

# THE THIRTY-EIGHTH SERMON

## WHICH IS THE FIRST UPON THE SIXTH CHAPTER

- 1 Brethren, if any man be overtaken with a fault, you that are spiritual help too amend him with the spirit of meekness: and consider thy self, least thou also be tempted.
- 2 Bear ye one anothers burthen, and so fulfill the Law of Christ.  
— <sup><480601></sup>GALATIANS 6:1-2

I HAVE DECLARED heretofore that there is not a more deadly plague than Ambition, when every man is given to himself and will needs exalt himself to the contempt of his neighbors: for then is nother [*neither*] indifference nor measure kept. Here is now another vice very near of kin to the other: namely when we snatch at such as have done amiss, to the intent to advance ourselves in comparison of them, which we see to be too common a vice in the world. For to our seeming, other men's virtues are a hindrance to us, that we cannot be in such reputation as we fain [*happily*] would. This is the cause that every of us prieth and peereth [*look narrowly*] at his fellow, to the intent to disgrace him in such wise as he alone may not bear away the bell, and by that means have chief praise and commendation. And although that that be not: yet will it often come to pass, that we shall be overrigorous under pretense of zeal. For this cause Saint Paul doth here exhort the faithful, to do their endeavor to reform a man with all gentleness, when he hath done amiss. And he doth purposely set forth man's state before us here. For it ought to move us to compassion, when we consider the common frailty that is in us all, as he will touch the same point more at large hereafter. Nevertheless his putting of us in mind of our infirmity by nature, is to the end that none of us should climb too high. And furthermore he addeth the word *overtaken*, meaning thereby that it always deserveth gentleness at our hands when we see a man surprised by the wiliness of Satan. For Saint Paul spake not here of such as have rooted malice in their heart, which are utter despisers of God, which are altogether heathenish, and which are so full of poison throughout, that they cannot

allege for themselves that they fall by oversight: for why, they be made beasts, rushing willfully against God, according as we shall see many that manifestly despise all order, and would have all the world put to confusion. Such manner of men are not comprised in the number of those whom Saint Paul speaketh of here. But although a man fear God and be willing to give himself to his service: yet notwithstanding Satan hath his snares ready laid, and catcheth us oftentimes ere we think of it. And so you see how we be overtaken or surprised. Now Saint Paul telleth us, that yet in such faults we must be pitiful still, and bear with such a man through the spirit of meekness. Howbeit we must mark well all the words that are set down here: and thereby we shall gather the meaning of the Apostle. For in very deed here is nothing superfluous, but every word hath his weight. For in saying that we must endeavor to amend him again that is fallen: he showeth that the gentleness which many men use in flattering such as have done amiss, favoereth nothing at all of Christianity. Therefore men's vices must be rebuked, and we must labor to bring back the party into the right way, which is strayed out of it. For if a man uphold him in his naughtiness, and foad [*encourage*] him in it: he betrayeth him, because he rocketh him asleep, and by that means sinketh him the deeper in destruction. Ye see then that the means which Saint Paul hath appointed, is that if a man have done amiss, he should be amended, howbeit that the same must be done with the spirit of gentleness and meekness. He could well enough have used the word *Meekness* without the word *Spirit*: but he hath joined them together, to do us to wit that we must have a hearty desire to procure the welfare and salvation of such as have need to be warned and exhorted when they have committed a fault: and therewithal he meant also to express that the same proceedeth of God. For like as he is the fountain of all goodness: so also doth he give his children some meekness, to the intent they should follow him and frame themselves after his example. We know that the manner of the holy Scripture (<sup><231102></sup> Isaiah 11:2) is to term the gifts of the holy Ghost, the spirit of truth, the spirit of the fear of God, the spirit of wisdom, and such other like, because the fullness of all goodness is in him. Ye see then that the sum of that which Saint Paul teacheth here, is that we must not only love virtue and like well of such as walk in all perfection, and in whom we can find no blame: but overmore we must be gentle in bearing with the faults of such as are not yet so well confirmed in the fear of God as were

requisite, to the end we may bring them back again into the right way, that are turned aside or thrust out of it. For if there should be no mildness nor gentleness in us: as soon as a man had committed any fault, we should as it were plunge him in despair, and this is seen too much, for that cause therefore Saint Paul telleth us that the meekness or mildness of God's children must try itself by relieving such as are fallen through weakness, yea and that in such sort as it may be known that their salvation is procured. Now I have told you that there are two extremities or two vices whereof we must beware. The one is, that we wink when any of our friends have offended God, insomuch that even when he hath given some cause of stumbling, we let it slip, because we be loath to purchase his displeasure by rebuking him. And nowadays ye see that the common way of maintaining friendship in the world, is to give leave and license of all misdoing, through Devilish dissimulation. For no man can abide to have his galled back rubbed, nother [*neither*] do any men take warnings in good worth, saving they whom God hath touched, and to whom he hath given the spirit of obedience to yield themselves teachable. Therefore such manner of men as these, will say with David, (<191405> Psalm 14:5) that they had lever [*rather*] to be earnestly rebuked, yea and with all sharpness, than to have the ointments of the flatterers which serve but to rock men asleep in their vices. Nevertheless ye shall commonly see that all men covet to be borne withal, and to have no word spoken to them whatsoever they do, nor to have their heads troubled with their vices and misdoings. Every man verifieth this, insomuch that God is forgotten, and (as the Prophet Esay saith) (<235916> Isaiah 59:16) there is no defender anywhere that maintaineth the truth, for there is as great confusion and disorder as may be, and yet men do let all slip. True it is that if wrong be done to any man, he will not stick to say that such licentiousness ought to be redressed: but he saith not so for any zeal he hath to maintain the honor of God, it is but only for his own peculiar advantage, and for the regard that he hath to himself. Thus ye see that God hath not any proctors or Advocates to plead his case, but every man is for himself. Therefore when we see any man do amiss, let us learn that it is no love nor charity to cloak his evil doings, so as we should dissemble them and make no countenance at all of them: but that if we have a care of him that is so fallen, we must turn him away. If a man be in the mire, we will reach him our hand to help him out: and if we pass by him and will not seem to see him, shall he not

say it is too shameful an unkindness? Even so is it when we suffer a man to fall asleep in his sins: for by that means he is sunk down to the bottom of perdition. Then is it too great a traitorousness, if we do wittingly suffer a man to undo himself utterly: and therewithal we show also that there is no zeal of God in us. For if he be our father, ought it not at leastwise to grieve us and make us sorry, when we see wrong and injury offered unto him?

So then, if the souls which our Lord Jesus Christ hath bought so dearly be precious unto us, or if we set so much by God's honor as it deserveth: it is certain that we will not so bear with men's faults, but that we will endeavor to amend them. Mark that for one point. But there is also a contrary vice: namely overgreat rigorousness. For this is a property of the Hypocrites, that if they spy a mote in their neighbor's eye, they cry out alarm upon him, and they must needs follow him with hew and cry, whereas in the meanwhile a great beam in their own eyes is nothing, as our Lord Jesus speaketh (<sup><230704></sup>Matthew 7:4) of them. Forasmuch therefore as there are many that widen their consciences to swallow up a whole Ox [in their own cases], and in the mean season can strain at a gnat when it toucheth other men: therefore we must beware that we be not too rough and sharp in rebuking of our brother. Besides this, there are also that have an unadvised zeal, so as they be too sour and bitter, and they are of opinion that they discharge not themselves, except they proclaim men's faults aloud, as it were by the sound of a trumpet. And how many warnings are made nowadays with an upright carefulness? If a man see any of his neighbors fall to naughtiness, he ought (if he can have access and entrance to him) to tell him his fault: but we will none of that. For (as I said) every man underprieth other, and lies in wait for him like a spy, to see if he can find anything amiss in him, and then useth he sternness to the uttermost. True it is that such as are handled overroughly after that fashion, cannot complain of it. For whereof cometh the naughtiness that is too rife nowadays among men, that no man is warned secretly to the end he might be brought back unto God, but that the vices which were done in covert are blazed abroad, yea even to the defaming of the party? It is for that every of us shutteth the gate, because our ears are too itching, and we cannot abide to be told the truth, but will needs keep the possession of all naughtiness, as though God were deposed from his authority, and had no

prerogative of judgment over us. Forasmuch then as every man would exempt himself from correction: therefore all are worthy to be handled hardly after that fashion, and to be dealt with like enemies, and not like brethren. For there can be no brotherhood among us, unless correction take place, so as every man be subject to it, yea even willingly. And because we will not in any wise be rebuked, therefore we deserve well to be handled with such excessive rigor. For this cause Saint Paul setteth down the mean, which is that we must have a care one of another, so that if any man stumble, he may be helped up again. And how? By good warnings. For that is the remedy which God hath stablished for us by his word. Howbeit that in the meanwhile we must not be so eager in rebuking other men's faults, as to forget to put oil to our vinegar, that is to say, to use the said spirit of meekness. For it were to small purpose to have Sugar in our mouth, as many men have, and in the meantime to bear poison in our heart. And therefore Saint Paul speaketh not here only of the tongue, ne [*nor*] saith that we must have enticing words: but that in rebuking men's faults we must always be led and moved thereto by an earnest desire to our neighbor's salvation. For it is certain that if we covet the soul health of such as do amiss, we will behave ourselves soberly, and that soberness will bring with it the moderation that Saint Paul speaketh of, so as we shall not be overeager, nor depart from the fountain, which is to beware that we be not too hasty in finding fault we wot [*know*] not why, nor to what end, but that we have a care to fetch him back again that is in an evil trade, and be desirous to bring him with us unto God. To be short, we must covet to have him our brother, that God may be served of us all and maintained in his state. If we be so minded, surely the rest will follow after. But under the word *Spirit* we be warned moreover (as I said even now) that we must be fashioned like unto God, forsomuch as he hath vouchsafed to choose us for his children, accordingly as our Lord Jesus Christ telleth us, saying: Be ye like unto your heavenly father, who hath pity even on them that are unworthy of it. (<230545> Matthew 5:45) Wherefore if we desire to be held and avowed for God's children: let us have an eye to the nature of him which calleth us to the likeness of his own Image, which is that we be mild and gentle. Now God in his gentleness flattereth not such as have done amiss. For he hateth iniquity, and must needs always show himself an enemy to it. But we see the thing that is said, namely that God doth in such wise correct his children, (<581206> Hebrews 12:6) that the

chastisements which he useth begin at his own house, (<sup><600417></sup> 1 Peter 4:17) and at his own household folk. Yet for all that, he thundereth not against poor sinners, but waiteth for them patiently, encouraging them, drawing them, bearing with them, setting his grace before them, and showing them that he is ready to receive them, and hath his arms stretched out to embrace them, if they will come unto him. Ye see then that the first thing which we have to consider, is that we must fashion ourselves after the example of our God, so as we oppress not those at the first dash in whom we see any infirmity, but rather labor to win them, because they be as lost souls. And hereupon we may also gather, that such as nowadays would have vices cloaked, yea and borne out under pretense that God is patient and gentle, do falsely corrupt the holy scripture. For nowadays, if never so detestable crimes be committed, by and by they allege mercy, O they must be pitied: Yea, but such folk blaspheme God in that they would have us to be more merciful than he is. Surely we know him to be the wellspring of all goodness, and it is enough for us if we can follow him a great way off, and it were a thing to be greatly desired that we could come nearer and nearer unto him. But when we have strained ourselves to the uttermost, it is very much if we can have in us but some little spark of the mercy which is infinite in God. Nevertheless God promiseth not his grace, but to such as return unto him. (<sup><380103></sup> Zechariah 1:3) True it is that he toucheth them with his holy spirit, and changeth their minds: but yet must repentance always be matched with forgiveness of sins. Now after what manner is it that men would be pitiful? It is that they might mock God to his face, that men should wink at their lewdness, yea and soothe them up in it, that God should be rejected, and that such as are ready to do still worse and worse, should be borne withal and borne out. But I have told you that it is too cursed a blasphemy, when men transform good into evil after that fashion. Then according to Saint Paul's exhortation, let us learn to bring a meekness that may be of God's spirit, not to allow of the evil, or to deface the good, but to amend things modestly with discretion. Therewithal let us learn also to pray God to govern us when the case requireth that we should correct our neighbors, assuring ourself that of our own nature we shall never be able to do it. We know that to serve God, and to employ ourselves faithful in that behalf, we must first receive of him the things that we want. Now then, let a man strain himself as far as he list [*wish*], and he shall not find himself able to bring one drop of

goodness of his own. But when we come to correcting, there we represent the person of God: and if I mind to tell a man his fault, I come not to him in mine own private name as his superior: but in the name of God.

Now then, seeing it is so that we execute God's office in rebuking such as have done amiss: how shall we be fit for that purpose, except he guide and direct us thereunto? Therefore let us learn to desire him to guide and rule us by his holy spirit, when any admonition is to be made, to bring such back again as are gone out of the right way. And herewithal we must mark also (as I have said afore) that Saint Paul speaketh not here of such as are saped [*steeped*] in wickedness, in contempt of God and in rebelliousness, but of such as are overtaken, so as they have some good will to do well, and yet notwithstanding do fall through infirmity. Therefore this matter must be handled very skillfully and discreetly. For if we will deal alike with all men, it is certain that we shall oftentimes do wrong to such as have need to be borne withal, and in the meanwhile do nothing but inflame the despisers of God, and make them more malapert [*impudently bold*] than they were before. Then (as I said) we must put a difference between the one and the other. For when the Prophet Ezechiell speaketh (<263404> Ezekiel 34:4) of the good shepherd: he saith that he must bear with the sheep that are weak, and if any of them be infected, he must heal them by good medicine. But if he should keep one manner of usage without putting a difference between one and another, how should he show himself to be a shepherd in so doing? In like case is it with all such as deal with the rebuking of their neighbors that have done amiss. As for example, if there be a shameless naughtipack, that daily runneth headlong into all naughtiness, which maketh none account of God's word, nor doth anything but [mar others] like a scabbed Ram that spreadeth his infection through the whole flock: or if there be a varlet [*person of low and mean disposition*] that is given over to all wickedness: such a one is not overtaken with sin. And why? For he hath already given over the service of God, he hath utterly shaken off his yoke, and (as I said afore) is become a mad beast that pusheth with his horns against heaven. Such manner of men deserve not to be borne withal by gentleness: and in this text Saint Paul doth quite cut them off and shut them out of doors. But when we see a poor man overthrown by infirmity, and that the Devil hath caught him unawares, and yet that the good seed of the fear of God which he had is

not utterly waterslain [*drowned*] in him: it becometh us to have pity and compassion on him. And forasmuch as we may slide every hour, let us learn to call yet earnestlier upon God, that he may govern us, yea and let us also bear well in mind how Saint Paul addeth, *look to thyself that thou also be not tempted*. Here he changeth the number. He had said, *Brethren if any man be overtaken, help ye to amend him*. And now he turneth his tale to every man particularly, saying: *Look to thyself*: and that is to the end that this warning should be the more vehement, and touch us the nearer. For we see that when one speaketh in general terms, every man thinketh it to be spoken to other men, and there is none of us all but he would shift out himself as much as is possible. Then if it be said, behold, all are inclined to this or that? very well, he speaketh to the whole company, but in the meanwhile no man is touched with it as he should be. Saint Paul therefore doth expressly change the number here, and he thinketh it not enough to warn all the faithful and the body of the whole Church in common: but he draweth every man aside and saith, look to thyself, and examine what is in thee: for thou also mayest be tempted. Truly there is not any reason that ought sooner to persuade us to be gentle towards such as have done amiss, than when we know that we ourselves also have need to be borne withal. And even the very heathen men have alleged the same. For they have said, that it is a great cruelty in a man if he cannot find in his heart to bear with the infirmities of his companions, seeing there is not any man which is not weak himself. It were impossible that any two men should live together in the world, if they be not patient to bear one with another. Then were two men enough to set all the whole world on a broil, if they would not bear one with another. And even they that think themselves to be most perfect, shall find that they themselves had need to be borne withal. For surely if we be not utterly blockish, we will hate the evil that is in ourselves. And we need not any man to trouble and vex us: every man shall have corzies [*vexations*] ynow [*enough*] in himself by being grieved at his own imperfections. Seeing it is so: what remaineth but that the same should induce us to deal mildly and gently with such as are fallen through infirmity? Thus ye see what we have to mark well here. And soothly if we search well the cause why many are inflamed with such inordinate zeal, and storm so extremely against small faults: it is that they think not upon themselves. Now then the order that we must keep in this behalf, is first to condemn the evil whatsoever it is: mark that for one

point. For if we condemn the evil but in this man or that man, and overslip it in others: it is a token that we be not led with a right meaning mind to the end that God should be served and honored, but that there is some secret root of malice in us, according as Salomon saith, (<sup>201012</sup>Proverbs 10:12) that enmity bewrayeth [*reveals*] vices, and every man findeth fault with him to whom he beareth any grudge. Ye see then that the first rule which we must keep, is to condemn the evil wheresoever it be found, even because it is contrary to God's will. That is one point. The second is, that every of us must examine himself. For surely the nearer that any evil is to ourselves, so much the more must we have it. If I see a despiser of God, it will grieve me more than if he were ten leagues off from me, and that I knew not his faults. Now then it standeth us on hand to have an eye to ourselves. For let us take this similitude, the nearer neighbors that we be, and the more familiarity that there is among men, the more must we put the thing in ure [*remembrance*] which I have spoken of: that is to wit, the more must every of us show other his faults when he hath offended. For God hath knit us together with condition that if I have a friend, I must reform him rather than a stranger. But now when evil is to be condemned, who is nearer to me than myself? Ye see then wherein a man shall know whether we seek the honor of God and the cleansing away of vice or no: namely, if we be rough and sharp in bridling of ourselves, and that when we rebuke others, we first condemn all our own vices, and show that we mislike them, and that we seek to amend them as much as we can. Ye see then that the way for us to judge of our neighbors, is first of all to condemn ourselves. And this warning serveth not only for the things past, but also for the things to come. Saint Paul therefore saith not, consider wherein thou hast offended heretofore: but he saith, *consider that thou mayest be tempted hereafter*. And truly we ought to walk continually in fear and carefulness, not that we should not always rest upon God's grace and favor, but that we must not be reckless. For faith importeth not that we should be careless of all things: but rather (as Saint Paul showeth us in the second to the Philippians) that forasmuch as we be not able to do anything of ourselves: God must be fain [*pleased*] to guide us by his spirit, and when he hath given us will, he must also give us power to perform it. Forsomuch therefore as we hold all of God: it behooveth us to walk in fear and carefulness. And so when we consider our faults past, and look well upon our present state, we have continual cause to cast down our eyes.

Indeed when God vouchsafeth us the courage to maintain goodness, and to condemn naughtiness, he granteth us great grace in making us judges, notwithstanding that we deserve to have our mouths stopped. Yet nevertheless it behooveth us to learn to be lowly minded in rebuking the faults [in other men] which we have already condemned in ourselves, seeing that we ourselves may daily and hourly, yea and every minute of an hour fall. Then sith [*since*] the case standeth so: let us pity such as offend, for they be all of them mirrors of our own frailty, because we see there what we ourselves are furtherforth than God holdeth us up by the grace of his holy spirit. Moreover, in admonishing such as have done amiss, we may yet (as I told you before) offend God in being too hasty, too rigorous, and too unkind. Although then that it be a commendable virtue to admonish our neighbors: yet if we be too lavish, all will turn into vice, except our Lord do so restrain us, as we keep an even hand and swarve not aside to any of the two vices that I have touched afore. Thus ye see what we have to remember concerning this saying of Saint Paul. Now he saith expressly, *you that be spiritual*: meaning to do us to wit, that we be the more bound to bear with the weaklings, when God hath strengthened us by his power, according also as is declared in the fourteenth to the Romans. And indeed if God distribute his grace more to one man than to another: it is not to bear down this man or that man with all, but rather to hold up such as are not able to go: like as if two men do go a journey together, and the one feeleth himself weary, so as he is not able to draw his legs after him: it is certain that he which is strong and lusty will not run before him as it were to spite him, but will restrain himself to his companion, yea and he will toll him forward, saying, Go to man, pluck up a good heart, and let me help thee myself. To be short, he will do all that he can to cheer up his fellow that is so faint. After the same manner also must we bear one with another, sith [*since*] we see that God hath called us all in common, and chosen us with condition that we should go all together with one accord, and every man reach out his hand to his neighbor (as the prophet Esay speaketh of it) (<sup><230203></sup>Isaiah 2:3) and say, Go we, let us go up to the hill of the Lord. It is no reason then that such as have received a larger measure of God's gifts, should go about to oppress others: but rather that they should bear with their infirmities, and be touched with the mildness that we have spoken of. Thus ye see how Saint Paul saith expressly, that the more that our Lord hath set us forward, the more ought

we to draw others after us. And hereupon he addeth for a conclusion, *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ*. When as he saith that we must bear the burdens [of our neighbors:] he doth yet better express the thing that I have told you heretofore: that is to wit, that he speaketh not here of the despisers of God, which run into all licentiousness and are saped [*steeped*] in malice and sturdiness: but of such as travel and go forward in all goodness, and have an earnest good will to attain to it, and which do even groan under their sins, as under a burden that is too heavy for them. For the better understanding hereof, we will set down a similitude contrary to that which is set down here by Saint Paul. He saith that such as are overtaken with their sins, are made as it were to stoop under the burden. And why? Because they are angry with themselves. Not that they fret or chafe against God through pride and disdain: but because they be not able to withstand Satan so steadfastly and stoutly as they fain [*happily*] would. But as for these roisters that are given to all evil, they be so far off from stooping under their burden, that they rather ride aloft upon their wickedness, triumphing and vaunting themselves, as though they would utterly defy God. Thus see ye the diversity that is betwixt them which are to be borne with, and those against whom all rigor may be used. For the one sort is bowed with the weight of the burden which doth in manner weigh them down: and these are the same whom our Lord Jesus Christ calleth to him, saying: Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you, and you shall find rest for your souls. (<sup><401128></sup> Matthew 11:28) Our Lord Jesus calleth not all men without exception unto him, but giveth a mark to such as may have access to obtain favor, namely that they be overloden: that is to say, they welter not in their sins, ne [*nor*] take pleasure in them, neither do they boast of them as folk past shame: but they would fain [*of obligation*] have ease, and can find none in themselves. Therefore he saith he is ready to deal gently with them. And for the same cause also doth Saint Paul in the seventh to the Romans say, that he doth not the good which he would, but the evil which he would not. Now Saint Paul speaketh there of himself: insomuch that although he were as an Angel of God in respect of his conversation in this world, and as a mirror of all holiness: yet doth he mourn still, and say he is accursed. And why so? Because he was held as a captive in prison, insomuch as he was not at liberty to give himself fully unto God: for he was hindered by his own

sinfulness. Now if Saint Paul were in that taking [*plight*]: how shall we do? By the way we see how this word *Burden* is to be understood, where it is said that we must bear one another's burdens. Herein Saint Paul exhorteth us to hold up one another: and if any man miss of his duty, we must not therefore give him over, but be inclined to pitifulness still, and use the forementioned meekness. To be short, he saith that we be knit together with such condition, that if any of us be overloden or wax faint, the rest must supply his default and weakness (as I said) even as inclined thereto by nature, without being encouraged by the word of God. If we be going of a journey in a company together, and see any of the company overloden, every of us will help to hearten him: and for the doing thereof, we will unload him, and every man take a piece of his burden. In likewise let us consider that the sins which we commit through infirmity, are burdens, and that in such cases it behooveth us to put under our shoulders, to ease such as are wellnear weighed down with them. Not that we should use any flattery, as I have said afore: but that we should help to amend them. And for proof hereof, if a man offend God, and I overpass it, so as he continueth in his naughtiness: the burden increaseth in such wise, as it is enough to break his neck. For whereas he had but one burden: behold now are many mo [*more*] added, to bear him down to the ground, even for want of warning. Insomuch that if he had been admonished at the first, he had been eased of his load: whereas now by cloaking of his vices, we be the cause that the poor wretch can never be relieved. And therefore it behooveth us to use the foresaid mean: which is, that in bearing with the weaklings, we must not fail to touch them to the quick, that they may be made to acknowledge their faults, to the end to amend them. Now for a conclusion Saint Paul saith, *that we must by that mean fulfill the law of Christ*. It is not to be doubted but that Saint Paul meant here after a covert manner to nip those against whom he disputed heretofore. For we have seen how that in those days there were many that would have had men to keep the Ceremonies of the Law: for that was all their holiness and perfection. Therefore because they ever had the word Law in their mouth, and bear men in hand that they should discharge themselves to Godward by ceremonies: Saint Paul saith unto them, Go to, we have the Law of Jesus Christ, who is a faithful declarer of the will of God his father. Then if we will have a true interpretation of the Law: we must not seek it elsewhere than in Jesus Christ, who is the everlasting wisdom of God, and

was sent to bring us all perfection of wisdom. Seeing it is so: let us above all things look what he commandeth us, and consider what yoke he layeth upon our backs or necks: which is, that we should love one another, as it is said in the thirteenth of Saint John, (<sup><431334></sup> John 13:34) I give you now a commandment that is both new and old: which is, that you love one another. That is the thing whereunto we must apply all our whole mind: namely to bear with such as have need, and to reach out our hand to such as are overloden, to relieve them. By that means then we shall fulfill Christ's Law: and when we have so fulfilled it, we may defy all such as condemn us. Those therefore which fulfill the Law of Christ, shall be no more subject to the ceremonial Law as they term it. It is true that we shall never fulfill the Law of our Lord Jesus Christ, neither in this respect, nor in [any] other. But Saint Paul showeth us the mark that we must labor to come at. Although then that we be continually on our way so long as we be conversant in this world: yet must we not run at adventure, without knowing whither we go. For we have our mark set up afore us, and thither must we enforce ourselves. So then, that we may serve God according to his own will, let us learn to give ourselves wholly unto him: and to the intent it may be known that his will is to hold us in such unity one with another: like as he hath knit us together in an inseparable band, so let us seek to draw our neighbors unto him, and therewithal let us be patient and meek when aught [*anything*] is to be corrected: and yet not be willing that vice should be nourished through flattery and dissimulation.

Now let us kneel down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying him to make us feel them more and more, so as it may make us to mourn before him with true repentance, and to ask him forgiveness of them, and to labor always to be knit unto him, and to be rid of all the corruptions of our flesh, and to be clothed with his righteousness: and that in the meanwhile he will bear with our feebleness, till he have fully delivered us. And so let us all say, Almighty God heavenly father, etc.