

THE FORTIETH SERMON

WHICH IS THE THIRD UPON THE SIXTH CHAPTER

- 6** Let him that is taught in the word, make him that teacheth him partaker of all good things.
- 7** Deceive not your selves: God cannot be mocked. For look what a man soweth, that shall he also reap.
- 8** For he that soweth in the flesh, shall also of the flesh reap corruption. But he that soweth in the spirit, shall of the spirit reap everlasting life. — ^{<480606>}GALATIANS 6:6-8

WE SEE WELL enough that wheresoever Saint Paul was known, he could not be suspected to be a man much given to his own profit. For although it were lawful for him to have his finding, because he bear abroad God's word: yet notwithstanding (as we see) he forbear that liberty, to the end to prevent all occasions of stumbling. And he protesteth that he was fain [*pleased*] to labor day and night with his hands to earn his living. (^{<442034>} Acts 20:34) But yet was he so much the better able without suspicion to call upon the negligent sort to do their duty, as we see in this text. He commandeth men *to find their teachers, and not to suffer them to want anything*. Now if Saint Paul (as I said) had been a covetous man in scraping to himself other men's goods, or if he had been desirous to set out himself in pomp and superfluity: he should have had his mouth stopped, and it would always have been told him that he spake for himself, and that it had been no giving of himself to the service of God. But forasmuch as he had showed sufficiently by experience, that forgetting himself and having no regard of his own person, he sought nothing else but to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to edify his Church: therefore he might rebuke the unthankfulness of such as behaved themselves amiss towards their shepherds, in abridging them of sustenance for their bodies, whereas by their means they had food and sustenance for their souls. Now it is a very unkind dealing, when a man considereth not that he which

bringeth him the doctrine of salvation, is as a foster father sent unto him of God, and at leastwise findeth not in his heart to give him bodily food. Therefore when men are so reckless in that behalf, they bewray [*reveal*] a contempt of God's word. For nature ought to teach us, that when we be in any man's debt, we should strain ourselves to the uttermost to requite him the like: and if we be not able to do it: then at leastwise to show that it is not for want of good will. But in this case, like cannot be requited for like. For God's word findeth not anything in the world that may be laid in balance against it. Yet notwithstanding, such as are taught, ought at leastwise not to spare their temporal goods, for the finding of those at whose hand they receive the inestimable treasure of the Gospel. And verily we see how it hath always been the policy of Satan, to spoil God's Church of good Shepherds and ministers, by after a sort starving of them. Satan's upholders shall always have enough to cram themselves withal: according as we see how that in the Papacy, these idle bellies which do nothing else but bark out their Masses and Matins, are crammed to the full. Though all the world should hunger and thirst for it, those kind of people shall never feel penury [*extreme poverty*]: yea and they shall have good store of provision though all the world starve in the meanwhile. But clean contrariwise, when such as serve God shall have shown the singular zeal and care which they have for the health of men's souls: men let them alone, and think them greatly bound unto them that they give them the hearing. Well (say they) we have heard him, God speed him well, he hath done his duty. And how many are there nowadays that make contribution when they come to hear a Sermon? They could find in their hearts that God should never be spoken of, because it is a melancholic matter to them. Whereby we see, that the Devil hath by that means given a push, to rid away all teaching, and to bring to pass that there might be none but Idols, nor any man care how he behaved himself. Then was it not without cause that Saint Paul was desirous to remedy such inconvenience, saying, that he which teacheth ought at leastwise to be nourished and maintained, and that he which receiveth the doctrine of salvation, is bound at leastwise to give of his goods and substance, to him that hath ministered spiritual food unto him. And Saint Paul speaketh here expressly of God's word. For whereas human sciences have always been so highly esteemed, that such as have professed them, have been maintained: the word of God, which surmounteth all other things, is as it were cast down. Therefore Saint Paul

blameth men's naughtiness, saying: See what a worthy thing it is to have God's word brought unto you: See what fruit redoundeth unto you by it. For we be all miserable and cursed, saving that God calleth us to him by means of his word: for that is the power which he spreadeth over us to gather us into his kingdom. Sith [*since*] it is so then: how can you be niggardly [*stingy, covetous*] of the transitory goods of this world, that such as travail for your welfare and edifying, should not at leastwise be so maintained, as they might give themselves wholly unto that, and not be drawn away by cares that might stop them and hinder them of doing their duties? The word that Saint Paul useth here, is *Catechize*, which signifieth to teach, train, or instruct, and thereof cometh our word *Catechism*, which signifieth a Teaching, Trainment, or Instruction. Then *he that catechizeth*, saith he: that is to say, he that is a faithful Teacher to edify the people in God's word, let him be maintained by such as are Catechized, that is to say, by such as are taught, or as are brought as scholars unto God. Now we see Saint Paul's meaning: and thereupon we have to gather, first of all that we must not take any nowadays for Ministers and Herdmen of God's Church, but such as bring his word. Mark that for one point: and it is greatly for our behoove [*advantage*] so to do. For the Papists boast that they have the Church on their side. But it is certain that it cannot be verified of God's children, that they should be a flock without a guide. Then what are the marks of the Church? That there be a flock gathered together, and that therewithal there be a shepherd to lead the sheep to our Lord Jesus Christ. And in good sooth [*truth*] the Papists allege also that they have a Hierarchy, that is to say, a holy and sacred Sovereignty, but in the meanwhile the mark that Saint Paul setteth down here, is not to be found among them. For we see that all the horned Prelates, and all the route of the Popish Clergy, have no more but the bare title. For where is the said word of God? They think that that were a stain to their state: it is enough for them to do their Ceremonies and gewgaws [*trinkets, showy trifles*], and they bear themselves in hand that they have very well discharged their duty, when they have so played an interlude: and so those Hypocrites do nothing else but fill the world full of their abuses and Illusions. Therefore let us learn to discern God's true Church, from all the Synagogues that Satan hath builded in the world, and wherewith he dazzleth our eyes nowadays. That is to wit, when God's word is preached faithfully, let us conclude that God also doth both know and acknowledge

the flock that is assembled there. And here ye see how they ought to dispose the goods of the Church, as Saint Paul showeth. Furthermore whereas he saith, *Let those that are taught impart all good things*: it is not meant that they should bestow such abundance upon the preachers of the doctrine of salvation, that they should be ready to burst with it. For the superfluity of riches hath been a deadly plague, when a number of men were moved, and driven by fond devotion, to give their substance to such as they thought worthy to possess the greatest part of the world, whereby they brought all to horrible confusion. And therefore we must not think that Saint Paul meant to enrich the Ministers of God's word in such wise, as they might have wherewith to riot with all excess, or as they might have wherewith to maintain a dissolute life in pomp and bravery: Saint Paul meant not to open a gap for any such things: but only meant to do men to understand, that they ought to succor them in all their needs, so as they should not be driven to extreme penury [*poverty*].

And it behooveth us to bear in mind how that in another place he saith, if we have wherewith to feed and clothe ourselves, let us be contented. (<540608> 1 Timothy 6:8) Also we know that God hath a care of all creatures: and therefore much more of his faithful ones. So then let us live soberly as if we had but a day to live, and let us not make a hoard of the transitory goods of this world. When the ministers of God's word bear this lesson in mind, namely to live soberly and thriftily, and not to have a care so full of unbelief as should torment them and burn them, and provoke them to heap up unmeasurably: then will they content themselves with a little, and yet notwithstanding men will be bountiful and liberal to them without their craving of it, so as they shall always have wherewith to be fed and clothed. And in good faith, besides this that hath been said, we see that Saint Paul did not only practice this doctrine himself, but also exhorted his brothers and companions to the same. For in the twentieth of the Acts he allegeth principally, that he had travailed and taken pains with his hands to get part of his living: howbeit that it is much better to give than to take: for (saith he) the thing that we ought to have learned in the school of our Lord Jesus Christ, is that we should be better apayd [*content, satisfied*] when we have occasion to do good, and to give to the relief of others: than when we receive to become rich ourselves. For it cannot agree with God's servants, that they should covet to hoard up.

To be short, now we see whereat Saint Paul aimed: namely that he meant not to give bridle to the preachers of God's word, to have a delicate and dainty table, or to be brave to the worldward: but that they should have wherewith to find themselves soberly according to their degree. And therewithal also he blameth the unkindness of the world, for that they which are bound to their Shepherds do show themselves so niggardly [*stingy, covetous*], that it seemeth to be as it were a plucking out of the guts out of their bellies, when they be spoken to for the relief of the need of those to whom they be bound beyond measure. Now forasmuch as that vice hath reigned at all times in the world, and the devil (as I said) hath by that policy given a push to discourage the ministers, that there might be no more teaching and instruction: let us learn that Saint Paul hath not without cause set down this rule, that they which take pains in preaching of God's word, must have wherewith to find and maintain them. And we see nowadays a greater churlishness in the world, than that which Saint Paul blameth and condemneth. For they that are at no charges at all with them, will not fail to grunt and grudge when the ministers of God's word be talked of. O (say they) these fellows must be nourished in idleness: verily as who should say it were idleness to serve God and the whole Church. Again, the Apostles (say they) did nother [*neither*] so nor so. No, but it is apparent that the Apostles were fetched afar off: and every man did strain himself for the same, not only in his goods, but also in his own person. If any Apostle were to be accompanied, it appeareth that the rich and wealthy men passed the sea with them. And nowadays there shall be nothing but murmuring and grudging at God's servants, though they be entertained niggardly [*stingily*]. But this discovereth and showeth the wickedness of those repiners, and bewrayeth [*exposes*] them to be Heathenish folk, that could find in their hearts to live in barbarousness and beastly conversation, without having any doctrine of salvation, and that all were thrust under foot, that every man might live after his own lusts. So then, let us bear in mind the thing that Saint Paul telleth us here, to the end that such as are called to the state and office of preaching God's word, may know that whereas they be found and maintained, it is because they should take pain, and profit the whole people with their service, and be thereby the more provoked to do their duty warily and carefully, and finally be quickened up to become so much the more diligent. And let not men envy them nor grudge against them when they have convenient

finding and entertainment, seeing that God hath so ordained: and we ourselves also do see reason why it should be so. Now hereupon Saint Paul addeth, *Be not deceived, for God is not mocked, for look what a man soweth, that shall he reap.* Saint Paul, in willing men not to be deceived, showeth sufficiently that men have at all times had store of shifts, and that when they intended to do or say evil, they have ever pretended some cloak. But here he citeth them to God's judgment, as if he should tell them that they might well enough content men and stop their mouths: but yet for all that they must be fain [*obliged*] to come to account before the heavenly judge. And therefore all your shifts (saith he) will stand you in no stead. It is true that these excuses will easily be admitted among men, and (as I have touched already) many men will hold their ministers at the staves' end, and there shall be nothing but quarreling with them. For their ears are so itching, that a man shall hardly find one of a hundred which will not be glad to hear such matters, and to add some scoff besides, or else to make the sauce sharper. This is too common a case. Nevertheless Saint Paul's doctrine extendeth generally to all the excuses that we be wont to make when we would justify our evil doing, or make men believe that the Crow is white. First of all therefore let us have an eye to the ground that Saint Paul treateth of here. Now the case concerneth the finding of the ministers of God's word. He willeth men that they should not beguile themselves. And why so? For it is a fond thing to say, why should not the Ministers of God's word labor for their living, seeing they ought to give example unto others? When they come out of the pulpit, can they not spend the rest of the time in some labor, that they might not burden the Church? This will easily be received of such as gabble after that fashion, thinking themselves to have a good case, and to be very zealous of the common welfare and of the order of the Church. But such men deceive themselves. For there is nothing in them but malice, and Satan thrusteth them forth thereunto, to the end to make the world to loath the doctrine of salvation, or at leastwise to set light by it and to scorn it. [That is the very wellspring], thither must we go, and there must we hold us. So then, it is not without cause that Saint Paul warneth the Galatians, to beware that they beguile not themselves in using these fair colors. And secondly we must also apply this warning of Saint Paul's generally to all the coverts which we take in going about to disguise things, for we will always have wherewith to clear ourselves, if men will believe us: And there is not so

very a naughtipack but he will still have some shift to conceal his own shame before men, insomuch that if we were a hundred times convicted, yet the Devil would ever put some device in our mind, to set a good face upon a foul matter. And because we be inclined thereto by nature, and hardened therein by custom: it standeth us the more in hand to mark the thing that Saint Paul telleth us here: which is, to beware that no man beguile himself, and that we err not willfully. For it is certain that hypocrisy shall never deceive men, till they beguile themselves willingly and wittingly. The hypocrites shall now and then be deceived, and yet notwithstanding be convicted therewithal, and they shall have such heartbitings, that they shall be the first that shall condemn themselves, though all men else did acquit them. But there are that fall asleep, and bear themselves in hand that nothing is amiss in them. Yet cease they not therefore to have some pricking within them: and although they be blind, yet doth God make them unexcusable, because he quickeneth them up, and they seek shifts still to entangle themselves in, so as they themselves perceive not the mischief, that they might repent them of it. Ye see then that the worst kind of Hypocrisy that can be, is when men deceive themselves by fond flattery in alleging this and that, and in seeking to shift off the matter, not only before men, but also before God. Now Saint Paul saith here, that God will not be mocked. As if he should say, that such as beguile themselves after that fashion with their fond excuses, are mockers, yea and very mockers of God. For if we bear such reverence to God as we ought to do: it is certain that when we be cited before his majesty, we would found [*set, ground*] ourselves to the hard bottom of our thoughts and affections, so as there should not be anything that were not examined to the quick. All they then which make so light a matter of coming before God, as though he were but some little babe and might play with him at their pleasure, do thereby show themselves to be full of ungodliness. Now therefore we see how profitable this text is for us, where Saint Paul having warned men that they should not beguile themselves, addeth *that God cannot be mocked*. This should seem not to make to the purpose. For what though we be deceivers? doth it therefore follow that we be mockers of God? Yea saith Saint Paul. And for proof thereof, ye seek vain shifts and give yourselves to them. But if you looked rightly upon the deed, and were not wrapped in your own maliciousness: surely you should have a righter judgment than you have. What causeth you then to fall asleep in

your so fond excuses? it is because ye consider not that we must all of us appear at God's judgment seat, and that it is he which searcheth men's thoughts, and from whom nothing is hidden. But you take him to be but an Idol: you would bear him in hand that he ought to be contented with your fool's babbles: and when ye have beguiled men and laughed them to scorn, ye think that God is of the same stamp, and use yet greater boldness towards him. Therefore it is certain that all such as flatter themselves and seek startingholes, are Infidels, and the thing itself showeth them to be plain mockers of God. Now although this saying be short: yet ought it to make us quake, forasmuch as we hear so great a thunder, or see such a lightning coming upon us from above. And I pray you, is it a fault to be pardoned, when men that are but stark rottenness, do so vaunt themselves against God, yea even to mock at him? Surely we know it is the greatest reproach and spite that can be done unto a man, to laugh him to scorn after that fashion. If it be intolerable among us that are nothing: will God suffer himself to be mocked? Saint Paul therefore hath well given us occasion here to look nearly to ourselves, and to walk plainly, and not to use our scoffing tricks, as though we thought to mend our market by it, forasmuch as God is provoked by it, as though we defied him, or as though we intended to dispossess him of his right, and to make him believe that a man might pluck him by the nose, and do all manner of villainy to him and he not perceive it. Were this saying well marked, we would walk in another manner of awe than we do: but we see how men become Heathenish, yea even willfully, and wax so hardhearted, that they regard nother [*neither*] shame nor honesty when good or evil cometh in question, but ye shall see them corrupt and pervert all doctrine with full mouth, and cast out blasphemies against God. Ye shall see then nowadays that all Tables, all houses, and all streets are full of mockers of God. And whereof cometh that? It is true that there are many Hypocrites and self-soothers: Howbeit, the Devil hath so possessed some, that they spit openly at Heaven, that is to say, they defy God without any remorse of conscience, and thereby it appeareth that they be given up to a reprobate mind, and spirit of madness. And whence proceedeth such malapertness of advancing men's selves so against God? As I told you before, it cometh of the said hypocrisy, when we think to disguise things in such wise by our subtle slights and fair replies, that there is no more difference betwixt white and black. So much the more therefore doth it behoove us to bear well in mind

this warning of Saint Paul's. Now hereupon he proceedeth with the matter that he had touched, insomuch that he extendeth it yet further, in saying *that look as we sow, so shall we reap: He that soweth in the spirit shall of the spirit reap everlasting life, and he that soweth in the flesh, shall reap corruption.* To be short, here Saint Paul likeneth all the study, care, and pains that we take, unto seed which husbandmen sow. For wherefore do men busy themselves about this or that, or wherefore do they travail and take pains, but for some end which they have purposed to themselves? I say, even because they hope for fruit to their commodity: that is the very cause why they be not weary of their labor. As for example: he that intendeth to get much, will suffer hunger and thirst, cold and heat, and nothing will appall him. And why? For his covetousness carrieth him on still, so as he forgetteth all things else, and tormenteth himself more than if he were in his enemies' hands: nay, his enemies would not torment him so much. So then, when a man taketh great pains to gather goods, it is like the sowing of a husbandman: and he hopeth that harvest will come, and that he shall gather it up again in the end. He that would advance himself to the worldward, dares not sleep half his fill: and what seeketh he by his watching? To come to some honor or worship, and to win credit. Well then, Ambition is the harvest of them that covet worldly honor. Their desire is to gather. And what? The thing that their own nature liketh and longeth for. Even so is it in all other things. Like as an unthrif [prodigal, of dissolute conduct] will labor to satisfy his appetite, and he will not stick the rather to do some lewd prank, as to play the bawd, or some other like thing. And to what end? To the end he may eat his fill and fare delicately or else play the drunkard. And othersome fall to robbery and murder that in sin they become arrant Thieves. Lo whereunto men's lusts bring them. For they purpose with themselves to make a harvest: that is to say, to have the thing that they lust for, though it be to their ruin and confusion. But howsoever the world go, if ye consider why men give themselves to one thing or other: ye shall find that they always hope for a harvest. So then, the things which they do, are the seeds of the labor which they hope to gather fruit of. Here Saint Paul saith, that after as we sow, so shall we reap. And afterward he openeth himself in saying, that the one sort soweth to the spirit, and the other sort to the flesh. Now to sow to the spirit, is to withdraw a man's self from the world and from this transitory life, and to know that we be created not to tarry here beneath, but to pass

forth on till we be come to our inheritance and that our life is not to be here but for a little while, and to walk away (as hath been said in ^{<199005>}Psalm 90:5, 6; that hath been sung and shall be sung again), so as our being here, is not to abide here forever, nor as though we had an everlasting dwelling place: but God giveth us as it were a short walk, and causeth us to make but a turn or twain, and straightways after saith unto us, Come away Sirs and return ye into dust, as Moyses also speaketh in his song. Seeing it is so, if we bethink ourselves well to renounce all our own lusts, then shall we sow to the spirit, that is to say, we shall see that it behooveth us to apply all our study to the heavenly life whereunto we be called. Ye see then how the one sort, of whom the number is very small and scant, do sow to the spirit, because they start not out into worldly cares to be tied to them, but consider that God calleth them higher, and therefore prepare and endeavor themselves to come thither. The other sort do sow to the flesh: that is to say, they be so wholly possessed with a beastly affection, that to their seeming there is nothing to be compared to this life. And truly if ye mark at what mark men shoot, ye shall find that the world holdeth them back well near all. Ye shall scarce find one among a thousand that goes any further, to consider that this world is but a shadow that vanisheth away, and to bend themselves earnestly and rightly to the heavenly life. Therefore all men well-near do sow to the flesh. True it is that their respects do somewhat differ. For one is a whorehunter, another a drunkard, the third a niggardly [*stingy, covetous*] pinchpenny, and another a spendall. Then if ye look upon the humors of the men, they be diverse and as it were repugnant, so as the one hateth the other. And wherefore? Because (saith he) he is not of my nature, he and I cannot agree. But howsoever the world go, if a man sift them, he shall find that all of them sow to the flesh. Therefore there are many sorts of sowing: but yet notwithstanding all of them stick fast here beneath, so as they cannot consider whereunto God calleth them, and whereunto they ought to apply themselves. For some would be rich, some would have honor and credit, some would live at their ease, and take their pleasure, some would have this, and some that: but in the meanwhile all of them pour upon this transitory life, and cannot lift themselves up. Now Saint Paul saith, it is good reason that we should reap according to our sowing. They then which do so give themselves to the world and sow to the flesh, shall (saith he) reap corruption: that is to say, in the end they shall perceive that all

the things which they esteemed so highly, were but smoke. True it is that this word *Corruption* might be taken for everlasting death: but that is not Saint Paul's meaning. For he intendeth to say that men are destitute of wit and discretion, when they will needs entangle themselves in their blockish and gross cares. For why? if a man ask them: go to, what is the world? They will say, it is a shadow that slippeth away. And what is our life? It is nothing. And what are the goods of this world? They be but a dream. All of them will say thus much, and yet nevertheless they be so ravished, as a man cannot tell how to pluck them from it, and the Devil holdeth them as it were bewitched, so that God crieth out at their ears, wretched men where are you, and yet they go on still to plunge themselves deeper in the quagmire. And although they know well enough that all their lusts are nothing, and that this life slippeth swiftly from them: yet will they needs be wedded to it still. Although then that God do cry to these unadvised folk to bring them into the right way: yet are they so dulled, that they cannot obey nother [*neither*] the Counsel nor the warnings which they hear. Thus ye see why Saint Paul saith, that such as have sown after that manner, shall of the flesh reap corruption. But they (saith he) which sow to the spirit, (that is to say, which know that there is a much preciouser life than this wherein we be, and set their whole affection and mind thereupon) shall reap of the spirit everlasting life. That is to say, because they have been governed by God's spirit, and have labored to come unto him and to be knit to him: therefore is their reward also ready for them. Now here first of all we be warned, to think better upon all our thoughts, doings, attempts, wishes, and endeavors, and to consider well to what end they tend. For this similitude shall always be found true, that we do then sow, when we apply our labor or travail to anything. Therefore let us look well to ourselves, and consider that although God will have us to gather Corn and wine in this world for the sustenance of our bodies: yet notwithstanding he calleth us yet higher, and will not have us to be held still here. Wherefore let us learn to seek first that God may reign, and bear rule, so as we may yield ourselves wholly to him and his righteousness, and that the care of this transitory life dull us not, as I have said afore: but that it may be as an income to the principal whereunto we must go, that is to say, to the kingdom of God. To be short, let us consider that God hath put us into this world to sow, that is to say, not to be idle nor unoccupied. And how? Truly the Ministers of God's word ought to sow, to the end to

gather in such a harvest, as they may offer up to God as an holy offering. And their sowing is to teach faithfully, to the end that God's word may bring forth fruit, and his name be glorified and blessed, accordingly as our Lord Jesus Christ said to his Apostles, (^{<431519>} John 15:19) I have chosen you to the end you should go and bring forth abundance of fruit, and such fruit as shall last forever. The ministers then have this peculiar to themselves: howbeit all of us in common must sow to eternal life, that is to say, we must pass through this world as strangers, lifting up our minds to the heritage where we should rest, and whereunto also it behooveth us to apply all our endeavor. And even when we travail for the sustenance of our bodies, let it be always with tending to the said mark, according as it is said that we must not live to eat and drink, but eat and drink to the end to be conveyed to another life: and that our living in this world is not to settle here, but to attain to a higher thing, that is to say, to the heavenly life. Sith [*since*] it is so, whensoever any man busieth himself to get his living, whither it be by tillage or by some handicraft, or by trade of merchandise, or howsoever it be, in all the cares that we take for ourselves or for our households, let us always shoot at a higher mark. For surely it is a naughty thing, if a man busy himself but only about the getting of his living, and have no regard of God's service. For in the getting of his living he ought to consider thus with himself: How will God allow of my doing? How will he accept my service? Truly that will he do if I walk not after mine own lusts, if I look that I do no man wrong, and if I busy myself faithfully about the thing that I am bound to do. This (I say) is the way for us to sow: that is to wit, that we be not wedded to the world, nor held down here beneath, but that we may always mount upward to the life of heaven. Now then let us look well upon the mean of sowing after that sort: that is to wit, of sowing to the spirit, saith Saint Paul. Wherefore let us consider that we be not as Asses and Oxen that toil and labor, and afterward do eat and drink, and are fed as reason and good right require: but that God hath adopted us to come to the life of heaven. Therefore let us sow to the spirit, and cut off all that may hinder our mounting upward, let us shake them off as hurtful things, and assure ourselves that all such as labor to get reputation in this world, shall in the end find themselves disappointed. Why so? For they shall see plainly that it is but corruption. When he that shall have gathered great abundance of goods cometh unto death, he hath so much the more grief, because he made this world his paradise. Therefore

he then gnasheth his teeth at God, and he stormeth and tormenteth himself, much more than if he had not taken so much pains to gather. Thus ye see that such as have sowed in the flesh, perceive [at length] that they have sowed to corruption, because they gather nothing else but corruption: but it is all too late, and therefore let us bethink ourselves. And although we see most men beguile themselves, and to make their reckoning that it is a happy life to have all things that they wish, as commonly every man is ruled by his own liking: although we see men storm after that fashion: let us learn to do otherwise and consider that God calleth us to an everlasting life, which he setteth continually before us by his Gospel. Let us set our whole minds upon that, and let all our intents and desires tend thitherward, and let us endeavor to profit more and more in the doctrine of salvation, that he may lift us up and draw us hence from beneath, according also as Saint Paul saith (^{<490616>} Ephesians 6:16) when he telleth us what the weapons of Christianfolk are, making the doctrine of the Gospel to be our shoes. For it standeth us on hand to be armed from top to toe, or else we should soon be wounded with the assaults that are given unto us in this world. After he hath declared this (say I) he saith that the Gospel must lift us up, and draw us from the corruptions wherein we be plunged, so as we may attain to the kingdom of God whereunto he calleth us. Ye see then what we have to bear in mind. Now as touching that Saint Paul saith, that they which have sowed in the spirit shall reap everlasting life: he meaneth not that we in so doing deserve so worthy and excellent a thing as the kingdom of heaven is: but he showeth that the faithful having known their own calling, shall never find themselves deceived, though they seem wretched to the worldward. We know that God adopteth us of his own free goodness: that is the groundwork of our salvation. He forgiveth us our sins: and that is our righteousness. For if he should consider us in our own nature, he could not but cast us away as loathsome and accursed: So can we find no grace at his hand, except he admit us of his own free goodness. And we know also that our works are evermore unperfect and blemished with some vice, so as they cannot be accepted of God. We are sure that when we should go about to serve him and to do good, oftentimes we go clean backward, so that we are evermore in his danger. But howsoever the world go, when God hath once adopted us to be his children, buried all our sins, and showed that he liketh well of our service though it be unperfect: then declareth he further and addeth as an overplus,

that we shall not be deceived in dedicating ourselves unto him, and in laboring for the heavenly life. It is true that men will laugh us to scorn. Behold these fondlings say they: see how they martyr themselves? And wherefore? for the kingdom of heaven. And who hath brought them tidings of that? It is I wot [*know*] not what a kind of Religion that beguileth these folk, and in the meanwhile they be poor outcasts, in whom there is neither courage nor anything else. According whereunto we see nowadays, that such as stand upon their reputation, do rail upon us saying: as for these wretched silly souls what think they to do? Lo how we be scoffed at, because we covet not to advance ourselves nor to be in reputation of the world. Although then that we be so scorned, let us give ear to the promise that is made us here: which is that if we follow our vocation simply, we shall perceive that God who hath begun is faithful, and that his intent of winning us unto him is our sovereign welfare, and that he not only seeketh our profit in all respects: but also will through his infinite goodness show himself a father and Savior towards us. Wherefore let us strain ourselves to the uttermost to come unto him, let us dedicate ourselves wholly to him, and let us give over all worldly things that may hinder our coming unto him, I say let us give them all quit and clean over, seeking continually the things that may guide us upward, and let us continue in them to the end. And if we do so: surely our Lord Jesus Christ will show that there is a harvest prepared for us, not of these worldly riches which are subject to corruption, (for the costliest and richest apparel and deckings of this world shall be eaten with moths and worms: and there is neither gold nor silver nor anything else, but it perisheth in the end). And moreover when men will needs take of them unmeasurably: they shall burst with the goods which they have heaped together, and they shall not only become unprofitable to them, but also they shall turn to their utter destruction. Instead of this then, we shall find that we have hoarded up a good treasure, which shall be laid up safe for us in the hand of God, to receive the fruit of it when we shall have finished our course in this world, and continued the sowing of our seed, that is to say, when we shall have proceeded in the serving of our God without weariness, looking always up to heavenward, and withdrawing ourselves from the world as much as is possible for us.

And now let us cast down ourselves before the Majesty of our good God with acknowledgment of our sins, praying him to make us so to feel them,

as it may bring us to true repentance, and yet notwithstanding we not cease to comfort and cheer up ourselves with his goodness, not doubting but that he receiveth us to mercy, at leastwise if we repair to him to be reformed by his holy spirit, till he have rid us quit and clean of all the imperfections and vices of our flesh, and renewed us after his own image, to bring us to the perfect righteousness whereunto we travel. And so let us all say, Almighty God heavenly father, etc.