil is always practicing to put us out of heart, and he shall find furtherers enough in this world, according as there are full many that cannot abide that God's word should be preached purely and uncorruptly. They will not say with open mouth, that God's name ought to be buried: but yet would they fain [*happily*] devise a fashion of doctrine to their own liking. Now therefore it behooveth us to look simply to that which God commandeth, and to harden ourselves thoroughly to it: according also as we see how Jeremy (<sup><240118></sup>Jeremiah 1:18, 19) was willed to fight, and God promised to give him a forehead of brass, to push against those that should come to assail him. And for that cause doth Saint Paul say now, that if he listed [*wished*] to preach circumcision, and to make such a minglemangle as the deceivers went about to do: he could rid his hands of all vexation, and make every man to clap their hands at him, or at leastwise he could bring to pass that no man should persecute him and trouble him. For the Jews would easily have granted that Jesus Christ should have been preached, so they might have held still the state of Eldership, and the Ceremonies have been used still, and the Gentiles have been as little untimely born things to come in array in their train behind them. Ye see then what the Jews' desire was. Saint Paul could have pleased them well in so doing, but that he minded to serve God faithfully and substantially. But on the contrary part Saint Paul showeth, that they which labored to overthrow the doctrine that he had preached, sought more the favor and friendship of men, than to discharge their duty. Now then we see what is meant by this sentence where he saith, *My brethren, if I preached Circumcision still*, that is to say, if I would agree to make a minglemangle, that Jesus Christ might be disguised, and every man have what he would ask: no man would be anymore offended with me, I should be welcome everywhere, and I should have credit by it. But now, is it likely that I will be at defiance with all the world, of purpose to be tormented? Ye see then at a word, that I seek not mine own profit. For what moveth these goodly doctors to make such a minglemangle as ye see, but that they would fain [*willingly*] pleasure every man, and are loath that any man should trouble them in any wise? Seeing that their feeling is for ease and commodity: you ought of good right to suspect them. Now then we see here, on the one side the thing that I touched not long since: namely that all such as are called of God to the preaching of his word, ought to be fully determined

upon this, that although the whole world should step up against them, yet they would not bow, but abide all assaults, being well assured that God will maintain them at their need, and always give them victory, so they follow their vocation in pure singleness. For we cannot do God any greater wrong and outrage, than to submit ourselves to men's likings, by turning away from his word, either to the right hand or to the left. Neither is it for us to leave any piece of our duty undone, but we must steadfastly maintain the truth of God which is unchangeable, and ought not in any wise to be altered, though men be never so variable and unconstant. And this is to be marked well, because that although men have some good willingness that God should be known, and that his truth should be preached accordingly: yet the most part will commonly bow, when they see the slanders that are raised of them, and hear men's grudgings and repinings against them, specially when sometimes there shall be so great broils, that all is like to go to wreck. For if we maintain God's quarrel as we ought to do, by and by the slanderers will give it out that we be willful. Like as at this day the Papists do charge us, first of all with great rashness, that we, (who be but a handful in comparison of themselves which are so huge a multitude, yea and men of so great experience, which have seen so much, and are had in so great estimation and reputation,) will take upon us to control all the states of the world: and secondly that we be too precise, yea and to malapert, in that we will have all men's heads under our girdle, and do seek nothing else but to overmaster all men, and to make every man to stoop to our lure. Lo how we be wrongfully slandered. Nevertheless we must rather swallow up this slander, than forebear the doing of any piece of our duty. For why? in this behalf it is not for us to make any composition as it were between man and man. For if two parties be at variance for some sum of Money, or for some Land, an umpire may so qualify the matter on either side, as peace shall soon be made betwixt them. But if we grant God's enemies their own asking, specially to the prejudice of him that will have his own right thoroughly maintained (as good reason is that it should be:) what a thing is that? So much the more then behooveth it us to mark well this lesson, where Saint Paul telleth us, that to serve God we must not shun, neither trouble, nor vexation, nor repinings, nor reproaches, nor anything else, insomuch that if it stand upon the hazarding of our life, we must go through with it. And though there be great frailty in us: yet let us consider that God calleth us unto

him, and that he is able to remedy all our weakness, and to give us sufficient strength to hold out to the uttermost. Howsoever the case stand, seeing he employeth us in his service, (us I say which are nothing of ourselves:) we must not dishonor him so much, as to make him subject to men's lusts. Thus ye see what we have to consider in the first place. Furthermore we be warned therewithal, to suspect all such as seek their own advantage and profit, and all such as disguise themselves, rowing between two streams, and falsifying God's pure truth at every turn, to please men withal. For as I have told you already, we must prepare ourselves to many battles, if we mind to serve God simply. And we must call to mind this sentence where Saint Paul said, (<480110> Galatians 1:10) that if his mind were to please men, he must of necessity forsake the service of our Lord Jesus Christ his master. For as I have told you before, the devil will not cease to make war upon us on all sides: and again, men are naturally disposed thereunto: every man coveteth to be soothed and upheld, and to have all his vices cloaked. To be short, there is none but he desireth to be foaded [*encouraged*] and maintained in his recklessness. And therefore if we will be friends with men to frame ourselves unto their wills and desires: Jesus Christ can have no more mastership over us, and we shall not only become unprofitable for him, but also utter perverters of all. Now therefore when we see that these which pretend great zealousness of Christian religion, do seek their own profit: let us hardily conclude, that they deserve not to have any authority. Of which sort are they which nowadays keep a barking to maintain popish abuses, and cease not to slander the doctrine of the Gospel, but labor to bring it in discredit with the blind and ignorant, and yet notwithstanding what is it that the most part of them do seek? Some to maintain themselves in their estate, with their red hats, horned capes, and crosses: Others run after them like hounds in a chase, and these poor storvelings [*def: one who is emaciated for lack of nutriment*] ply them apace that they may have their wages. Besides this, all that ever is done of these pelting hypocrites, and of all the whole stinging and stinking rabble of shavelings [*def: contemptuous epithet for a tonsured ecclesiastic, i. e. monk*], (what pretense soever they make) tendeth to none other end, but to have their dishes always full, so that all their fighting is but for their belly. Also there are a great number of Neuters, which are contented to have the Gospel preached by halves, but to go to it with so great rigor and severity, O (say they) it is no reason at

all, for the world cannot away with it. And why should not men pass much for Ceremonies (say they?) Although they sprung of superstitions and abuses, yet should we not go to work so roughly: for that were too importunate dealing. All they then which cannot abide to have the filthy dregs and corruptions of Popery cut off to the quick, do certainly aim at none other mark, than to eschew persecution, and to shrink away from it. And would God that examples of it were not too rife. But nowadays ye shall see an infinite number of such as would be ashamed to withstand the Gospel in all respects, consent well enough with us to say, Indeed it is true, but yet many things had need to be borne withal, and we had need to go to it with gentleness and modesty. And what moveth them to this? What foundation have they? See I pray you what they allege. O (say they) we see fires kindled everywhere: and what a thing were it to move yet further troubles that should make them greater? It should seem that we be bent of set purpose to provoke those that are already enemies to the Gospel, and have the sword in their hand, and are able to rend all up by the root: were it not better to bear with things awhile, till God had given some rest to his Church? It is certain therefore that such folk as desire to make truce with those that fight openly against our Lord Jesus Christ, are full of treason. And so see ye the second warning that is to be marked upon this text. Furthermore whereas Saint Paul saith, *that the stumblingblock of the Cross shall be done away*, he meaneth that the world shall no more be so provoked to refuse the doctrine of the Gospel: for when we preach Jesus Christ crucified simply without any mixture, that doth he purposely name the preaching of the Cross. Now the world would always fain [*willingly*] have solemnities, and first of all we see that many men's ears itch, and they desire nothing but that men should flourish in Rhetoric and painted speech, and such other like things. Again we see that many are ashamed of the simplicity of the Gospel, because that if the great and small should be coupled together, it might seem that it tendeth to the pulling down of all highness. And should men be spoiled and robbed after that manner of all their glory [think they?] Many therefore are ashamed of that. Now for this cause Saint Paul saith, Go to, it is the preaching of a Gibet or Gallows. It is true: for to the intent to open unto us the Kingdom of heaven, the son of God was fain [*pleased*] to suffer our curse, and to endure that death which is so slanderous before men, yea and to be cursed of God's own mouth according to the saying of the Law, Cursed is he that

hangeth on tree. (<sup><052123></sup>Deuteronomy 21:23) Then was our Lord Jesus Christ fain [*pleased*] to come to that point, that he might be our borrow. To be short, he was as good as overwhelmed. And we see how the Prophet Esay saith (<sup><235302></sup>Isaiah 53:2) of him, that he was disfigured like a poor Lazerman [*diseased person, leper*], so as men vouchsafed not to look upon him, or to count him in the number of men. Also we see how the twenty-second Psalm saith, (<sup><192207></sup>Psalm 22:7; <sup><422329></sup>Luke 23:29) I am a worm and not a man, I am a mockingstock even to the rascaldest sort: insomuch that the thief did scorn him and scoff at him. Well then, at the first sight this doctrine seemeth unworthy to be received. But we must bethink us what Saint Paul saith (<sup><460121></sup>1 Corinthians 1:21) in another text: that is to wit, that the world knew not God in true wisdom, and therefore he was fain [*pleased*] to use another fashion of teaching which is by foolishness. For were we thoroughly wise, as we would be taken to be: we have as good an instruction as can be, in beholding the skies and the earth. We see there a mirror wherein god showeth us his infinite goodness, power, righteousness, mercy, and wisdom. And so we see there the great treasures of God's wisdom, which ought to ravish our wits to wonder at it. But who fareth the better by it? Nay contrariwise we see men gobble up God's benefits and fill their paunches with them, without any thinking upon him at all, and not only that, but also to kick against him that hath pampered them. And when they ween [*think*] to do God service, they pluck away the honor that belongeth to him, and set up Idols after their own fancy. Seeing then that the world hath not known God in true wisdom, and by the order of nature: God was fain [*pleased*] to try another way, as he did. For if we judge after our natural wit, it is a kind of stark folly to say, that the son of God, the head of the Angels, the Lord of glory, the wellspring of life, the person to whom all majesty belongeth, was not only made a mortal man, and clothed with our state: but also utterly abased, (as Saint Paul saith in <sup><500207></sup>Philippians 2:7) yea and became subject to our curse, and bear the name of sin, which is more. When a man speaketh to us in such phrase of speech, it must needs seem strange to us as it is indeed. But we must submit ourselves with all lowliness, and consider that forasmuch as we have not profited by the things that god hath shown us from the beginning both in heaven and earth, we must be fain [*obliged*] to come to this other school. Thus much concerning this strain where Saint Paul saith, *then is the stumblingblock of*

*the Cross put away.* But to be short, we must gather upon this Text, that if there be any absurdity in the Gospel according to our understanding, the same must not make it out of taste with us, but we must consider that God intendeth to try our obedience, by sending us to the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that there we see as it were the gulf of hell, seeing that the son of God is there to bear our condemnation, and is become our surety there to pay all our debts. Again let us consider further, that from death there was a goodly passage unto glory, which appeared in his resurrection. For the Son of God having suffered through infirmity, (that is to say, according to the ordinance of God his father, and according to his own good will also, whereby he consented to submit himself to such bondage) and having suffered in such wise that he overcame death by the power of his holy spirit: he obtained such a victory, as all knees must now bow before him, and he hath a name above all names, and men must know that all the Majesty of God appeared and shone forth in his person. Thus ye see that we need not to be ashamed of the Gospel. And above all things let us hold fast that which Saint Paul in <sup><450116></sup>Romans 1:16 calleth the power of God to the salvation of all believers. Then as for the worldlings and such as are swollen with pride and overweening [*high opinion*] like Toads, let them despise the Gospel as much as they list [*wish*], and let them perish in their own cursedness: and in the meanwhile let us with all humbleness of faith embrace the son of God, who offereth himself to us of purpose, to lift us up to the glory of the kingdom of heaven. But here is yet more: namely that Saint Paul matcheth *Stumbling*, and the preaching of the Gospel together as things inseparable. It is true that we must eschew all stumblingblocks as much as is possible: for woe be to him by whom stumblingblocks come. (<sup><401807></sup>Matthew 18:7) But yet must Jesus Christ reign, and have his full scope, though all the whole world should stumble at him. The word *Stumblingblock*, importeth a stop, hindrance, or let, as if there were a rough and stony way that had some thorns and bushes, or some other cumbrances in it, the same were a means to make men stumble. Now it were to be wished that Jesus Christ might go on freely, and that all the world would receive him, and that nothing might stop the preaching of the Gospel from the one end of the world to the other. I say we ought to wish it as much as in us is. Howbeit let us learn that God intendeth to try the obedientness of our faith, by giving Satan the bridle who casteth many stumblingblocks and cumbrances in our ways. To be short, our Lord Jesus

Christ is not without cause called a stone to stumble at, and a stop for all men to dash against, (<230814> Isaiah 8:14) and by that means to break their necks. And in the end (as it is said in Saint Luke) (<420234> Luke 2:34) they must be crushed by that stone, for it is too hard for their stubbornness. And this is very much for our behalf. For we see many men so nice, that if men agree not to the Gospel out of hand, they think themselves quit and clean discharged and set free before God, from maintaining the quarrel or case any longer. If all Kings and Princes had caused it to be proclaimed by the sound of a trumpet, that there should be no more fighting against God's truth: every man would make countenance to be of the same mind. But nowadays ye shall see great cruelty, tyranny, spitefulness, menacing, and such other like things. Again ye shall see that the most part of the enemies are as greedy wolves that desire to devour all, and seek to shed innocent blood, to the intent that they may have their goods. Othersome have a frantic zeal, insomuch that they would fain [*happily*] have the name of God clean wiped out, and the doctrine of the Gospel utterly quenched. When men see this: O (say they) I will not meddle with it. What? Shall I bring all the world in my top? Is it not manifest that they which have tasted this doctrine are but a handful of men, and that all others are enemies to them, or else they do reject them or laugh them to scorn, or at leastwise bear a poisoned and malicious heart against them? Ye see then, that very few are so strong, as to bear out the stumblingblocks of the Gospel, when they see as it were logs cast in their way, and that Jesus Christ is hindered by Satan, and by the practices of his underlings. O (say they) we must needs back again. Yea and what a number are to be seen at this day, which will say that this doctrine bringeth store of stumblingblocks? Again, see I pray you what diversity of opinions it hath (say they). Behold such a one speaketh thus, and such a one thus. Furthermore when the wicked sort which set their tongues to sail like harlots in a Brothel house, and cast out blasphemies against God and his word, find any cloak either to despise or to reject the Gospel: by and by many wretched folk have their tongues filed to say, Alas, we see that this doctrine bringeth great stumblingblocks with it. Yea and Jesus Christ should not be that which the holy Scripture reporteth him to be, if the Gospel caused not many stumblings. But yet must we not be dismayed at them: we must rather overcome them. Thus ye see what we have to gather upon this strain, where Saint Paul saith that we shall never hold out in the

faith of the Gospel, except we be armed with such constancy, as not to turn out of the way, let Satan do what he can. Verily (as I said afore) we must (as much as we can) eschew all stumblingblocks, and go on forward, and put them aside. We have seen heretofore how every of us ought to behave himself, insomuch that the Prophet Esay speaking of the preaching of the Gospel, saith (<234003> Isaiah 40:3, 4) that the way must be made level, and that the thing which was rough and crooked before, must now be made smooth and straight. Well then, we must do what we can that it may be so. Howbeit forasmuch as God will have us to be humbled, and that there must needs be stumblingblocks and cumbrances, and it cannot be but that Jesus Christ must reign in the midst of his enemies: let us go forward and defy all Satan's practices, and not mislike of the Gospel for it, though we see never so many stumblings and stumblingblocks abroad in the world. Now Saint Paul having said so, addeth, *I would to God that all they which trouble you were cut off*. It may seem at the first blush, that Saint Paul is moved here with too much choler, when he wisheth that all those which sow their darnel [*tares*] and errors abroad to pervert God's pure doctrine should be dispatched, that the devil might possess them, and that they might never find mercy at God's hand. For so doth the word *Cut off* betoken. But we must mark, that the zeal which we ought to have of God's glory, forgetteth all worldly respects, when they be put into the balance together. Howbeit before we go any further, let us first note that in this word *Cut off*, Saint Paul hath spoken by a similitude. For those rascals that had corrupted and falsified the doctrine of the Gospel strove for Circumcision. Well then (saith he) pare off and cut off as much as ye list [*wish*], and yet all your seeking is but to have other men busied about such pelting trifles as well as yourselves. But as for me, I would that all such deceivers were quit and clean cut off, and that God would sink them or root them out, and so cast them off and damn them, as they might not have any hope of salvation. Now let us come to that which I have touched. I told you shortly, that when men make war against God, we must become such deadly enemies unto them, as we must utterly put out of mind all kindred and friendship, and all that else is: for otherwise we do not our duty in any wise unto our God, who, seeing he beareth the name of our father, and doth us the honor to take us for his children, ought at the least to have his glory esteemed of us above all things. But we must pass on yet

further. For what is the Majesty of God? Again, how precious ought this truth to be unto us?

Moreover, seeing that he doth so join his glory with our welfare, as we cannot procure the one without the other: yea and that we can neither profit him nor disprofit him, though we were never so zealous to maintain his quarrel, for he hath no need of us, neither needeth he to borrow our helping hand, but yet he maketh us his deputies or agents, to none other end but that every of us should seek his own profit, howbeit not of this world, nor in these corruptible things, but in the everlasting salvation of our souls: seeing (I say) that God employeth us after such sort, and we notwithstanding be still retchless and cold: is this treachery of ours excusable? Nay we must come to that which is said in <sup><196909></sup> Psalm 69:9, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up, and the railings of them that railed on thee, I have taken to myself. Certain, this was fully accomplished in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, as in the head of the Church. And Saint Paul showeth that we must be fashioned like unto him as our pattern, so that whensoever we see God's honor defaced by men, every of us must set himself manfully against it. Thus ye see briefly that the rule which we must gather here, is that we must prefer God's honor before all things, yea even before a whole million of lives if we had them. Then is it not for us to spare men, when they strain themselves to the uttermost of their power to trample God's name under foot, to turmoil the doctrine of salvation, to bring to pass that we might no more know what religion to stick unto, and to drive away all peace utterly out of the Church. Therefore if we see men apply their endeavors that way, is it not reason that we should be their adversaries? Truly if it be possible, we must procure friendship and agreement with all men, yea on our own behalf, and so far forth as lieth in us, saith Saint Paul to the Romans. (<sup><451218></sup> Romans 12:18) But when we see these naughtipacks [*wicked, dissolute men*] advance themselves against God, and thrust forth their horns to doff at him: it is good reason that every of us should step forward, and show indeed that we be no more our own men, but that forasmuch as our Lord Jesus Christ hath bought and paid for us so dearly, he ought of right to be Lord both of our life, and of our death. Ye see then why Saint Paul maketh here so sharp a wish, namely that they which had troubled the Galatians might be utterly alienated from God, and drowned in the gulf of

damnation. Now if it be objected that this wish is against the rule of charity: the answer is easy enough. For we be bound to love our enemies, yea though they persecute and vex us: and although they seek nothing but our destruction, yet must we procure their welfare and salvation to the uttermost of our power, and we must have pity and compassion of them to see them so given over unto Satan. Thus ye see what charity importeth. But yet for all this, God must be above all, as I have declared already. Therefore Charity is between man and man. When any man shall have done me wrong, I must forget it. Though he bear me malice, yet must I procure his welfare. But when it cometh to the maintaining of God's quarrel, there men must be esteemed less than nothing as I have said already. Yet notwithstanding we do clean contrary. For what else is the common practice, than to stoop and strike sail when God is misdealt with? And yet in the meanwhile every man will follow his own right to the uttermost. As for example: There is a man that hath committed a very heinous crime, he deserveth to be punished: and if he be not corrected there is an evil gap opened to bring in corruption. There is some man of authority, and (to go no further) they that ought to show the way of salvation, they that preach the word of God, even they I say are seen to live wickedly, they be ribauds [*crude, offensive*] and lewd folk that serve to no purpose but to make confusion and debate. And yet for all this, they must not be cut off, they must not be handled roughly will some say. A drunkard, a whoremonger, a varlet [*person of low and mean disposition*] shall be maintained. To be short, there shall be nothing but contempt of God, and the Gospel shall be unregarded everywhere, and yet must all of it be suffered under color that there must some clemency be used: yea marie [*def. expression of surprise*], and in the meanwhile God's honor must be left at random. But if ye do never so little touch these men that are so gentle, or at leastwise pretend to be so: by and by they fall out into deadly defiance, saying: why not? such a man hath done me such a wrong. They fight it out to the uttermost. Well then, they endure all things that can be at the hand of Satan's underlings, yea even to be buffeted and boxed about the ears by them with shame enough, as Saint Paul saith in the <sup><471120></sup>2 Corinthians 11:20 and yet in the meanwhile they cannot abide that God should be avenged of the dishonor that is done unto him. Now then we see that Saint Paul's zeal was well ruled, and if any man had done him wrong in his own person, we know he would have been patient in that behalf.

But now that he seeth God's Gospel coming to such an afterdeal [*disadvantage*]: he cannot abide that: but setteth himself against it, wishing that such men were damned. Yea verily: for he had no regard of himself, but (as I said afore) preferred God's honor before all the whole world. Thus ye see how we may be safe from straying: namely if we look simply unto God, and give not heed to our own affections, but be governed by the spirit of uprightness and discretion, so as God make us to discern how far forth we must fight, and how far forth we must resist. Then if we once have such discretion, and be governed by the holy Ghost, we may with Saint Paul, with David, and with the residue of the holy Prophets defy men, when they go about to turn us away from the pureness of the known doctrine: yea and we might curse the very Angels if need were, according as Saint Paul hath said heretofore, (<sup><480108></sup> Galatians 1:8) where he defied the Angels of heaven, if they should set themselves against the doctrine of the Gospel that he had preached. Not that the Angels do ever set themselves against it: but that if it were possible for them to do so. As if he should say, put the case that an Angel should go about to overthrow your faith: yet should ye rather send him to hell, and hold him for a fiend and curse him, than be turned aside from the right way by him. Ye see then that we must in all respects rest wholly upon God: and moreover let us be afraid of that saying, as though we heard it thunder from heaven against all such as trouble the Church. For though it be but Paul that hath spoken it, yet did the holy Ghost guide and govern his tongue. Forasmuch then as he was the instrument of God to utter the said sentence: it is as much as if unrepealable judgment were already given against all such as go about to break the union of faith, and the agreement of brotherhood that ought to be among all God's children, and to sow errors and heresies to falsify the pure truth. Furthermore God showeth how dearly he loveth us, (as hath been declared this morning) wherein he giveth us a warrant of the fatherly care which he hath of our salvation, in that he taketh such vengeance on all such as would disappoint the same. And finally he saith, *Brethren, ye be called to freedom: only make it not an occasion of fleshliness, but serve ye one another in love, because it is the true fulfilling of the Law*, and the very squire also whereby we must rule all our works. Here Saint Paul showeth, first that his striving is not to bring to pass that men might live at their own ease, and everybody sport as they list [*wish*] themselves: but that we might be free before God. And that is well worth the marking. For as soon

as this word freedom or liberty is spoken of, every of us is so inclined to his fleshly lusts, that by and by we think with ourselves, very well, then may I do what I list [*wish*], I am no more restrained, I need not anymore to think myself so much bound, nor to make so great scruple of conscience as I have done. Thus ye see how that under the pretense of liberty, every of us makes himself thrall to his own affections. For it is a policy of the Devils, to deceive and beguile us in the things that seem to be good, yea and to turn them to the clean contrary. For (as I have declared heretofore) it is certain that all such as covet to live after their own liking, become wretched bondslaves, and are held in straighter bondage than such as are set in the stocks or manacles. And why? Let us consider a little what tyranny there is in our lusts and passions. If a man follow his own lusts, surely he must needs shake off all shame, and forget himself, and become a very beast. Lo here the goodly liberty that all men seek commonly by nature. But I have told you that the liberty whereunto Saint Paul exhorteth us, is another manner of thing. It is not that we should run as rovers [*randomly, without definite aim*], and have no bridle to hold us in awe: but that we should consider what God requireth of us, and be ruled by his holy word, and none of us become so lordly as to say, this or that must be done. For when men take upon them to rule us by laws and ordinances of their own making, it is certain that they do but (as ye would say) make infinite cords to strangle poor souls withal. Saint Paul then showeth that the liberty which he preached, and for the maintenance whereof he stood so stoutly against the deceivers, is not that men should overshoot themselves and take leave to do what they list [*wish*], but that they might freely serve god, and be no more racked and tormented with unquietness, as we see poor ignorant souls to be, who being held fast in superstition, are evermore in doubt and grudge of conscience, making questions of everything, and never being resolved of any one point. Of which sort also are the Papists, who have an infinite number of doubts among them. And no marvel at all: for they know not to what master they must yield their account. Every of them talks according to the disposition of his own brain: [one says] to my seeming such a thing would be good: [another says] Lo this my devotion telleth me: [and the third says] it were good yet that this or that were done more. Now when they be once entered into such a maze, at length they fall to doubting whether they may comb their heads or no, and make a scrupulousness with which finger they should feed themselves,

and of everything else. To be short, there is neither end nor measure of their fondness. When Saint Paul intendeth to show what it is to be wrapped in men's traditions: he saith (<sup>510221</sup> Colossians 2:21) that when they have once forbidden to eat flesh, anon [*at another time*] after they forbid to taste it: and when they have forbidden to taste it, so one after they forbid to touch it. Ye see then that the way for us to maintain the liberty that is purchased for us by the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, is first to know in what wise God will be served and honored, to the end we be not tossed with so many scruples of conscience for want of discerning what is good or evil, but determine fully and certainly with ourselves, to follow God's word, assuring ourselves also, that in so doing we cannot do amiss. And secondly to serve one another's turn, that none of us be so addicted to his own self as to overmate [*overpower, subdue*] his fellows, but be so gentle and kindhearted as every of us have an eye wherein he may advantage or succor his neighbor: abstaining from all offense giving, so as it be not said, I care not for such a one or for such a one, I pass not whether he sink or swim: but that (forasmuch as our Lord Jesus Christ hath linked us together to be members of his Church) we hold fast the said doctrine, that is to wit, first that God be honored and served among us as he commandeth, and secondly that we agree in such wise together, as we labor through meekness to match ourselves one with another, and to serve one another's turn, notwithstanding that we be free still to Godward as in respect of our consciences.

And now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God with acknowledgment of our sins, praying him to make us so to feel them, as it may humble us before him, and draw us to true repentance, and we go forward therein more and more, groaning continually under the burden of our sin, till we be quite cleansed and utterly ridded of it: And that it may please the same good God to bear with us, and not to handle us so rigorously as he could do, but to guide us in such wise by his holy spirit, as he may both forgive and forget our sins, till we be fully cleansed from them. That it may please him to grant this grace, not only to us, but also to all people and Nations of the earth, etc.