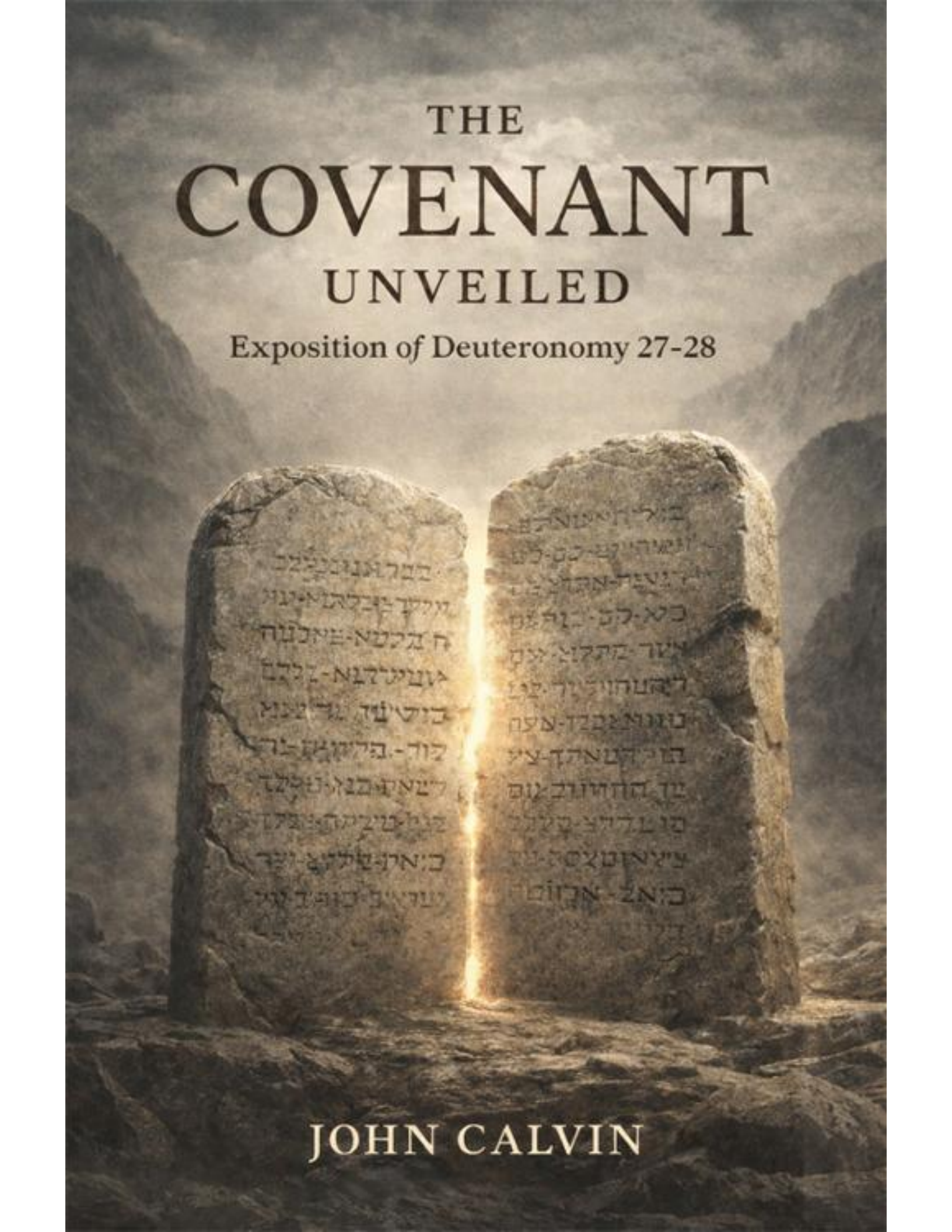




THE COVENANT UNVEILED

Exposition of Deuteronomy 27-28

JOHN CALVIN

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The Covenant Unveiled:

Exposition of Deuteronomy 27-28

by John Calvin

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On Thursday, the xxvii. of February, 1556,

The 149th Chapter.

Sermon which is the first upon the twenty-seventh Chapter.

[18, 19 And the Lord hath set thee:]

1 Then Moses with the Elders of Israel charged the people saying, Keep all the commandments, which I command you this day.

2 And when you be passed over Jordan into the land which the Lord thy God gives thee, thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaster them with plaster.

3 And shalt write upon them all the words of this law when thou art come over, that thou mayest go into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee: a land that floweth with milk and honey, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee.

4 Therefore when ye are passed over Jordan, ye shall set up these stones which I command you this day in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaster them with plaster.

5 And there shalt thou build an altar unto the Lord thy God, even an altar of stones: upon which stones thou shalt lift up no iron tool.

6 Thou shalt make the altar of the Lord thy God, of whole stones, and offer burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord thy God.

7 And thou shalt offer peace offerings, and eat there, and rejoice before the Lord thy God.

8 And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law well & plainly.

9 And Moses and the Priests, the Levites, spake unto all Israel saying, take heed and hear O Israel; this day thou art become the people of the Lord thy God.

10 Thou shalt hearken therefore unto the voice of the Lord thy God, and do his commandments and his ordinances which I command thee this day.

In yesterday's Lecture, Moses, having exhorted the people to serve God, declared that the covenant he had made with them was to their great profit. For the more that God bestows on us, the more particularly are we, (if we are not devoid of all sense and reason), bound to give ourselves over wholly unto him. But yet for all that, though we see that God is so liberal towards us, are we moved to offer ourselves in obedience unto him? [No, verily]. For this cause Moses said unto the Jews: that they were chosen to be in praise, in name, and in glory, as people singled out from the rest of the world unto God.

Whereas some expound this, that they were in praise & glory, to the end that God might be glorified: it is a hard & forced exposition. The thing they say is indeed true in itself, as it is said often times in the holy scripture, that God had chosen this people for his own name, as the end whereunto he has created all things. And the church was built specially to the intent that the name of God should be exalted, as it is said in the Prophet Isaiah: & as S. Paul also leads us unto the same consideration in the first Chapter to the Ephesians, where he treats of that thing more at large. Therefore, it is true in itself that God adopted the Jews to the intent that they might know his exceeding favor & goodness, & that the glory which was due unto him therefore might be yielded unto him. But in this place, Moses had an eye unto that which we have already touched, to wit, that the people might be the more moved & inflamed to discharge their duties because God has called them for none other reason, but to utter forth the infinite treasures of his mercies. And therefore he says: Your God

has placed you this day in honor & in renown, & in glory, according to this which has been said before in the fourth Chapter, "What nation is so noble and of such dignity," which has his God so near unto him, as your God has made himself familiar unto thee, to govern thee?

This then was a dignity which God had vouchsafed upon the Jews above the rest of all the world. And it ought to have been a cause to stir them up so much the more to be obedient unto the will & word of God. And indeed if all be well considered, we shall find that God can hope for nothing at our hands, nor receive anything of us, but that we hold all things of him. I pray you, when we have taken never so great pains to exalt the name of God; shall it be any whit increased thereby? What is it that we do unto him? Surely, we of our own nature cannot but blaspheme his name, and we are the cause why it is blasphemed: and if he will draw any good out of us, he himself must first put it in us. But when God has once granted us the grace to glorify him, do we bring anything unto him, or does he receive any profit of us? Doubtless no. Yet in the meantime, he pours out his benefits, so as we hold all of him, as I have already told you. So then not without cause does Moses declare unto the Jews, that they were called to glory, to renown, and to praise, to the end he might upbraid them with their unthankfulness if they enforced not themselves with all their power to serve God, who showed himself so liberal towards them. And this touches us also nowadays. For seeing it pleases God to imprint his image in us; is it not a pre-eminence which he gives unto us above all the creatures in the world, to be called unto the

company of the Angels, and to be members of our Lord Jesus Christ? For as much then as he so prevents us with his goodness; what remains but that we should give ourselves wholly unto him, and show, that seeing he has filled us with his glory, we will not cause his name to be set light by, nor the doctrine of salvation which he has given us, to be reproached, that the unfaithful should make a scorn of it? Let us therefore give all diligence hereunto: as we see we be warned in this place. And that is the very thing also whereat Moses aims when he adds: That when the people having passed Jordan shall come into the land which was promised unto them, and have it in full possession, they shall then set up great stones, and write upon them an abridgment of the law. And secondly that they shall erect also an altar, to give thanks unto God, and to testify that he had fulfilled the promise which he had made in former time unto their fathers. This (I say) is the intent & meaning of Moses, namely that the people should not only for one time give thanks unto God, but that they should do it afresh when they come into the land which was promised unto them: and that they should ratify that which they had before confessed, that is, that they owed all homage unto God for that land, because it was given unto them of his free bestowed goodness, & not gotten by their own power, nor befallen unto them by any kind of chance, or by the gift or help of men.

But we have to note the manner & fashion of the speech which Moses uses; he says, That he & the Elders of Israel commanded the people saying, Do that which I command thee. I grant that this might be referred unto Moses, because he was the chief servant of God in

publishing of the law; but it is certain that both he & the Elders speak in the name & as it were in the person of God. And yet it would seem at the first blush that this sentence were not well framed. Moses and the Elders say unto the people, Do that which I command thee: but they are many, & yet here is mention made but of one alone. Yea, but (as I have already told you) it was requisite that the Jews should be taught that these things proceeded not from men but from God, who spoke by their mouth. We see then that Moses and the Elders come not here in their own persons as attributing anything to their own worthiness, neither step they forth upon their own heads, nor to charge the people with any laws: but were the instruments of God to deal forth faithfully whatever was committed unto them. Now if Moses, which was the excellentest of all Prophets (as we shall see hereafter), did nevertheless restrain himself with such modesty, that he usurped not the authority to speak anything in his own name: what shall we say of them which govern the Church nowadays? Will they say that they exceed Moses? Let us note then that Pastors are not appointed to set forth whatever doctrine shall seem good unto themselves, nor to bring men's souls in subjection and bondage to them; nor to make laws and articles of faith at their own pleasure: but only to bring to pass that God may bear rule, and that his word may be hearkened unto. Let that be noted for one point. We see then that all the traditions of men which are nowadays in the Papedom instead of the pure word of God are but vain things: and that they must be all beaten down, and that the true government which God likes of, must be established again in his Church: that is, that men hearken unto him, that they submit themselves unto him, that both

great and small receive that which is delivered in his name, & that men pass no farther. Let this be well noted. But withal we must also note, that when they which are appointed ministers of the word of God, do their office faithfully; then they may speak with masterly authority, as they say. And indeed we hear how Moses with the rest of the Elders says, I command thee this day, keep my statutes. It is not for a mortal creature to advance himself so high: no, but because Moses brings nothing of his own, but is a faithful minister of God, & does nothing but expound the law even as it is given & committed unto him, therefore he sticks not to speak as from on high, as one having all power & authority. Therefore when we bring nothing but the pure doctrine of God without falsifying of it, or without adding anything thereunto of our own: then may we bring into captivity all the loftiness of men as S. Paul says, so as no man may exempt himself from the doctrine which is put forth unto him, but that even they which are the greatest must submit themselves unto it. The servants of God then must so behave themselves as they may not be of a fearful mind to yield to the world when it rebels, & will not be willingly subdued: but that they must hold their own with invincible constancy, challenging to their master the honor of sovereignty, & the overruling of all the world. This is the thing which we have to bear in mind concerning this place.

But let us come now unto that which is said. The Jews are commanded, To gather great stones, & to whitewash them over, & so to engrave the law of God upon them, that the letters might be easily read, & secondly they are commanded To build an altar on the hill of

Hebal, & there to sacrifice unto God. As touching ye altar we have already said, that it was a special witness of the people's doing homage unto God for that land which they knew they held of him. For indeed the law was there engraved, to the intent that the remembrance thereof should be renewed, & that the doctrine thereof should be laid open and made common unto all men; & that at their first entrance into that land they might have a mark to put them in mind, to say: This is a land dedicated unto God. And like as princes set up their arms & their ensigns in the ends & borders of their seignories & kingdoms: even so the arms of God were set up in that place, that men might see not a puppet or some such other thing: but the law of God written, to the intent that men might say, Behold it is the living God that hath dedicated this people unto himself, & chosen them for his service, that he might be honored & called upon of them. Thus ye see in effect what we have to bear in mind. But before we pass any farther, let us consider why it is said that they shall not make or build the altar of carved or polished stones, and that they must not lift up a hammer or any other tool upon it, but that the stones must be taken as they come to hand, without any fitting of them, by reason whereof it should be but as a rude heap. This place hath without cause much troubled many men, neither could they in the end find out the meaning of it without some allegory, saying, that when God commanded to have the altar made of rough & unhewn stones, it was to show that he takes no pleasure in any inventions of men, & that he will have no curious workmanship in his altar, to the intent we should be warned, that to serve him aright we must make no mingling with our own devices, as indeed we see it is not lawful

for men to forge at their own pleasure any service of God, for he likes of obedience above all things: & so this sense of theirs is in itself true, but it is nothing to the meaning of the place. Moses has an eye unto another thing, to wit, that there should be but one altar to sacrifice unto God. And in very deed we see that when the two tribes & the half were returned home after the conquest of the land of Canaan, & had erected an altar, they were in danger to have been utterly destroyed & rooted out for it. For when news thereof came to the rest of the Tribes, they said: What meaneth this making of a double altar unto God? And thereupon they went all forth to battle to destroy the Tribes which dwelt beyond Jordan, & to put them to horrible slaughter: and that was because God had commanded, that they should make but one only altar. And the reason hereof was to maintain the unity of faith & agreement among the Jews. We know that although the law contains the perfect doctrine of salvation: yet notwithstanding it fails not to be dark, as we have already seen. Therefore it behooved the Jews to be as it were inured to that doctrine, that they might not wander. For we see how fickle men are, so as they be easily turned aside to make diverse sects, & every man hath his devotion apart by himself. God therefore minding to prevent that mischief, whereunto he saw men overmuch given by nature, would there should be but one single altar. But now if they should have made an altar of hewn & squared stones, it would have lasted for ever. And what would men have said hereupon? This is the altar whereon they sacrificed unto God. And thereupon they would have thought it to have been a serving of God to have sacrificed there still: and they which succeeded a long time after, would have thought that

the sacrifices which had been offered there, would have been of the more worthiness, and that had been an overthrowing of the order which God had established among that people: it had been the next way to bring in a general confusion. We see what befell of the hill of Samaria, as the woman which spake to our Lord Jesus Christ declareth. What? (saith she) did not our fathers sacrifice on this mountain? Because Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob had dwelt there, the Samaritans bare themselves in hand that their temple was more excellent & more holy than the temple of Jerusalem. Yea: but it was built against the will of God, it was an heathenish place, it was more full of filthiness & uncleanness than any brothelhouse. Not but that the people had thought they did well, but we must always consider whether God likes of that which we do: if he does not, woe be unto us.

So then because men will needs without reason follow the examples which they hear, it was requisite that there should be no altars made of polished stones, for they would have remained in their estate, & there would have been sacrifices offered. Now you see what abominations proceeded thereof in Israel, Jeroboam intending to maintain his estate, erected an altar in Bethel, & would have God worshipped there, & sacrifices to be offered there unto him. He says unto them, well, behold, we sacrifice unto God, who brought us out of the land of Egypt. He protests that he will serve no Idols, & yet notwithstanding he serves them. Yea verily: for it was God's will to have his temple built in Jerusalem where it was, & we have seen heretofore that he reserves the authority unto himself to say: Thou

shalt call upon me in that place which I have chosen to have my name called upon there. For it is not for men to say, let us worship God in this place; but they must keep themselves unto that which he has commanded in that behalf. Jeroboam therefore in making a second temple brought the service of God wholly out of kind. He corrupted & falsified the true religion. Indeed he made a fair protestation (as I have told you) that he would change nothing in the service of God: but we see what the meaning of God is; namely that when they were come into the land of promise, they should sacrifice unto him on the hill of Hebal, & there set up an altar with such stones as came next unto their hands, without using any workmanship, to the intent it might be abolished & that no mention should remain of it, to draw that into an everlasting rule which was done but for one time only.

Now albeit that this Ceremony serves not us nowadays: yet may we gather a very profitable doctrine of this place. And first of all let us note that we must not ground ourselves upon that which God has commanded for a certain time, as if it ought to be observed forever. For under the law it was God's will that men should sacrifice brute beasts unto him; but nowadays there is no such thing. He required that there should be perfumes made, and lights set up, & fire always burning upon the altar. These things are now done away, & if any man renews them, they are but dung as we see how they are yet used in popery. When the Papists come & perfume their idols' noses, they bear themselves in hand, that it is an acceptable sacrifice unto God. And when they have consumed much wax on their torches & tapers &

candles, O here is a wondrous great devotion think they. And yet it is but a mere mocking of God. For it was his will to be so served under the law: But if we should now go & enlighten the sun, that is to say, if now after the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ into the world, we should yet still use those lights as in the night & in the dark; it were a perverting of the whole order of nature. The ancient fathers walked under dark shadows & therefore they stood in need of those aids. And when they had a light, it was to show them, that they came not to worship God at all adventures, or at random, but that they were guided & directed by the word of God, & by his holy spirit. And so they were held bridled, to the intent they should not presume upon anything on their own fancies. But as now we have no need of all these things: for why? The veil of the temple is rent in sunder; & God shows us his face in the gospel, even in the person of his son, so as we may now walk as at noonday. So then let us consider what is everlasting & what is but for a time; that we make no fond & foolish confusion & do as the papists do. For that is the fountain from whence so many superstitions have risen. When the Papists baptize, they take spittle. And why? Forsooth because Jesus Christ did so. Yea but would he have it drawn into consequence & that men should make a rule of it, and that his miracle should be mocked at in baptism? Will they make a young infant to speak, by their spitting upon his lips? Again, they have the anointing of the sick, and that is a sacrament with them. And why? Forsooth the Apostles used oil when they healed the sick. Yea, but that gift served but for the beginning of the gospel, & now after that we know that miracles are ceased, will we use the signs still? Is not that a mocking of God? By like then, the

truth & substance of things must depart & the sign must remain; that were a goodly matter. Again, they have retained other like things, as is lent. This is the fast that is to be kept, say the Papists. The reason forsooth is, because Jesus Christ fasted. Yea, but did he who is the fountain of all perfection, and the mirror of all holiness fast every year? No, he fasted but once in his life. The Papists say that we must fast every year, and that there is great devotion & holiness therein. Yea, but therein they would exceed Jesus Christ. But indeed it is a devilish superstition, to fast 40 days after that manner, upon opinion that by this means we may make ourselves like to Christ. For we know that our Lord Jesus meant to show thereby, that he was then exempted from all condition of man, as the same was done in Elias by miracle, & likewise in Moses, when he published the law. And did the Jews follow Moses and Elias therein? Or did any of so many holy prophets ever fast that fast? No: for they knew well it was not commanded them of God, and that he made no common rule of it, nor would have that thing drawn into example which he had once ordained for the authorizing of his law. So then we see that it is very profitable to consider what God has for one only time commanded, to the intent we pervert not all, nor desire without any difference to do whatsoever is contained in the holy scripture, without knowing first whether it concerns us & be spoken unto us or no. This is one point to be noted.

A second point to be observed is that we ought, as much as we may possibly, to maintain unity & agreement among us; as shall be declared presently. It was God's will there should be no more

temples but one. And why? To the intent it should be as a bond to hold the people together in the pureness and soundness of faith. We have one only God who is called upon among us, we must come into one certain place to sacrifice unto him, all of us must there gather ourselves together. It is true indeed that we are not nowadays tied unto any such bondage; but however it be, yet the substance is remaining still unto us. Let us therefore take heed unto all those aids which we have to hold us in this communion of faith, and in this unity which God requires, let us keep them well, and let no man turn aside from them. And as touching the outward order, we know that our Lord Jesus Christ would have men to assemble themselves together. I grant we are not bound to be all in one place, & men also preach in diverse churches of one town. And why? Because all the world cannot hear one sermon: but yet for all that, because of our slowness we are so bound that we must gather ourselves together in the name of God. He that will keep himself in his house, despising the common order, and will say, I can read at home & edify myself sufficiently there, that man as much as in him lies breaks asunder the unity of faith & tears in pieces the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. We know that baptism was ordained to the intent it should be as a common seal that we are the church of God, & are governed with his spirit. Now if every man will have his baptism apart, what a wicked disorder were it? The holy supper of the Lord also is distributed as a common food to the intent we should all communicate of it. We are warned by it that we are one body. And as one loaf is made of many grains of corn, which are so mingled together that they make but one substance; even so ought we to be knit together, if we will be

accounted for the children of God. Therefore if every man should have his private supper, were it not a withdrawing of ourselves from the agreement & brotherhood which Jesus Christ would have us to keep? In Popery every man must have his altar & his chapel. Yea & they were of opinion, that God was much bound unto them for so doing. There should have been one common table (for I will not say that they have turned the communion table into an altar to sacrifice upon, which thing in itself is a devilish abomination) but in the meantime although they retain the word, yet will they not have a common table for all the church. For every man thrusts in himself to say, O I will have a chapel, & there I will have my devotion by myself. When men be come to that point, it is a horrible wasting of the Church of God; & the building of so many several altars has been the cause of the bringing in of so many sects & divisions. Although the papists had placed no idols in their churches, & although they had not such a number of superstitions & idolatries as we see they have; yet in doing of this one thing they have broken the unity which Christ has solemnly set between his members, & in the whole Church. What must we do then? Let us endeavor to keep ourselves in brotherly agreement and under the signs & tokens which God has given us, and let us continue therein, and make all those means which he has given us, to serve unto that end. That is the doctrine which we have to gather upon this place.

But let us return now unto that which we said in the beginning; that is, that God has here required of his people a solemn acknowledgment, how much they were bound unto him. We are

therefore exhorted to acknowledge the benefits of God, yea & to occupy ourselves therein, so as we never forget them. The people indeed had already given thanks unto God after they were come out of Egypt, in the wilderness, where they sacrificed continually unto him, but yet after they are passed over Jordan, they must begin to give thanks again. And why? Because men would always discharge their duty towards God by halves: and they have soon forgotten it, & think no longer what they owe unto God. And that is the cause why they must be occupied continually in the self-same thing. So then let us note well, that even all the time of our life we must apply our whole endeavor to magnify & set forth the name of God. For although we be not lodged in this land of Canaan: yet the favor of God ought to be as much, or more esteemed of us, than that earthly inheritance which was given to the children of Israel. For God, having plucked us out of the dungeons of death, & out of the bondage of Satan, declares that we are blessed of him, and that we are a royal priesthood. And who is he that can discharge himself in magnifying so great & so inestimable a goodness of God? So then because we are slow & slack to give that glory unto God which is belonging unto him; and because that when we have once done it, we think it enough & we are loath to do it again; let us bear in mind this lesson which is taught us here, that is, that according as God increases his gifts in us, & as he confirms & ratifies them, so ought we on our part to be so much the more moved & stirred up to yield him praise, declaring thereby, how much we are bound unto him, and protesting that we are wholly his, and that we will dedicate our whole life unto him.

This (say I) is the thing which we have to bear in mind as touching this place, where mention is made of sacrificing unto God.

Now after that Moses has named The whole burnt offering, he adds, Thou shalt offer also the peace offerings unto the Lord thy God. Now before he showed that the peace offerings served for thanksgiving, so as if God had delivered his people, if he had given them any victory against their enemies, if he had delivered them from famine or any other calamity; then they sacrificed, in witness that this benefit deserved not to be forgotten. We see then that Moses aims altogether at that which we have already declared: namely, that the people should make an acknowledgment of this benefit unto God after they were come into the land of Canaan. And whereas Moses says that it was a Land flowing with milk & honey (as we have already seen afore) it is to the intent that the people should be the more stirred up to give glory unto God, when they see that the land was so fertile, and that God had showed himself so liberal towards them. We know that at this day it is not so fruitful a land, neither was it so fertile before their coming thither, and that is a wonderful thing. And yet notwithstanding the wicked have taken occasion hereupon, to blaspheme, as that wicked heretic which was punished here, mocked both Moses and the prophets saying, that when they praised the land of Canaan, they did but fable. Yea but he shows himself (as all despisers of God & such enraged folks whom Satan possesses use to do) to scorn God's benefits which men may see with their eyes.

Neither considered he, that (as it was showed unto him, notwithstanding that he continued in his willful stubbornness) God did expressly threaten to sow salt upon that land, that is to say, to make it barren: & at this day also men see it desolate & waste. So as it is a dreadful thing to behold, what the state of that country is at this day, in comparison of what it is known to have been heretofore. For our Lord has showed by effect, what is said in the 107 Psalm: namely that when it pleases him to bless a land with fruitfulness, it shall be fat & full of all manner of fruits; and contrariwise that when he listeth to make it barren, it shall be clean withered. We see this to be true in the land of Canaan. So then let us note that Moses meant to show here more particularly the favor which God showed to his people, in nourishing them in that land for which he made it as a man would say to flow with milk & honey, showing thereby that that was done even by miracle. Now for our part it is true that we shall not be fat fed as in respect of our bodies: but yet in feeling the spiritual benefits which God bestows largely upon us, we ought to be moved & stirred up to this consideration, that when we have protested as solemnly as is possible, that we are his, and that we owe all unto him; yet we are not discharged of the hundredth part of our duty.

And as touching what is added concerning the great stones, whereon God commanded his law to be written; according to what we have already touched; let us note, that God meant to hold his people under his obedience by all the means he might. For men by reason of their infirmity, had need to be held in awe: and to be called back unto God,

to the intent they swerve not aside from him. I have already brought a comparison from the arms of Princes; instead whereof God would have his law to be written. And why? For his laws are his true arms: & his word the lively image wherein we ought to behold him. And that is the cause why he says, you shall come & present yourselves before my face, when they presented themselves before the ark, wherein the law was enclosed. For God would not have any other shape whereby to be represented unto men, than only the continual instruction of his word, according to that which we have already seen in the fourth chap. where it is said, remember that you saw not the shape of man, or of any creature whatsoever, but you heard the voice of your God. Take heed therefore how you counterfeit anything in this behalf. Now forasmuch as we have the understanding hereof, let us note that when our Lord vouchsafes to have his word preached in any place, and lodges us quietly as it were with his own hand; it is to the intent we should do him double homage. As many as live in the world & are fed and sustained by God, ought therefore to confess that he is worthy to have all sovereignty over them. But seeing we have such a special privilege of God, as to be separated from the rest of the world, & to have his word preached unto us, & to have liberty to call upon his name purely: ought we not to enforce ourselves to do him double homage for it? Surely this ought nowadays to be thoroughly considered of. For how great favor does God show us, in that we may use his sacraments with all liberty, and have our ears every day filled with the doctrine of salvation; so as he ceases not to call us unto himself? We see on the other side many wretched people which are held in bondage under the tyranny of the Pope, & dare not once open

their mouth or make the least countenance of worshipping God purely, they have neither churches to resort unto, nor any means to be taught: the world sees this. So then we ought indeed to have the arms of God, whereby the law should be presented. But we see the clean contrary; for as soon as any man comes near unto us he should perceive a wonderful change in us by our withdrawing of ourselves from the defilements of the unbelieving; but whereas men should see that God reigns & bears rule among us, & has his seat & throne with us; they may see us as loose in living as the very ignorants in all the world, nay a man may see that God is defied of some of them, unto whom the gospel is preached, & that there are worse devils & more wicked among them, than in the deepest dungeon of popery. And this deserves double woe. For it is not only to the Jews that Moses has spoken, but it is to show unto all in general, that as God vouchsafes us the favor to be his, even so we ought to remove all corruptions from among us, that men may know that we are indeed his people. Yet notwithstanding, this imports not that they which live in popery are to be excused. Although they be never so much threatened, & cannot make a free confession of their faith without danger of death: yet they are always guilty of offending God, in that they have not honored him. Now if there be no excuse for them, how great shall our condemnation be? For there is nothing to hinder us from serving of God, save only our own wickedness & negligence. So then let us be diligent to discharge our duty, not as touching the outward ceremony of great stones which is commanded here: but as in respect of the thing which God had a special eye unto; namely that every of us should not only yield ourselves unto his obedience, &

dedicate ourselves to follow his will; but also that with one common accord, we should show that he is our sovereign king and that we are under his government; and that because he has planted us in such a place where his name is openly called upon, & where there are Churches for us to come together to make our common prayers, & to confess our faith in; we also do endeavor to walk in such sort, as men may indeed know, that those places are not defiled, but reserved unto the glory of him who has chosen them to that use.

Now for the end & conclusion let us note that our Lord will not have his arms blazoned in such sort as men like of, but that he will have his own Image to be known in them: and that is the cause why he speaks purposely of the law. The words, says he, of the law. The Papists have chapels, they have crosses, they have gay paintings, & they bear themselves in hand that God is represented by them: but he likes none of all those things. What is to be done then? We must return unto the word, which is the means whereby God opens himself unto us, & thereby will he be known. Let men therefore content themselves simply therewith. Now as touching that which he says, Let these words be well engraved: hereby we are taught, that God gave not his law for a few people, but meant that it should be a common doctrine unto all, both great & small, even to the most Idiots: and that all should be instructed by it. And if it were so in the time of the law, by greater reason ought it nowadays to be in force among us. For of the gospel it is said that it should be preached unto all creatures. God therefore will not have his doctrine locked up, and that none but the clergy should thrust their nose into it: but he will

have us all to be his scholars, & the law so written, that every man may read it. And why? To the intent that all men should receive instruction by it. Let none therefore exempt himself from the reading of it, as we see many do, which say, O I am no clerk, I never went to school: it pertains not to my occupation. I grant indeed that it is not every man's occupation to be a teacher. But who may exempt himself from being a scholar in the word of God? It is all one for a man to renounce Christianity, & to say, ô as for me, I know neither A nor B; what can I tell what the law of God or any holy scripture meaneth? Nevertheless, the will of God which is declared to us in his word, is written in letters big enough, & albeit that nowadays there be not any heap of stones set up for the law of God to be written & engraved thereupon; yet notwithstanding our Lord meant to show under this figure, that when he has delivered his word, it is to the intent that we should be taught, & ordered by it, & that the doctrine thereof should be common unto all. And truly we have no less need to nourish our souls with the word of God, than to sustain our bodies with bread & other daily food. Seeing then it is so, let every of us labor that way, & let us be attentive to harken unto our God when he speaks unto us by the mouth of the minister; & when we have his holy scripture, let every man endeavor to be taught by it: they then which have no skill to read themselves, let them hear it read, that we may show, that seeing our Lord speaks unto us, we on our side are ready to receive that which he shall say, & desire nothing else, but to profit under him; & that in such sort, that his word be not only engraved in stone & chalk but also imprinted in our hearts, so as in our whole life we seek to follow it, and give ourselves wholly unto it.

Now let us kneel down in the presence of our good God with acknowledgment of the great number of faults & offenses which we cease not to commit daily against his majesty, praying him to make us feel them better than we have done: that we may endeavor to amend them more & more, until we be clean rid of them, and that forasmuch as we obtain pardon for them by the means of our Lord Jesus Christ, we may also increase & be confirmed in all righteousness & holiness, that so we may indeed confirm our calling: and that forasmuch as he has chosen us for his people, it may please him also to withdraw us from all the defilements of the world, so as we may be unto him a holy people in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. That it may please him to grant this grace not only to us but also to all people and Nations of the earth, &c.

On Friday the 28th of February, 1556.

The 150th Sermon,

which is the second upon the twenty-seventh Chapter.

11 In that day Moses commanded the people, saying:

12 These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people when you pass over Jordan: Simeon, and Levi, & Judah, &

Issachar, & Joseph, & Benjamin.

13 And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.

14 And the Levites shall speak & say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice:

15 Cursed be the man that shall make any carved or molten Image, which is an abomination unto the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, & puts it in a secret place: and all the people shall answer and say: so be it.

WE saw yesterday how God meant that the favor which he showed unto the people of Israel should be recognized first by solemn sacrifice, & secondly by a monument set up, to the end that it might be known, that this land was not purchased by man's hand or by any power of man, but that it was given of God unto that people for an inheritance. But now we have another commandment whereby God meant to bind the people unto him after another manner. Indeed he had done it already; but because men are so hard to be rooted, and that they cannot be bound with too many bands & cords to hold them under obedience; it is not without cause that God would add further that which is set down here, to keep them the better under obedience. We have already treated that when God gave his law, it was a mutual covenant; and like as he bound himself unto the children of Israel to be their God, so also the people of Israel bound themselves to be his people. But here is yet another confirmation

added, to ratify that first bond the better; which is, that God ordained that when they were passed over Jordan, the people should part themselves in twain, and that six tribes should keep themselves upon the mount of Gerizim, and the other six tribes should stand upon the hill of Ebal right against them, so as the Ark of the covenant and the priests should stand in the midst, and that they which were on the part of Gerizim should

bless & those which were on the side of Ebal should curse. Now this cursing & blessing is referred unto that which we shall see hereafter, which shall be anon touched in this chapter. For God, to encourage his people the better, did not only declare unto them his will, & say, You shall walk thus; but also added by and by, you shall not serve me in vain, your pains shall not be lost: for I will cause you to prosper, it is for your own welfare that I would have you to be subject unto me, I seek after no profit or advantage thereby, but it is for your own benefit & commodity, that you should cleave unto me, in keeping of my commandments. Lo what blessings God gave, to the intent the people should serve him with a willing mind & not through force or constraint. Again, because men are so stiff-necked, that they stoop not but with much ado, and because on the other side their lusts carry them so headlong away, that they quickly forget what it is to serve God, & play the wild horses which are broken loose; here are threatenings added: Take heed how you offend me, for vengeance is ready for them that despise my law. Thus see you what the cursings are which we shall see more fully in the 28th chap. but Moses touches them here as it were by way of example. Now it were enough

if God had but pronounced & said, Whosoever serves me in keeping my law, he shall be blessed, & I will make his whole life prosperous unto him. Seeing God has once promised to recompense them which serve him, it ought well to suffice us. What need men to speak in their own behalf? Likewise seeing God pronounces sentence of condemnation upon them that transgress his law, forasmuch as that Judge himself has spoken; no man ought to reply. What need is there then that we should ratify that which God has said, as if his word were not of sufficient strength & authority in itself? True it is that God deserves well to be hearkened unto, & that thing which he says is as an unchangeable decree: but yet he will have men by outward witnessing to allow that which he wills us to follow, he will have us to acknowledge the favor which is offered unto us, & to declare that we are assured by faith, that he will not deceive us in promising us prosperity when we endeavor to live according to his word. God therefore will have us so agree with him, that we also confess in humbleness & fear, that there is great reason why he should punish all those that despise & overthrow his righteousness, & commandments. And when he threatens them, we may not think that it is in vain, but that in the end they shall feel the execution of that sentence. God therefore in this respect will have us to say Amen, both to the promises which he makes unto them that keep his law, & unto the threatenings which he denounces against all them that are rebels & despisers of him. So then we have now made a good entrance unto the understanding of this place. As touching the blessings and cursings, we shall more fully treat of them in the chapter following: and we shall do better to keep them to be handled

there, because the place is more fit for them. It suffices to know in a word, that when God offers his favor unto those that obey him, it is to the end they should serve him, not through constraint, but of a free good will: knowing that it is for their own commodity, & welfare, and again that on the other side such as are of their own nature given over to their lustful desires, & take to themselves a lawless liberty of living ill, must be withheld by fear since they see that they shall not escape the hand of God, but that in the end they must come to their account. Thus you see what we have to bear in mind in a word until we come to handle the matter more at large.

Moreover, let us note well that which we have said, namely that God thinks it not enough to have spoken himself; but he will have us also to agree as it were in one melody with him. And that is to show the faith which we have in his word, which consists in these two points: namely, that we embrace his promises & hang wholly upon them: and secondly that we tremble, as often as he gives us any sign of his wrath, so that we be not blockish, nor drowsy, nor so hardened that he must be fain to strike upon us with main blows, before we can feel his anger: but that we prevent it by endeavoring to obey him, & eschew his vengeance as much as we can. Now then blessings in this place are conditional, to wit, blessed is he who observes the law of God, who maintains his service purely, who is not given to superstitions nor idolatries, who abuses not his holy name, who observes the day of rest, & all the other ceremonies, who honors his father & mother. This blessing (I say) is matched with condition, so that if we serve God, he will show himself liberal unto us, & we shall

not lose our time: but yet do all these blessings depend hereupon, that God of his free goodness had chosen this people: so that they might not rest on this point, to say, Blessed is he who serves God. And who is that? For none discharges himself of this duty (as we have already declared) & shall see further in the end of this chap. Seeing then that we are all sinners, yea even the faithful, inasmuch that when they endeavor to walk uprightly they make many false steps; what shall become of us then? It is certain we should all be deprived of the hope of salvation, if we had nothing else to lean unto than our own righteousness. But (as I told you) the promises which import a condition depend hereupon, that God has received us for his people, & will have us to take him for our father. Now this thing is grounded on nothing else but upon his mercy. So then we must be thoroughly persuaded, that God will take pity on us, though we be wretched sinners, & deserve not to be pitied: he will receive us for righteous & accept of us, although we deserve to be rejected of him. And although we can hope for nothing but utter confusion, yet notwithstanding we shall be assured of the inheritance of salvation because we are his children. We must be thoroughly persuaded as touching this point. And secondly it remains that seeing God has chosen us out, & set us apart for his service, we may not take liberty to all manner of wickedness, but endeavor to obey him. For this cause we must be quickened up and pricked forward by his promises to serve him. Thus you see how the conditional promises shall not be in vain in respect of us: namely, when they are referred unto the freely bestowed goodness of God, whereby he receives us although we be not worthy to be received: and secondly he imputes not our

vices unto us: but although there be many stains and corruptions in us, yet he hides them and will not call them to account. And so we see now in what sort God encouraged the people of Israel to be of good comfort. For if he had begun thus with them and said: Serve me & you shall be well recompensed for your labor, if God should speak this simple word unto us, alas what should we do? For when we would think to serve him, we should be very far from the perfectness which he commands us: they which should run best would be but in the midway, when they ought to have come to their ways end. We should therefore all be discouraged rather than have any good heart. But we must join both these things together, to wit, that he will not deceive us in any thing, & secondly that he binds us to serve him, & declares that he will bear with us in our infirmities, & not deal severely with us to pay us as we have deserved, but use a fatherly goodness. Now hereupon we may be of good comfort to serve him, when we may say, Surely it is true Lord, that I discharge not myself of the hundredth part of my duty towards thee, but howsoever the world goes, yet thou wilt not fail to accept me because thou respectest not what I do, but takest a pleasure in me as in thine own child. Ye see then how God pardons us, and regards not our faults & imperfections which are in the service that we yield unto him. So we serve him not hypocritically, but of an unfained good will, he likes of all that we do, and rewards us for it. Since we hear this, let us bestow our pains, let us receive the bridle into our mouths (as they say) and let us go on; & although we be hindered by the vices of our flesh, yet let us enforce ourselves to go on further. And why? For we shall not lose our labor. Thus ye see what the meaning of God is; whereby we

perceive his inestimable goodness, in that of his own good will he offers his promises so unto us, whereas he is nothing bound unto us, as we have seen heretofore: but his will is to win us unto himself by all the means that he may. Now he repeats this point again, and that is done because of our sloth and negligence. For that cause he adds this aid, and all for our profit, for what is he advantaged thereby? Shall he gain anything by our service? Let us defy him to the utmost, what shall that hurt him? but he will possess us for our own welfare.

And herewithal he shows us also, what mind is requisite for the observing of his law in such sort as is required, to wit, if we come willingly and yield ourselves unto him, and place our whole felicity & joy in the serving of him, and put this sentence in ure, that where our treasure is, there will our heart be also. You see what we have to note as touching the first point of the blessings. What is it then in effect, that we have to do? Although nowadays we have not the Ceremony whereof mention is made in this place, yet must the substance thereof be in force among us, which is that in seeking to serve God, we must have an eye always unto his promises. Behold, our God calls & allures us unto him. And how? He might command us in one word, and say: You owe all unto me, see therefore that ye discharge yourselves: but he bears with us, & utters a fatherly goodness towards us, in saying, My children, I will not have your service unrecompensed. Indeed I owe you nothing, but yet nevertheless I will be so bountiful above what I need, that if you serve me, your life shall be happy, you shall prosper in all things. And besides that, there is a sovereign blessing for us as touching the life everlasting.

For all that we can desire or look for in this world, is nothing in comparison of that salvation which we hope for through faith; and all the blessings which God promises us, & offers unto us as touching the life to come. Therefore all this ought to make us the readier & better disposed to submit ourselves unto God. For what? Seeing our Lord seeks nothing but our welfare in our obeying of him, & offers us a reward for our so doing; are we not too wretched if we enforce not ourselves to serve our God. You see then how we ought with our good consent to ratify all the promises which are contained in the holy scripture; that whereas others think it were but lost time to do well, we may always have this imprinted in our heart, that there is nothing better than to cleave unto God. The heathenish sort do think themselves very happy in following of their own lusts. When lecherous and covetous persons have scraped together on all sides, they think all is well gained, and they triumph in their doings. If the fornicators who are brutish in their fleshly lusts, can enjoy their pleasures, they welter in them, they are drunken with them, they are wholly bewitched by them. If a vain-glorious man be in any dignity, and be advanced to any authority among men; he thinks there is no other joy nor happiness, but to be in high estate. At the same point are all the despisers of God. And in the meantime the poor faithful ones are mocked: they are poor persons, they are set at naught, they hang their wings, they do nothing but drop and pine away in this world. These wretched souls (say some) are not well advised to take so much pains they know not why; for what profit have they for all their travail? It seems therefore that they who seek to serve God are greatly beguiled, and that the wicked bear the whole sway. But we

must on the contrary side be thoroughly resolved herein as it is said in the prophet Isaiah, Say ye; Yet there is fruit for the just men, for they shall eat the fruits of their labors. The prophet Isaiah would have us to fight against this temptation. Inasmuch that although the world laugh the Godly to scorn, & the wicked triumph over them: yet for all that the faithful should not be astonished; but conclude with themselves, and say: No no: the righteous man shall not lose his labor; he shall not be deceived of his expectation when he depends wholly upon the promises of God. The thing then which we have to gather upon this place is, that as often as we read the promises in the scripture where it is said: Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, they who shall walk in the obedience of his word shall be blessed; blessed is he who walks uprightly, and soundly with his neighbors: but especially they who renounce the world because they have a better inheritance in heaven: as often (I say) as we read these things, we must be confirmed in our faith, and answer with a good courage Amen, Lord, it is so: we reply not against that which thou hast said, we embrace thy promises in this place, and trust assuredly unto them. Thus you see how every man ought to enforce himself to serve GOD, even because he bears so gently with us, & commands us not so precisely as he might, having all authority over us, but applies himself to our rawness to win us, and to enjoy us. And above all let us be mindful of this general promise, when God calls us unto himself as his children, when he spares us and bears with us, and enters not into any extremity of rigor with us, but although there be many faults in our works, yet they hinder not him to accept of them, so as if we offend we always find pardon at his hand, and when we swerve aside,

he brings us into the way, and none of all these things is imputed unto us. You see then what we have to bear in mind as touching the first point.

Now as touching the second, let us also note that the threatenings of God are very necessary for us. For we see how great pride & rebelliousness is in all us: insomuch that although we be not rebellious of set purpose to set our God at naught, and to cast off his yoke: yet we are so bleary-eyed, that we think not on him, the enticements of the world seduce us in such wise, that we pass not for the receiving of any warning that God gives us. If he call us by gentleness he can get nothing at our hands: and therefore he is fain to use threatenings. Hereby we see how he lets pass nothing that is meet to hold us in awe under his obedience. On the one side he uses mild and loving manner of speech unto us, (as I have told you) & says, Come ye unto me my children: Indeed I owe you nothing, but yet I will bind myself unto you: I promise you that if you serve me, it shall be for your profit. Thus our Lord speaks unto us, as a father that flatters his child to win him to be ruled by him & to employ himself in his service with a free-hearted affection. Howbeit, God perceiving that that is not enough to move us, uses threatenings, and says: Take heed, if you think to cast away my word, and yet to remain unpunished, you deceive yourselves. I must call you to account for it, I will not suffer my children so to mock me: I must be their Judge: & look not for any pardon, when you have abused my patience: I must double your punishment, and my vengeance must fall more horribly upon you. Therefore when God declares that our sins are

unpardonable, and yet we continue in them, and make none account of submitting ourselves unto him, specially when he applies himself every way unto us, to the intent we should remain in his obedience, and not perish: Since we see he has such a care of our salvation; must it not needs be that we are too too stubborn, or rather very beasts if we be not moved to fare the better, by the fatherly care which he shows towards us? Yes: And therefore being stirred up by the goodness and gentleness of God, whereof I speak even now, let us also quicken up ourselves with his threatenings. When we see that our flesh is over wanton, and that it draws us unto evil, let us say, Alas: And shall we shake off his yoke like wild beasts? What has God pronounced? Let us tremble therefore when we hear the threatenings of our God. For if the anger of an earthly king be the messenger of death (as Solomon says,*) what ought we to think of the anger of God, when it is denounced against us? So then, let us learn to tame ourselves with fear. When the temptations of Satan might prevail against us, and that our sins might be as baits to deceive us: let it come into our mind to say, What? Shall I under the pretense of some pleasure which will soon vanish, go and provoke the anger of my GOD, and so perish forever? After that manner (I say) ought we to call God's threatenings to our remembrance; and then to answer thereto Amen, and say, yes Lord, it is even so, it is no children's game. When thou pronouncest condemnation upon the wicked; thou art ready to execute it: and when thou hast once pronounced the word with thy mouth, it is all one as if we saw the fire already kindled to consume us. After that manner (I say) ought we to receive all the threatenings which GOD denounces against us. For that is the best

means to teach us to observe the Law, I mean so far as our weakness will suffer. For (as I have told you) it is not possible for us to come to perfectness indeed, as long as we are enclosed in this flesh of ours: but yet nevertheless we may well dedicate ourselves unto God, and be held in his fear, if on the one side his promises be in force with us, & again if on the other side we give ear unto his threatenings.

But now let us come unto the order which is observed in this place. Moses with the Priests of the Tribe of Levi, commanded the people saying, Six Tribes shall stand on the Hill of Ebal, and six shall stand on the Hill of Gerizim. And afterward he says, "Keep my Statutes and Commandments which I command you this day, for you are made a people unto your GOD." This has been already expounded: but it is good to bear that always in mind which has been said concerning it; to wit, that GOD speaks by the mouth of his Priests as if he were there visibly in his own person. And that is to the intent his words should be received with the greater reverence. For when we see but mortal men as we be: we are of opinion that whatever proceeds from them, may very well be rejected; and if there be no account made of it, we think the matter is not great. And thus we see how the word of God is often-times little esteemed. For when we see none speak but creatures like unto ourselves, we think that what they pronounce is nothing but a sound of words. But God will have the majesty of his word to be known: & although men bring it, and be the messengers thereof, yet will he not have the worthiness thereof to be diminished, so as men should not give audience unto it: but he will have every man to stoop to it and to receive the yoke which he puts upon them.

God therefore speaks in this place by Moses and by the Priests: but yet in such a language and kind of speech, that he will have people to lift up their minds more higher, and to know that although they be taught by the means and ministry of man, yet they ought to confess that God is the author of that word which men preach unto them, and that they ought to receive it as from God himself & so be silent to hear it, and make no reply or gainsaying against it: for such contempt is not done to a mortal creature, but God himself is despised by it. And therefore let us note well all the places whereby God authorizes his word, to the intent we may learn to hold ourselves unto it and to be ordered thereby: so as every of us do bow down his head, as often as men speak unto us in the name of God. And moreover we see also the order which God has appointed in his Church: he will have all the world to answer Amen: for we ought all to be partakers of the doctrine. It must not be kept in store only for great men, but the smallest also must be instructed by it, to the edifying and profiting of themselves. But however the case stands; there were always Priests to speak, who were ordained to teach the people according as it is said in the Prophet Malachi; "the law shall be in the Priests mouth, and he shall be the messenger of the living God, and they shall seek for knowledge at his lips." We see then that God in all times appointed some in the office of teaching the people, and of bearing abroad his word. And so nowadays we stand in need of such an order, and we know what Saint Paul says as touching this point, both in the 12th Chapter to the Romans, and in the 12th of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, and in the fourth to the Ephesians. And it is proved unto us also throughout all the holy scripture, that

God will have certain laws established, and certain men appointed to bear abroad his word, and to be teachers in his Church, to instruct the people in his name. Hereby we gather, that when God has appointed such order; all those who cannot suffer themselves to be taught by this common order with the whole body of the Church, may well protest, that they be Christians: but they come to the Church as holy as horses, bearing themselves in hand, that it is enough for them to have granted in a word, that the Gospel is the word of God. But contrariwise we see here, that if we will be of the body of the Church, and have God to take us for his children, we must hear the word of God as it is ministered unto us, by the ministry of men. But because this point has been handled largely heretofore, I do now but as it were glance at it by the way.

Also, there is this point: Today thou art made the people of God, if thou keep his commandments. Therefore, like as our Lord receives us into his house, so must we also wholly give ourselves unto him, knowing that to this end he has schooled us out from the rest of the world, and will have us to be his own, and as it were his peculiar inheritance. It is time indeed that all men are bound to serve him: but yet notwithstanding, when he calls us unto him, and shows himself our father, does he not bind us unto him, with a double bond? Yes, verily. Are we not then without all sense and reason, and altogether bewitched, if we be not moved to yield ourselves over to his will, so as he may guide us and bear rule over all our whole life? Then let us weigh well these words: Today thou art made the people

of the Lord thy God, and therefore keep his commandments. How are we made the people of God, but by being his Church, and by having the use of his sacraments, and that is all one as if he appeared among us? For we may not look that God should come down from heaven in his own person, or send his Angels unto us. But the true mark whereby he will be known to be among us is the preaching of his word purely unto us: for no doubt but then he bears rule in the midst of us. So then let this thing profit us, that we know that our Lord receives us unto himself and will have us to be of his own household. Seeing it is so, let us take pains to obey him in all our life, and to keep his commandments: let us not wander like brute beasts as the wretched unbelievers do, because they never knew what it was to be of the house of God.

But now let us come unto the rehearsal which Moses makes of the curses: he says first of all, Cursed be he who makes any Idol or any molten Image, or any carved Image: all this is abomination unto God: and cursed is he who puts it in any secret place. And all the people shall say Amen. Let us note that Moses does not specify in this place all the curses, every one by himself, but he sets down certain examples, to show that all they who swerve aside from the law of God seek nothing else but to run wilfully into utter ruin and destruction. The effect therefore of all this is, that if we will prosper, we must draw near unto God, seeing that he is the fountain of all happiness and prosperity. Whereas on the other side, all they who depart from him do go and cast themselves into utter destruction: but all they who cast off the yoke of God, that is to say, who yield not

themselves to follow his law and his word, all they depart from him, and do as much as in them lies to banish themselves from his presence. And so it is all one as if they did cast themselves into the bottom of hell, and sought nothing else in this present life but to provoke the vengeance of God against them, and so to seek their own woe. Behold what we have to bear in mind. Now God begins with his own service: and not without cause: for (as we have declared afore,) the law is divided into two tables: to show us that men ought first of all so to behave themselves as God may be honoured: and this is the first and principal duty which we ought to perform, because we are his creatures, and because he has fashioned us unto his glory: let us tend unto that end, and let our life be referred thereto, seeing the first table shows us so briefly how we ought to behave ourselves towards our God. That is the cause why God says now in these curses; Cursed be he who makes any Idol. But I have told you that Moses rehearses only certain sorts, and that is to comprehend the whole in one part, as we have seen examples thereof. In effect, therefore, when it is said: Cursed be he who makes any Idol, it is all one as if Moses had in general pronounced a curse upon them who falsify and corrupt the service and worship of God, as if he should say: You know how and after what manner our God will be worshipped of us; whoever invents any manner of Idolatry, whoever devises any manner of superstition, he makes Idols. And that is not to serve the living God, but rather to follow their own fancies and imaginations: and therefore they are all accursed. You see then how we ought to expound this place. And Moses meant to set down unto us in this place such a particular, as wherein we might most evidently

see an intolerable corrupting of the worship of God. For when God is so misshapen in any painting, or in any puppet, or in any other piece of wood or stone, that men will there represent his Image and say, It is a resemblance of him: it is too gross and outrageous dealing. Indeed, men think not so; as we see in popery, how they say, Lo yonder is God, and a remembrance of him. And are they not so brutish that they think there is no divine majesty in heaven, unless it be represented there in the shape of an Idol? But they who have any taste what GOD is, and have heard any syllable of his word, where it is said that God is an immortal and infinite spirit, the fountain of life: do know that he has too great injury done unto him, to be represented by a dead thing and by a corruptible creature, and to have his name given unto a puppet as if he were but a creature, and less than we. They, therefore, who have but a small taste of this doctrine, do abhor the setting up of an idol, and the imagination of serving God by going thereto, and that any should pray to a dead thing, or look for health from that, which can do nothing, neither good nor bad. Therefore if this were well marked, we should find that Moses meant in this place to make Idolatry more detestable, according to that rule which we have heretofore expounded. Yet notwithstanding we have two things to note in this place: the one is, that God cannot suffer his infinite majesty to be represented under stone, wood, painting, or in any other creature in the world. What must we do then when the case concerns the worship of GOD? We must lift up our minds above the world, and know that we may not stick fast here below, nor make any Idol or puppet unto him: for he cannot abide it. That is one point to be noted. Secondly, we have also

to note that God will not be served nor worshipped after our own manner, but he will have us to walk according to his word, without putting anything thereunto, or taking anything from it, so as all the inventions which men have forged are all one as if they had set up as many Idols. Indeed, they make themselves believe that God will like well of that which they do: but it is but a bare guess of them, while they have not an eye unto that which he likes. Therefore they serve their own fancies, and not the living God, who has given them such a rule as he will have observed. And therefore at a word all the worshipings of God (as they term them) wherein men are so devout after their own fancies, and whereof they have no warrant of the word of God, to say. This he has commanded me: are nothing but Idols of their own forging. Let this be well noted.

Now let us consider how God says, "Cursed is he who forges Idols." It is true that the Papists, when they take pains to trudge from altar to altar, to mumble their prayers before their Images, to set them out with wax candles, and to do their other dotages: if a man tells them that God dislikes all their doings, it spites them to be told so, and they fall to railing against God himself. But yet for all that, whereas they think they win a score of heavens, every step which they set forth is a casting of themselves into the gulf of hell. And why? Make they never so fair replies; yet the Judge gives this sentence upon them; "Cursed are all they who make Idols." Let them go seek their wages at the devil's hand: our Lord has already pronounced the sentence which is here contained, to wit, cursed are all Idolaters. If anyone says it is no such great harm for a man to do a thing of good

intent, and to say I think it is good, I believe it is well done: Yet notwithstanding God detests every whit of it, because it is a forging of a new God, when men turn themselves from the pure simplicity of the worship of God, to devise this or that. Although they think to do well, yet notwithstanding they are accursed. And why? For God dislikes and condemns what they do. And it is not for a mortal creature to promise this or that unto himself, but God must promise, and we must answer Amen. And likewise when he threatens, we must be confounded, and every mouth must be stopped before him: he must have audience, and we receive his threats and confirm them, as I have told you. And here is purposely mentioned a secret place to show that although a man be not convicted before the world, yet he ceases not to be guilty before God, and that the heavenly Judge will find him out well enough. Therefore let us not beguile ourselves, and think we shall escape and remain unpunished, when men reprove us not, nor convict us of the evil that we have done. For we may well seek starting holes, but yet will God find us out, seeing he says: "Cursed is he who makes an Idol, and puts it in a secret place." And again he says, "It is an abomination unto the Lord," to show that men must not beguile themselves, by standing upon their own opinion, or upon the judgment of the world: it is enough that God says, such a thing displeases me. Although the world like of us, yet gain we nothing thereby. So then let us take heed that we frame ourselves so unto the will of God, as that this world carries us not away, and that we serve not our own nor other men's lusts, but submit ourselves always unto our heavenly Judge. Thus you see what we have to bear in mind. For when God is to be served, we must not look whether

there be any witnesses of our doings here below; for although we may deceive the whole world, yet God sees us, and we cannot escape his sight. What lurking places then soever we have, let us know that our condemnation is ready at hand. And thereupon let us order our life so as GOD be served and honored, not only with our feet, our hands, and our eyes, but also with the service of our hearts, that is to say, with all our affections, and with all our thoughts given over unto him. And (to conclude) we are taught that the service of God is not without cause called spiritual: whereby we may understand, that it is not enough for us to do him reverence before men, by kneeling down, and by using of such other Ceremonies, or by abstaining from serving of Idols in the sight of men; but also in secret when every man is withdrawn into his secret places: even then must we avow him for our God, and all our affections must be held under his obedience, and we must have the pureness which Saint Paul speaks of, namely the obedience of faith, by which every of us may dedicate and consecrate himself wholly unto God.

Now let us kneel down before the Majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our faults, praying him that we may be touched more and more with true repentance, to be displeased with ourselves, that in applying our whole study to minding both his promises and his threatenings, we may not be so forward as to cast off his yoke, but rather be held back always by such means as are fit and convenient for us: and that we may yield unto him a willing service, to the intent that as he of his free goodness has called us unto him, so he also will guide and govern us by his holy spirit, that

we may give ourselves over unto him, and serve him in humbleness and fear, embracing his promises, and trembling at his threatenings: and that in the meantime he will make us feel that if we be so given to his service, he will make us to prosper, and we shall be most happy, and that especially because he has set before us the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven, which he has purchased unto us in the person of his only son. That it may please him to grant this grace not only to us, but also to all people and nations of the earth, etc.

On Wednesday the fourth of March, 1556.

The 151st Sermon

which is the third upon the twenty-seventh Chapter.

16 Cursed be the man who curses his father and his mother: And all the people shall say, Amen.

17 Cursed be he who moves his neighbor's boundaries: And all the people shall say, Amen.

18 Cursed be he who leads the blind astray: And all the people shall say, Amen.

19 Cursed be he who perverts the justice due to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow: And all the people shall say, Amen.

20 Cursed be he who lies with his father's wife, for he uncovers his father's garment: And all the people shall say, Amen.

21 Cursed be he who lies with any beast: And all the people shall say, Amen.

22 Cursed be he who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or mother: And all the people shall say, Amen.

23 Cursed be he who lies with his mother-in-law: And all the people shall say, Amen.

We have seen already why God ordained such solemnity, that the people should meet together on Mount Ebal, which is opposite to Gerizim, to pronounce the curses that are set down here. For when God has once uttered His will unto us, it is only reasonable that each of us should consent to it and confess that adhering to His word is the rule of all righteousness. The chief honor which God requires of us, as if it were setting our seals unto it, is to declare that there is no gainsaying or replying to what He speaks, but that it is altogether sure and ought to be adhered to. Furthermore, we ought to note that the condition of men agreeing to God's word is such that if they do the contrary in their lives, they condemn themselves with their own mouths. It is not enough for us to profess that whatever God says is rightful and reasonable; we must also show by our deeds that His

doctrine has full force and authority among us. So, whoever yields such confession with his mouth is his own judge without any other process if he does not follow what is taught him and what he knows to be rightful. Now we have seen how God spoke of idolatries and consequently of all superstitions. I have told you that it is enough for us to have here some examples touched to show us that God requires full obedience to His law from us, as shall be declared for a conclusion in the end. You see then that God ratified His whole service. Now He comes to the second table and begins with the honor and subjection that is due to the father and mother. Cursed shall that man be (says He) who curses his father or his mother. Now, this curse imports very much, for it comprehends all that is repugnant to the honor, obedience, and help which children owe to their fathers and mothers. Therefore, whoever does not honor his father and mother is cursed by God. We have well seen heretofore the punishment that was appointed for them: so much so that if any man had disobedient children, being brought before the Judges, they were (upon his single witness) to be stoned to death, and so such infection was to be taken away. For it is an unkindly and accursed thing that the children should set themselves against those who brought them into the world and have brought them up, and have taken so much pain and care for them. We know that a father occupies as it were the room of God towards his own children and offspring. It follows then that he who so lifts up himself against his father or his mother manifestly despises God, even as if he were a contemner of all religion. Here, by the way, God tells us that although Judges and Magistrates do not do their duty or if he who has done wrong to his

father and mother is born with; yet he is not therefore escaped. For many crimes lie buried in this world, which notwithstanding God reserves, and early or late they must come to account.

Let us mark well then that there is no more speaking of the execution of Justice which is to be done by means of law, for that has been spoken of before: but God declares that although they who have offended through disobedience are not punished here in this world or their faults are not known, or that no such examination is made of them as they deserve, yet they gain nothing thereby because there is a heavenly Judge who forgets not anything but keeps all things registered before Him, and He in the end will surely do His office. Therefore, let us think well upon this doctrine; and although men find no fault with us, nor any man vex or trouble us, let us not thereupon fall asleep, but rather every man summon himself, according to that which is told us here, and consider that we must come before the judgment seat of God. And therefore let us learn to walk in such a way that He may accept of us when we come there and as we may not stand in fear of the curse which is uttered here. Not that any of us can perform the Law (as I have declared more fully heretofore) but that it behooves us to tend thereunto and to put our endeavor to it. For although we be not altogether clean before God, but contrariwise guilty of many of the faults that are contained here, yet does He not lay them to our charge, so be it that we dislike of them and give not ourselves over to them nor let the bridle slack. Wherefore, let us learn to restrain ourselves and to be sorry, seeing we are not so perfect as were requisite. But yet therewithal (as I have

declared already), let us strain ourselves to please our Lord God and to obey Him; and let us have such a record in our own consciences as we may freely and with open mouth say, Cursed be he who has not followed the doctrine of salvation in such a manner as it is shown unto us. To make any long discourse of the honor which every man owes to his father and mother, it is not needful as now because the law has been expounded already heretofore. It suffices as now to know that in this text God declares that all disobedience, as well against fathers and mothers as against all superiors whom He has set in authority in this world, is intolerable in His sight. For He will not have us to live here disorderly like beasts, but He will have order and government observed among us. And that cannot be done except we stand in awe of such as bear any office for the common government of men. Whosoever then breaks God's order, let him look to be accursed, accordingly also as Saint Paul tells us, that in so doing we resist not creatures or men; but we make war against God Himself when we go about to overthrow the superiority which He has ordained and commended unto us. Mark that for one point.

Now it is added afterward, "Cursed shall he be who plucketh up his neighbor's boundaries, [meers, or landmarks]." We must always bear in mind what I have told you already; namely, that here under one kind, God comprehends all. And I expounded therewithal, that if the bounds of men's lands are not kept certain, no man shall be master of his own possessions, but all shall go to spoil and havoc. And surely the having of just weights and measures, the maintaining of lawful money, and the keeping of bounds and boundaries unchanged, are

things that have been ever privileged. For how might men buy and sell or use any trade among them if the coin be not lawful? Again, if weights and measures are falsified, in what taking are we? To what purpose shall justice serve anymore? To what end shall all the laws in the world serve? As much is to be said for bounds, boundaries, meers, and landmarks. So then, under this saying, God meant to show that it behooves us to observe equity and uprightness in dealing with one another. True it is that laws are made for the punishing of such offenses; insomuch that if any man shifts or removes his neighbor's boundary, he shall not be discharged by setting it in the right place again and by making amends for the harm that he has done, but he shall be openly punished also as for a heinous crime. As much is to be done for the falsifying of weights and for the having of wrong measures. As touching the counterfeiting of Coin, if a man has used it, it is not enough that he pay back that which he has wrongfully taken, but he must also die for it, and good reason. For otherwise (as I said), all laws were to be abolished. And it were better for us to be wild beasts than to live without those means which God has ordained and nature also has taught us. But put the case that some man defrauds his neighbor, be it by false measure or by some other wicked practice, and that he seeks to advantage himself by another man's loss, and the magistrate knows nothing thereof, by means whereof it escapes unpunished: yet it is shown to us here that in the end it must needs come to account before the heavenly Judge. If a poor man is put from his right or oppressed by authority, violence, or otherwise, and dare not say a word to it nor find an advocate to tender his case in this world, yet is God his

warrant, and those who think themselves greatly benefited by enriching themselves by hook or by crook shall at length find that it were much better for them to have had but one bit of bread to eat than to have had never so much to glut themselves withal, and in the meantime to abide the curse that is set down here. For God has no need of man's help. Put the case that all men dealt amiss here and that all things were confused and out of order: yet shall not this saying fall to the ground, that the man shall be accursed who plucks up his neighbor's boundary, but that God must needs do His office. True it is that He will have them to use the sword, into whose hand He has put it, and He has ordained that they should do so, and if they be slack and slow in doing it, He will show them that He appointed them not in vain to punish crimes and offenses. But yet cannot mortal men prejudice Him. When an earthly Judge discharges not his duty, it follows not that God's power is weakened thereby or that He is bereft of fit means to execute His office or that He is idle. For He is not like worldly Princes, which trust to their officers and are well contented to play the blind persons when things go amiss. "As for me," say they, "I understand that all things go well, and forasmuch as I have mine officers, my will is that they should behave themselves faithfully as I have commanded them." A Prince thinks it enough for him to have said the word, but God overlooks them and controls them. And although offenders and transgressors escape the hands of men, yet shall they be punished at His hands in the end. So then, let not our care be, lest we should be spied or lest men should take us tardy in working any deceit, but let us be mindful of this saying, "Cursed shall he be who pulleth up his Neighbor's

Landmark." Men perchance see it not a whit, but yet God beholdeth it, and we can no more eschew His eyes than His hand. Wherefore let us beware of all fraud and false dealing, assuring ourselves that our Lord watcheth over us, yea, and that in such wise as He will not suffer the poor to be wound in, nor the simple to be outraged or eaten up, and that those things shall abide unpunished, but that He will show in the end how it is not without cause that He claims to Himself the title to be the Judge of the world.

Now it is said further, "Cursed shall he be who causes the blind to stray out of his way or to stumble in his way." Here is yet a cruelty even against nature. For the more necessity a man is in, the more ought other men to pity him and to succor him. There is a poor blind man, men see him ready to take a fall, and they withhold him not from it. They who take pleasure herein must needs be altogether of a lewd and corrupt disposition, so as there is not one drop of common kindness in them. To be short, they must needs be lovers of all cruelty and mischief. For even the Heathen did greatly abhor that thing; in so much that in some places, such a deed was as grievously punished as murder, theft, or such other like things. However, commonly men made not a law for it. And the reason that was yielded for it was, that it seemed that every man ought to be sufficiently learned in the behalf of himself; so as it had been a superfluous thing to have said, "If a man see a blind man, let him set him in his way." Nevertheless (as I have declared before), we have to note that God extends his matter and doctrine yet further. And in effect, his meaning is to say, "Cursed shall he be who suffers his

neighbor to go astray for want of good Counsel." For as a blind man rushes against things, stumbles, and goes astray if he be not led and guided in his way, so also when we want Counsel and good advice, surely we are in the same plight that blind men are, unless we are succored. Yea and although a man have eyes, yet if he be in a strange and unknown Country, and go quite and clean from his way, and run wandering here and there, and men let him alone: it is all one as if they had made a blind man go out of his way, and so did the heathen men themselves construe it. It is not for us to seek excuses and to say, "Why so?" God speaks but of blind men only. Yea, but even they who had neither the law nor the Gospel could well skill to say so, and have showed us our lesson; namely that whoever shows not the way to a traveler when he sees him out of his way; is a very monster, and a detestable creature: and so is he also who is niggardly of the light of his candle. I see a poor man whose candle is out, and he comes to me to light it again. The doing thereof costs me nothing, and yet I say unto him, "You shall have none of me": and are such folk worthy to live upon the earth? What a dealing were that? Do not such folks deserve to be confounded? But (as I said before) this place treats not of punishment to be executed by the earthly Judges. God tells us that although such dealing be borne with, and that it be but laughed at: yet it shall come to account before him. Now since it is so, let every man look to himself. And first let us beware, that when our neighbors are in any extremity, we also be pitifully moved with compassion to succor them. Therefore, look as any man shall have need of our help; let us be pressed and ready to reach out our hand and to lend it to him. And especially if our Lord grant us the grace to be able to serve

our neighbor's turns, without straining of ourselves for the matter, or without cost: let us understand that he does us great honor. For whoever relieves him that is in need, is the minister of God. Thus God employs us in his service, and therewithal promises us that our labor shall not be lost; and ought not we then to be the more provoked thereunto? Mark this therefore for a special point, that such as are succorless, are here commended unto us by God. And moreover let us know, that if we are bound to guide the blind, lest they should stumble or stray out of the way, we ought to be much more forward and ready to advise a man, when we see he has need of counsel, and is likely to fall into some danger for want of our advice. But yet much more ought the way of salvation to be privileged: in so much that if we see a man overshoot himself, and is going into destruction; we must not disdain to warn him, saying, "Wretched creature, whither goest thou? What wilt thou do? Wilt thou needs thus willfully perish?" And especially when he does it of ignorance: If we then spare our tongues in that behalf, so as they be not used as instruments of salvation to the poor ignorant soul, who would fain be taught: surely such recklessness shall not abide unpunished, nor be forgotten before God. Although neither Law nor Justice proceed against it; yet shall this curse be ratified upon it. To be short, let us mark, that our Lord meant by this threat, to induce us to pity and compassion, in succoring all such as have need of us: And especially in employing ourselves when we see poor ignorant persons destitute of counsel, and that we ourselves are of ability to bring them back again into the right way. Thus much concerning that point.

Now follows immediately concerning cruelty: "Cursed be he that wrests the right of the stranger, the widow, and the fatherless." True it is that to the uttermost of our power we must maintain every man's right. Nevertheless, our Lord in this place as before, speaks of widows, fatherless, and strangers, because they lie open to a great number of injuries and outrages, and no man sets himself in their defense; nay, few have any care at all of them, because they are not able to make any recompense. Look upon a Stranger, see how he shall be fleeced, how he shall be vexed, how he shall be wronged, yea and that openly; and yet it shall be winked at. And why? For every man will be friendly to his own neighbor; and as for that man, he is not of the same country, he is not of the same city, he belongs not unto us. Thus you see how the poor man shall be left destitute. In like case are Widows and Fatherless Children. For as for the fatherless child, men look not that he should acknowledge what is done for him today or tomorrow. Sometimes he lies in his Cradle, and knows not who does him good and who does him evil, because he hath no discretion: he cannot requite the pleasure that is done unto him: and therefore every man Jetteth him alone. In the same case do widows stand, specially when they are poor, and are of no great countenance to the worldward: for then every man shrinks from them; and so they are left up as it were to the spoil. Now because these things come commonly to pass, God doth purposely take such folk into his protection, saying that if any man do wrest or hinder the right of the stranger, the widow, and the fatherless, he will be revenged thereof: insomuch that although it be not accounted of before the world, but rather the doers of such outrages be well liked of; yet will he call

them before him, and show that he had a care of those whom he had taken into his safekeeping. And so under one kind, God meant to show briefly, that if we tread upon such as have no credit, nor mean to defend themselves, nor any stud to lean unto, as in respect of the world, he reserves to himself the punishing thereof. That is the thing which we have to gather upon this text.

Now, to wrest or hinder the Right is nothing else but unjustly and without cause to oppress the feeble and weak, and such as have nobody to support and maintain them. Truly that manner of speech is set down in the holy scripture, which is all one with this which we are wont to say, to dash a good case, but yet in general it is as much to say, as, to disappoint a man of his right. Now, therefore, when I pill a man, when I rake to myself the things that belong to him, when I strip him out of his substance, when I thrust him out of all that ever he hath, when I overmaster him, and I take more upon me than becomes me: then do I hinder his right. And so we see (as I said before) that in this text God shows that he will be the Judge of all the outrages which are done to such as have no means to revenge themselves, and are forsaken and forgotten on the behalf of men. But were we well advised, surely we would be more afraid to have God our adversary party, than all the whole world together. And indeed therein we show that we give small credit to God's word: in so much that if a man be of great kindred and have many friends, if a man be rich or highly favored of the world: we dare not meddle with him; and although he have molested us, yet will we sweetly swallow it up, and in any wise beware that we provoke him not. Thus will men bear

with all such as have wherewith to maintain themselves to the worldward; when in the meanwhile they that are destitute shall be pilled and eaten up. Yet notwithstanding God is their defender, and says, that in oppressing such folk, we make war against him, and therefore that he also must be fain to lift up his arm in the maintenance of those whom he hath taken into his protection. But men care not for that: and do we not thereby betray our unbelief? For had we a true and lively feeling that God jests not here, in telling us that his curse shall light upon those which shall so have mistreated the feeble sort and such as have no maintainers: it is certain that we would quake whenever we were tempted to do evil to any poor creature that hath no stay, credit or authority in the world. I see this man hath no kinsfolk nor friends; I see no man regards him; I see he is undefended: now if I advance myself against him, or if I trouble him; God sets himself against me, he sets his mark upon the poor man, and he tells me that if I meddle with such a person, he will take the case to himself, and I shall have impeached his own majesty. If we did think on this, certain it is, that we should be much more restrained and held back by his fear than we are by all the favors and displeasures of this world whatsoever. Nevertheless, we see the clean contrary, we be very dullheads in this behalf. And therefore let us bethink ourselves to be more watchful than we have been. And since we dare not attempt anything against those which are armed with all defense, and have wherewith to uphold themselves in this world, let us much less do any outrage or injury to those whom God does as it were brood under his wings, and of whom he declares himself to be the protector: and let us also consider well, that though the world say

not a word to us, but rather allow of us for it, God's vengeance must light upon us double, specially when through such contempt we shall have taken greater liberty to do evil. For it is certain that the cruelty which is committed against poor folk which have no stay to lean unto, is a manifest contempt of GOD, and an utter scorning of him, as who would say he were unable to execute the vengeance which he has threatened. Now when GOD is so lightly esteemed, think we that he will bear it? You see here first how this kind of outrage is even against nature. For if we were not forepossessed with our wicked affections; surely every of us would confess, that it is much worse to have hurt or devoured a poor weak creature; than to have done harm to a rich man which is well allied and has rescue and power to revenge himself. All men will grant that. Therefore is it one of the greatest and most outrageous faults that can be among men. Again it is a scorning of GOD; which is a devilish wickedness when we be not moved at this saying of GOD, "I have these folk in my hand, I will maintain them, and whosoever advances himself against them, must needs have me to be his adversary party." If we make no account of this, as though GOD had never spoken it: is it not a token that we be too hard-hearted? And therefore (as I have said already) let us learn to bethink ourselves better; and to have a better regard of him: and when we be conversant among such folk as are despised to the worldward, without alliance, without friends, without succors: let us beware that we deal after such a sort with them, as it may always run in our minds that they be God's children, and that the heavenly Judge will not forget the wrongs that are done unto them, specially

seeing he hath told us here, that those which have been so cruel to the feeble sort shall not escape his curse.

Now Moses addeth further, Cursed be he which lieth with his father's wife, Cursed be he which lieth with a beast, with his own Sister, or with his Mother-in-law. This place treateth of all the infamous sorts of lechery, yea even of the loathsomest sorts of them; whether it be incest or buggery or such other infections. And it is not without cause that God chooseth out those kinds; for it is to the end that we should be touched with the more fear and terror when we go about any kind of Lechery. God could have said simply in one word, Cursed shall he be which committeth any lechery: and in very deed, that is the mark whereat this text aims. Nevertheless he contenteth not himself so, but (as I said) he chooseth the examples which are most outrageous. And why? To the intent we should be touched the more to the quick. For we see how slow we be in hearkening to the things which God telleth us. We have his word; but what for that? It passeth away. We will not stick to say, that it behooveth us to keep ourselves from breaking his Law. But if vices be spoken of but in a word or twain, shall they be esteemed as they ought to be, that is to say, as crimes before God which deserve endless death? We see how every man dispenses with himself, so as the privy thief makes no conscience of filching, till of a petty thief, he becomes a robber; and then (to his seeming) all is nothing that he hath done afore, except he become a murderer and a cutter of men's throats. Thus do men proceed in degrees of Thievery: and as much do they also in Lechery. For they make account of it but as of a thing of nothing, until they fall into the

greatest extremities. Forasmuch then as we be dulled, so as we be not touched with any such fear as were requisite, when God condemneth sin and would pluck us back from it: therefore it is needful that he should set before us the examples that are most detestable, even such as (spite of our teeth) must needs make the hair to stand on end on our heads when we hear them named; to the intent that no man should beguile himself with fond flattery, but every man be well ware that he hold himself under the obedience of God. Here then we see two things: The one is, that GOD hath condemned all unchastity, and all manner of Lechery: and secondly we see how he hath purposely chosen the things that are most ugly, as Incest, and uncleanness against kind, as the meddling even with brute beasts. And why is that? To the end that men should have occasion to bethink themselves the better, and not to do as they be commonly wont, which is to hearken and to lay down their ear to it and to say, All this is very true; and yet to make no account of it, but to fare as folk amazed, as though a man had knocked them on the head with a beetle. Thus much concerning the first point.

And we see how God standeth much upon Incest, when he saith, Cursed shall he be which lieth with his mother-in-law, the wife of his Father, or with the daughter of his father, or of his mother, or with his own daughter-in-law, and such other degrees. And why? Herein we see how men have in all ages overshot themselves in this behalf. For God could well skill to apply remedies according to men's diseases. Therefore it is not for naught that he standeth so much upon those things. And why? For inasmuch as he saw that men had

need to be held short; and that such kinds of wickedness would have reigned, if he had not set himself stoutly against them, and cast bars in their ways, as if he should have said, stay there, and play not the loose colts; if he had not so provided beforehand, that men might not rush forth into such vices: surely all had gone to confusion. And if this wickedness were in those days; certainly we be not exempted from it nowadays. And therefore let us understand, that the more earnestness our Lord hath used here in this behalf; the more doth he warn us to occupy ourselves in the minding of those things, so as we bethink us of them day and night, early and late, to the end we may walk in such chastity and sobriety, as our life may not break forth into such beastly sins; but as we may be given to God to serve him purely. That (say I) is the thing which we have to gather upon this place. And let us not flatter ourselves: for God knoweth well what is meet for us; or else he would not have spoken here of things that are so shameful, that we may be ashamed even to name them. And what then? Had not God a regard thereto? Yes, that had he: but he knew that the heart of man is a dreadful dungeon, and that we must be restrained as it were by force, or else he should never be able to compass us. Now then, let this provoke us the more to look nearly to ourselves, that we overshoot not ourselves one way nor other, but that we be vigilant to dedicate ourselves to the service of God with all pureness, as I said afore.

And moreover let us understand, that lechery in itself is so loathsome a thing before God, that although men make no great account of the punishing thereof; yet shall we not therefore make the better market,

at leastwise when we come before the heavenly throne. For it is no small thing, that God banisheth all whoremongers and lechers out of his kingdom, as is said thereof both in the first Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians (as we have seen not long since,) and also in the Epistle to the Hebrews. That is the thing in effect, which we have to bear in mind: namely that God will not have men to exceed in their fleshly lusts, by accompanying together like brute beasts; but that every man should live chastely in marriage, and have such regard of honesty in that behalf, as nature be not forgotten by the companying of the son-in-law with his stepmother, or of the father with his own daughter, or with his daughter-in-law, or by the marrying of the brother with his own sister, but that those degrees be observed. For without such order, what would come of it? Wherein should we differ from Bulls and Asses? Thus ye see what we have to gather upon the first point, in that our Lord hath here condemned all manner of unchaste dealings, and will not have men to behave themselves as lawless in those cases, but to dedicate themselves unto him, and consider that their bodies are the Temples of the Holy Ghost, and members of our Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore that they must repress their wicked affections. Mark that for one point.

Secondly (as I have noted already), God hath set down such examples here before our eyes, as ought to make us afraid, in that he speaketh of such as against nature do so company with their own mothers, their stepmothers, or their Sisters. He speaketh of them expressly, to the intent that from the one we should come to the other, as we see he doeth in all his Law. And this hath been declared

more at length heretofore. When he will condemn hatred, he speaketh of murder. And why? If a man tell us that no man ought to hate his brother; we easily grant it to be sin; but yet we make no conscience to do it. But when God saith, that he which hateth his brother is a murderer: then are we the more abashed and restrained. Likewise in this text, for as much as the scorers do but jest at whoredom; they do also bear themselves in hand, that God ought not to call them to account for it. And this vice is not of this day or of yesterday's breeding: we see it hath been in all ages, as Moses reporteth here. And therefore God nameth the detestablest kinds of lechery, to the intent that thereupon we should conclude thus, that if we live not chastely, we shall fall from one evil to another, until we be fallen into such a bottomless gulf, as shall be horrible to think on. That is the thing which we have to remember upon this text. But we ought to make our benefit of this warning, considering the blockishness that is in us. We think ourselves to be very sharp-witted and apt to conceive: and yet we understand not anything in the doctrine of God; we be so dull-headed, that he is fain to chew things beforehand to us, or else we would not be moved with them. To be short, we have less wit and reason than young babes have. Let men commend themselves as much as they list, and let them glory upon opinion that they be very able: yet are they so dull-headed, that we should play the very brute beasts, if our Lord did not chew things rudely unto us. And what is the cause thereof? Forsooth that we be forepossessed with our fleshly affections, and none is so deaf as he that will not hear, as they say. Since we see this, let us bethink ourselves the better, and when men chew things grossly unto us, let

us not think they do us wrong, as some do, who be so nice, that if a man use a rough style to them, "Oh," say they, "I understood all this by a word or twain; by like I am a little babe." To be short, they be weary if a man bring them not matter of great sharpness: for they fondly presume in their own imagination, that even at the first dash they know all that is necessary. But behold, God speaketh here in another style and language. Why doth he so? He seeth there is need. So then let us suffer ourselves to be taught according to our capacity; and seeing we be slowed; if our Lord waken us, let us receive it meekly, and learn to do ourselves good by it. And so you see what we have to gather upon all these texts.

Now whereas here is mention made of striking [or smiting] one's neighbor secretly: it is spoken against all hatred and rancor, and serveth for a conclusion. A man might demand here how it comes to pass, that GOD doeth here curse those whose offense is in things whereof no mention is made in his Law: for I have told you heretofore, that it is enough for a man to have observed the things that are contained in the ten commandments; and also that the full perfection of our life is set down there. But no mention is made there concerning the blind. And how happeneth it then that God doeth here denounce vengeance against the thing that is not forbidden in his Law? Verily herein we see (as it hath been expounded already) that our Lord in his Law requireth all things that concern charity; as, that we should succor one another, and that there should be such a common league among us, as that every man should spend himself in helping his neighbor. Whatever is contrary to this, is forbidden

and condemned by the law of God. And therefore it is said here now; Cursed shall he be which smiteth his neighbor secretly. Under this saying, our Lord hath comprehended all the misuses that we can offer to our neighbor: insomuch that if we give him but a fillip, it is as a kind of murdering before him. And we see how the man which doeth but grind his teeth at his brother, is condemned to hell fire: and what shall then become of him which shall have lifted up his fist? Surely, even to stir a man's tongue against his neighbor; is a sin worthy of grievous punishment. If we do but grunt in way of scorn or disdain; it is forbidden. How much more then shall we be blamed, if we go about to outrage them any manner of way? Let us mark therefore, that here under one particular, God doeth generally comprehend all outrage, violence, and misdemeanors which we can use towards our neighbors. And he saith expressly; in secret, or privately, to the intent we should be still put in mind of that which I have told you heretofore; namely that in this behalf, the case standeth not upon the yielding of account unto men. Put the case that we have offended in breaking all the commandments, and yet notwithstanding that no man challengest us for it, but rather that authority itself allow of our doings, and that when we be accused for it, we be acquitted of it, or that no man dare complain of the misorders which we have committed: let us put the case it be so: yet doeth GOD speak otherwise, saying; that if we have done our neighbor any harm secretly, his blood shall cry out against us for vengeance, even when we think ourselves escaped.

And we see what is said of Abel: although no man gave information against Cain, nor any process went out against him; yet did the blood of him that was murdered, speak. God saith not, "I have heard say," but, "the blood of thy brother crieth unto me, against thee." Here then we see that God threateneth us not with any punishment to be suffered at man's hand: but rather telleth us that we must walk before him and in his presence. And although we fear not any earthly Justice; yet we ought not to forbear to bridle ourselves short, for as much as he doeth his office, and the vengeance which he hath spoken of here, must needs be executed upon all such as have escaped by favour, or cloaked their crimes, yea or offended so cunningly as no man could come to the knowledge of it. Seeing it is so, let us look that we enter into our own consciences, and that we have God's Law written there, so as we have not an eye to men, as who would say, "I have not been blamed or reprov'd": but rather consider that our GOD watcheth over us, and understand the office of his word to be such as is written in the epistle to the Hebrews; that is to wit, that when it is preached unto us; then all things must come to trial, and it must enter in, even to the secretest thoughts of our hearts. Now if God's word have such power: let us assure ourselves that much more it hath the office which is attributed unto it. Wherefore let us be restrained by this means, and when we have served God with our hearts, let our life be so answerable thereunto, that when we shall come before our Lord Jesus Christ, we may show that we were truly minded to serve him, and not to please mortal men.

Now let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God with acknowledgement of our faults, praying him to vouchsafe to give us true repentance of them; and moreover to bear with us until he have rid us quite and clean of all our sins, and of all our spots; and to make us so to profit by the things which we hear, as we may learn more and more to renounce ourselves, and to repress our wicked lusts, until he have clothed us again with the purity of that righteousness whereunto he calleth us. And so let us all say; Almighty GOD heavenly father, etc.

On Monday the 9th of March, 1556.

The 152nd Sermon,

which is the fourth upon the twenty-seventh Chapter.

24 Cursed be he which smiteth his neighbour privily: And all the people shall say, Amen.

25 Cursed be he which taketh gifts to smite the soul of guiltless blood: And all the people shall say, Amen.

26 Cursed be he which confirmeth not all the words of this law by doing them: And all the people shall say, Amen.

WE understand by this text that the thing which has been said before is very true; namely, that God meant to teach the people of old time that it was not enough for them to discharge themselves before men or to escape blame and punishment here, but that they must look up higher and consider that there is a Judgment seat in heaven, before which we must one day answer and make our account. That is the place whereon we must think if we will discharge ourselves of our duty. For we may well beguile men in making a fair countenance, and again, we may so order our lives that no man may find any fault in us as touching our outward deeds; and yet in the meantime, if our hearts be full of wicked lusts, if it grieves us to be held in awe, if we grate our teeth against God: what obedience is that? Therefore let us note that whereas in this text it is said: Cursed shall he be which smiteth his neighbour privily: God condemns not only the faults that come to knowledge before men but also the crimes that lie hidden. And therefore if a man have lived in such a way that he cannot be rebuked of the world but rather is praised and commended, he must not thereupon fall asleep, but he must examine his heart and consider well whether there be any lurking hole or back nook there within. For if the thoughts be evil, although men perceive them not, yet will God always do the office of a Judge. And if our own hearts reprove us (as Saint John says), God sees much more clearly.

So then this text serves well to humble us. And indeed, we ought to remember this other sentence of Saint John where it is said that whosoever hates his neighbor privately, although he cloak his hatred so as it be not perceived, or rather make a show of love: that man

fails not to be condemned before God. And so you see in effect what we have to bear in mind. Let us not busy our heads about men's reports. Although a man be well reported of here in this world, yet let him not flatter himself therefore, but let him summon himself before God and consider whether he be faulty in his heart. Let not men bring hither their own opinions and fancies; for all such things shall be refused, they will serve to no purpose. And therefore let us walk with unsayed heart before God. For we know he regards not the outward appearance, according as it is said in the first book of Samuel, but he requires the heart and truth, as is said in the fifth chapter of Jeremiah. And look what is said here concerning murders and fightings, the same must we extend to all other crimes. For if God calls them to account who have done any outrage to their neighbors, although the same be unknown to the world, think we that robberies, and treasons, and frauds, and railings, and slanderings, and such like things shall pass away unspoken of? And therefore let us learn that we cannot by any means eschew the hand of God nor escape His vengeance if we foster vices in our hearts which are not apparent unto men. And that we may the more benefit ourselves by this doctrine, let every one of us examine himself aright in his heart when he comes to hear the word of God. For it behooves us to be reproved inwardly, as Saint Paul speaks thereof in the fourteenth Chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. Every man, I say, must search his own thoughts and affections to the very bottom. Also, it is the peculiar office of God's word to be a sharp sword and to divide asunder our thoughts from all our affections and likings, and to enter even into the marrow of the bones, and to leave

nothing undiscovered. Seeing it is so, let us prevent God's judgment and not tarry till He curse us and ban us for the guiltless blood which cries out against us; but let every one of us condemn himself as soon as he has offended, and let him be sorry in his heart and beseech God of His infinite goodness and mercy to deliver us from the curse which is denounced against all such as have so misbehaved themselves in secret and not been convicted thereof before men.

It followeth: "Cursed shall he be who shall have taken gifts to do any wrong to his neighbor, and especially to smite the soul of innocent blood." For so does Moses speak word for word. Nevertheless, the word "soul" means life. And because the blood is the proper seat of life, therefore it is said the "soul of the innocent blood." Surely, although a man be faulty, yet it were not lawful to buy and sell his life. But I have told you already that God has set before us the crimes that are most detestable, to the intent to waken us the better, because we are not sufficiently moved when he speaks of common faults. For those things slip away, and we bear ourselves in hand that it is no hard matter to get forgiveness of them. Now, for as much as there is so great slackness in men, therefore in this place God has chosen the offenses which even of nature we ought to abhor. For if the life of an innocent person be bought and sold, it is a horrible matter; every man will say that such wicked conspiracy is not to be suffered. Thus do we now see the meaning of God. But although this thing be sufficiently condemned with full mouth, yet do not men cease to put it too much in use. And for proof hereof, look upon the practices that are wrought continually to oppress the poor and simple sort. True it

is that they shall not always be in danger to have their throats cut, but yet for hurting of them, what in their persons and what in their goods, men are still guilty of murder before God. And as for the seeking of byways to disappoint the right of the innocent and the practicing of devices against such as seek to live in peace and concord, it is too common a thing; and therefore this law is no more than needed. True it is (as I have said before) that at the first push we can well enough say that there is no reason why we should continue in so great and so excessive forwardness; every man will say by and by, it is against nature; but yet the common use and custom are clean contrary. And therefore let us mark well the doctrine that is set down here; namely, that God cannot abide so great a crime unpunished, as the disappointing of the right, whereby the party that has not offended should be oppressed against all right and reason. And truly, God speaks here, as well of judges that have been corrupted to oppress a poor man, as of those that have sold themselves or have set themselves to hire to murder, beat, or strike men; as these squaring ruffians do, which seek to be set at work in beating men or in quarreling with them: all these kinds of offenders has God utterly condemned in this text. And under one particular, he comprehends generally all, as I have said before. And so the thing in effect which we have to gather is that covetousness must not lead us to hurt any man at all. We see now that this doctrine extends itself very far. For what is the cause of the committing of so many cousinages, oppressions, outrages, and injuries but only the seeking of self-profit? I would fain please a man that is in authority because that to my seeming he is able to requite me again; and hereupon I, for his

sake, do fall to oppressing one and to tormenting another. And afterward, that is not enough; unless I use other manner of dealings, so as the matter grows to be endless and out of all measure. So much the more, therefore, does it stand us in hand to mark well this doctrine where it is said: "Cursed shall he be who takes reward to do men wrong."

And hereunto answers that which is said in the fifteenth Psalm: namely, that if we will be God's household folk and dwell in His Church, we must beware of taking rewards to hurt the guiltless. If God banishes all such out of His kingdom and from the company of the faithful, as have gone about to misbehave themselves after that fashion by setting themselves to sale and hire through their covetousness, what remains for them but utter cursedness? For when God once disclaims us and acknowledges us no longer for any of His, needs must we be accursed. Wherein lies all our happiness? It is said in the Psalm, "Right happy be those folk whose God is the everlasting." The way then for us to be happy is to be taken of God into His flock; and if He cast us out, needs must all mischief light upon our heads. Since it is so, let us learn so much the more to restrain ourselves, and let every one of us be contented with that which he has, and let us not seek to advance ourselves by unlawful means; lest the profit which we have gripped to ourselves become as cudgels or rather as stabs with a dagger to the poor, whom we shall have wounded by raking so to ourselves by hook or by crook. Therefore, let us learn to have both our hearts and our hands clean from all annoyance and misdealing if we will be blessed of God and

taken to be of the number of the faithful. Thus, you see, in effect, what this sentence importeth.

Now for a conclusion, it is said: "Cursed shall he be who confirms not the words of this law by performing them." Here we see yet better the thing which has been declared heretofore: namely, that GOD meant to authorize his whole Law in general, without excepting any one point of it, notwithstanding that he have set down but some particular examples thereof. The point then whereunto the solemnity redounds which God caused to be made upon Mount Ebal, and likewise over against it on Mount Gerizim, is that the people should know that this Law is the Rule of all perfection, and that God who is the author thereof is not to be dallied with; but rather that it is to be received with all reverence, yea, and that every man ought to protest with his mouth that it is good reason that GOD should be obeyed; and that all the transgressors of his will should condemn themselves without making any reply in their own excuse; and willingly acknowledge themselves worthy of death and of all mischief unless they submit themselves obediently to the serving of God. For this cause, therefore, it is said: "Cursed shall he be who confirms not the words of this Law." He speaks not here of some one commandment or twain, or of some part of them, but of the whole Law and of every part and parcel thereof, without any exception. And indeed, we ought to bethink us how Saint James says that he who has forbidden to steal has also forbidden to commit adultery; and that he who has forbidden murder has also forbidden false witnessing. We must not then rend God's Justice in pieces. After whatever sort soever we

offend, surely we violate GOD'S Law and despise his majesty. But he will be acknowledged in his Law throughout in all points, and not in part, as I have told you before. Seeing it is so, let us mark that God has knit his commandments together to show us that it is not for man to put them asunder, as we see many do, who will needs indent with GOD to abstain from some one sin and bear themselves in hand that they are discharged when they can say, "Well, yet have I not offended in all points; indeed, I am blameworthy for such a sin, but as for in all the rest, I have obeyed God." The thief will boast that he is no whoremonger; the murderer will say he is no swearer; the whorehunter will likewise have his excuse, that he overshoots not himself in other things, as that he is not cruel or such like. But what? As I said before, God will not have his law to be cantered after that fashion into pieces and gobbets; it is a righteousness which consists of ten commandments knit together in one bond. God, therefore, must be hearkened to, both in the first word and in the last, and as well in the fourth as in the second. Seeing it is so, let us remember how it is said here that God will have us to confirm the words that are contained in his Law, so as it is not enough for a man to have discharged himself of some piece; God will not content himself with that, neither will he take such service for payment, but he will have men to give themselves wholly unto him. And with what condition? Lord, seeing that thy will is contained in thy Law, let our life be conformable thereto. For it belongs not to us to part them asunder; we have no such liberty. Also (as I have declared before), it is too gross a folly to think that we can bear God in hand that we have a

good will to honor him, and in the meantime despise him in one thing or another.

And it is said here, "To confirm the words by performing them." Here Moses shows after what sort we accept the doctrine which is delivered to us in the name of GOD. It is not in laying our ear to it, or in confessing with our mouth that it is true and rightful; that is not enough. For all is but hypocrisy if our life be repugnant thereunto; and it will fall our according to this saying of Saint Paul, that whereas we confess with our mouths that we believe in GOD, we deny him in our life. Wherefore let us mark well that the true trial of our faith and obedience is to have our life answerable thereunto, and to show by our doings that we have not been taught in vain. That is the thing which we have to mark upon this speech where Moses says that we must confirm the words of this Law by performing them; yea verily, by performing them, not by only protesting that they be good and rightful (for that were but a small matter), but by straining ourselves to serve God, by applying our whole endeavor that way, and by fashioning all our works according to his will. That is the good confirmation: that is the way for us to protest that God is righteous and that he has given us a good, sure, and infallible rule, such as we ought to observe. Now we see in effect the contents of this sentence; whereby we must understand that God has not enjoined us a piecemeal obedience but will have us to receive his law to the uttermost in all points without exception. We see likewise that it is not enough for us to say that GOD has not commanded anything which is not righteous but that we also must show an accord and

consent thereunto in our life by framing it after all his commandments.

Moreover, it behooves us now to see in what state we should be if this Curse should take place upon us. Certainly, all men are here denounced accursed. And this curse imports as much as if it were said that all are damned, all are lost, all are forlorn. Take the most righteous persons that ever were in the world, and by this sentence, they deserve to be cast away. There is neither Abraham, nor any of the patriarchs, nor David, nor all the Prophets, that can be exempted from this condemnation. God, by his Prophet, avouches Job, Daniel, and Samuel for the most righteous, and for such as were in manner blameless; yet must even they also be wrapped in this same curse. And as for David, he confesses it with his own mouth, saying: "Lord, enter not into account with thy Servant, for no man living shall be justified in thy sight." There David speaks not of the common people only; but he puts himself also in the number. True it is that in other places he declares sufficiently that it was his whole seeking to serve God, and that his desire tended that way; yet notwithstanding he acknowledged that he came far short of discharging himself or of having such perfection as was requisite. If he yielded himself guilty as well as other men, what shall we do now? But here is a dreadful sentence, and such a one as ought to make the hairs stand stiff upon our heads: "Cursed shall he be which performs not all the words of this law." And who is he that speaks this? It is God. Then is it such a definitive sentence as admits no appeal from it. For he will have all men to confess it to be so; yea, he will have every man to confess it

with his own mouth. And what remains then for us to do? Where is the hope of salvation? Hereby we see that if we had but the ten commandments of the law, we should utterly be undone and perish, and that it behooves us to have recourse to his mercy, which outgoes his justice, as says Saint James. God's goodness then must take place towards us, to deliver us from the confusion wherein all of us should have been if the said sentence should stand, and that there should be no grace to outgo it. And truly Saint Paul in the third to the Galatians proves by this text that we cannot become righteous by our works, but that it behooves us to be made righteous by faith only; that is to say, by the mere grace of God, because we are condemned everyone if God enters into account with us. For why? "Cursed shall he be which performs not all the words of the law." If a man replies, "Yea, but if a man does perform them, why should he not become righteous thereby? And why should he not be paid his hire at God's hand according to his deserts?" Saint Paul presupposes that there was never yet any man found, nor any can possibly be found, which performs all the words of the law and all that ever God commands. Indeed, it has been a common saying, That GOD'S Law is not impossible. And at this day when the Papists reason against us, they think it an invincible argument to prove their freewill. "Why should GOD have commanded us to love him with all our heart if we be not able to do it? It were too repugnant that GOD should exact more of men than they are able to do: nay, in so doing, he should be unjust and cruel." After that manner do the Papists reason. But Saint Paul, on the contrary part, says, "Cursed shall he be which performs not all the Commandments." And he presupposes (as I said before) that no

man performs them, and that it is impossible to find any such man. Whereupon he infers his conclusion, "Then is all mankind undone if they enter into examination of works so as men must be punished according to their deservings: GOD must needs cast them off and utterly damn them." And so we have an excellent lesson in this text. For it is as much as if GOD struck down all the Children of Adam with one blow of a beetle, yea and thundered down upon them to fling them into such a dungeon of confusion, as they might perceive that in themselves they are all damned and perished. But we tarry not there. For when God has once humbled us, he gives us the fit means of deliverance from the condemnation, as shall be showed more plainly hereafter. But ere we proceed so far, let us consider how the Papists deceive themselves. They see well enough that no man performs the law of God; and although they forge the fantastical arguments which I spoke of, saying that God commands not anything which is not in the power of men to do, yet are they convicted even by their own experience that all men are sinners, that all men have done amiss (as the holy scripture also tells us), that there is not any man living upon the earth (as Solomon says) which sins not, and that all men have need of the grace of God. The Papists then, although they well see this, yet do they wrangle still, saying that that is before we be regenerated again by God's spirit. Nevertheless, if they be pressed, they must needs confess in the second place, that even the holiest folks are still imperfect, and that there is some frailty in them. And though they would not confess it, yet does the holy scripture show it, and every man feels it in himself. Now then, wherefore do the Papists so greatly maintain the righteousness of

works, and bear themselves in hand that we deserve well to be recompensed, and that we purchase or earn the kingdom of heaven? How comes it to pass that they be so brutish and so beastly? It is because they imagine that although we perform not the law, yet nevertheless we fail not to merit or deserve; and this they term a righteousness in part. They say that all men do amiss indeed; that is true: and that in that respect they be faulty before God, and through rigor do well deserve to be condemned. Nevertheless, that when they have the righteousness in part, that is to say, when they do partly obey the law: that doing of theirs is worthy to be accepted and to be put into the account and reckoning. And that is the thing wherein they glory so much. After that manner then there are deservings in men, though they perform not the whole law. That is for one point.

Again, they have another devilish imagination; which is, that when they have done amiss, they can make amends unto GOD by their own satisfactions, and can ransom themselves, so as they shall go scot-free, at leastwise in their own seeming. They will well confess in one word, we be endangered; but yet does it not follow that we have no means to shift it off, and to make GOD to accept in exchange, whatever we bring unto him. Hereupon have they founded all their good devotions as they term them, as Pilgrimages, Masses, and Year-minds, with all their free will devotions, as their fastings and diverse other things; in so much that even their Shrift is put among their works of satisfaction. Again the prattling of some Paternosters, the babbling before a Puppet, the chanting of some Mass, the setting up of some Tapers, and such other things, are all of them such

recompenses as GOD cannot find any fault at all with them, howbeit, because they see themselves overcharged with those things: they forge a sort of petty inventions, wherewith to play with GOD. And therefore they have devised venial sins; in so much that if a man be tempted to wicked desires, yet he shall not have offended God, until he be willing and perfectly consenting to the performance thereof. If a man be tempted in himself, if a man be moved to do evil; all this is no deadly sin, say the Papists; it is but venial sin, and one sprinkle of holy water is enough to wash it clean away. But contrariwise, we know how it is said; "O Israel, what is it that thy GOD requires of thee; but that thou should love him with all thy heart?" Here you see how the righteousness of the Law is, that a man love GOD with all his heart. But he that hath offended is accursed. And all of us offend; and are not all of us then in danger of death? There is not that man upon whom GOD pronounces not this curse. Now when men have thought evil, so as they have been provoked to do naughtily: it is no sin (say the Papists), they be righteous still for all that. See how the Papists do fully mock God, in that they think that by some fond ceremony, or by a Mea culpa, they be discharged of their sins, and make account of them as of a thing of nothing. These are the starting holes which they have to mock God withal as a young babe; and that is a dreadful thing. But yet is it put in use in all their schools. Nevertheless, we must not go to work after that fashion; but we must rather bethink us how the Apostle says; "That it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Therefore we must not in this case break the bonds and yoke which he has laid upon our necks: we must not play the wild beasts: we must not think to beguile him by

some fair show in making countenance to serve him, having in the mean while no good will to serve him indeed. For in the end he will show that his vengeance shall light upon all such as have lived like hypocrites and double-hearted dissemblers before him. What is to be done then? We must frankly refuse this gloss of righteousness in part, which the Papists have forged: for it is a device of Satan's, and even they themselves will well confess, that we cannot merit by any inward worthiness which is in our works. They say that all the worthiness of our works comes only of this, that God is acquainted with us; insomuch that when men have done all that is possible, yet will there ever be some fault to be found in their works, when they come before GOD. Not that all Papists are of that mind, there is not past one of a thousand that thinks so: but there is yet a far finer and subtler doctrine of Popery; which is, that works are not worthy of themselves, but because of the promise of the Law. But what manner a one is this promise? Let us come to that point. Behold, GOD offers himself to all men, and says that whosoever performs the Law shall be blessed; and contrariwise that they shall be cursed which step away from it. Thus you see that the perfect righteousness is the performing of the law. But as I have told you already, no man performs it; and therefore God is quit of his promise towards us. Seeing that we on our side fail in our condition; he for his part owes us nothing. After the same manner also speaks Saint Paul thereof, saying; "If righteousness depends upon the works of the law, then is the promise to no purpose." Saint Paul in that place touches the matter to the quick. For why? Who performs the Law of God, that he can say, I have attained unto perfect righteousness in my works?

There is no such man to be found. Then is there no more certainty in the promises says he: & so consequently we be all damned, if we will needs ground ourselves upon our works. After that manner speaks he thereof, as well to the Romans as to the Galatians. And so let us mark, that God denounces us to be all condemned by this sentence, where he says, "Cursed shall he be which performs not all the things that are contained in the book of my Law." As for the pelting trash which the Papists call satisfactions, they are but mockeries. For GOD will be served with obedience. Moreover the releasing of our sins is freely bestowed, as the holy Scripture shows. And as for all the Satisfactions (as they term them) which men have forged; they serve to no purpose, neither does GOD accept any of them. When we fall to breeding of our own likings in our own brains, he refuses every whit of it. Therefore let us hold us to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that we be washed and cleansed by his blood: and it is the only remedy that GOD sets forth unto us.

Thus we have two things to mark: the one is, that if we should be judged by the Law of God, there needed no more but this foresaid sentence to damn us all, yea even the holiest Saints that ever were in the world. For no man has satisfied GOD'S Law; and therefore are we all condemned. For if the holy fathers which had an Angelicall holiness in this world, were notwithstanding faulty before GOD: what shall become of us? Let us now make comparison between us and them. How far off are we from the holiness of Abraham, the pureness of David, the soundness of Job, and the perfectness of Daniel? When these may be condemned, what shall we be? And

therefore let us learn to shrink in our horns, and let every of us keep his mouth shut, as says Saint Paul when he brings us to the righteousness of faith, and to the mercy of God. The thing then which we have to bear in mind is that God has bereft us of all righteousness, to the intent to rid us of all presumption and pride, and that we should no more pretend to come to account with him, to bind him unto us, but that we should willingly condemn ourselves. Let that serve for one point. Now hereupon we have to consider the remedy which God has left: which is that yet nevertheless we be righteous by means of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he has delivered us from the curse which was due unto us: and for that cause was he hanged upon a tree, as says Saint Paul. We have seen heretofore in the one and twenty-first chapter, that as many as were hanged upon a tree were all accursed. Now when GOD made that Law, knew he not what he had ordained afore concerning his own only son, who was to be hanged on a tree? Surely it was an unchangeable decree, made even before the creation of the world. Seeing it is so; we be redeemed from the curse by our Lord Jesus Christ; and we must now match this sentence with the other which we have seen in the one and twenty-first Chapter. Whereas it is said here, "Cursed shall he be which performs not all these sayings:" you see well that for want of performing them, we be confounded and of right as good as damned. But yet herewithal, we must also embrace our Lord Jesus Christ, who was cursed for our sakes. And if that this Curse be not in vain, then must we now be needs set free. What a thing were it, that the Son of God should be cursed without cause; and yet no fruit redound thereof to us? That he which is the fountain of all blessedness, should

be accursed; and yet we not know wherefore, but that it should be unprofitable? Now then seeing that the curse which Jesus Christ suffered in his own person, is not vain and to no purpose: let us know that by the same means we be delivered before GOD. And so you see how we ought to make those two texts to agree.

Furthermore, we know also that he became subject to the Law, to the intent to perform all manner of obedience to the full, as it were in our person. And the righteousness which he has gotten in himself, is at this day allowed unto us, as if every of us had discharged ourselves towards God. The way then for us to be delivered from our cursedness, is this: After we have been ashamed and as it were plunged in despair; we may take heart again to us to be assured of our salvation, and offer ourselves before the Majesty of our God, with assured trust that he will accept us for his children, and also like well of us: and moreover that seeing our Lord Jesus Christ has fulfilled the Law, and not failed in any one point or jot thereof: now we be clothed again with his righteousness, and the same is allowed unto us as our own. And therefore let us go boldly before God, and call upon him as our father: yea verily, so we put not our pureness in our own works, nor imagine that God owes us anything, nor pretend to bring any desert or merit of our own: but that being utterly empty, we call upon God to vouchsafe, not only to fill up that which wanteth in ourselves in part, by the means of our Lord Jesus Christ: but to give us the righteousness whereof we be utterly destitute and unprovided. And let us mark further, that when we be once so received into favor; then shall our works also be accepted. The way then for us to serve

God to his liking, is that being justified by faith, that is to say, that having obtained forgiveness of our sins, yea and having obtained it because that daily yea and all the time of our life we have need thereof: and also having recourse to God's atonement with us of his own free goodness by means of the death, passion, and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ offered up unto him: we having so done, be then also desirous to serve God; for then shall we do well, and then will he accept the service which we yield unto him; whereas without that, we can have no faith in Jesus Christ. But when we endeavor to serve God; although there be somewhat amiss, and our affections turn us now one way now another: yet does not our God cease to allow our life. And why? Because our sins are not imputed unto us. True it is that in very rigor, this saying, "Cursed shall he be which performs not all these words," will stand in force: but behold, Jesus Christ is our borrow, and pays for us out of hand, delivering us from our cursedness, and making satisfaction to God his father. For we know that his death and passion are accepted for the price and ransom of our salvation, that by that means we should be reconciled unto God. You see then how that on the one side it behooves us to feel our own cursedness, that we may be afraid of God's judgments: and that on the other side we must take courage, not doubting but that seeing our Lord Jesus Christ answers for us, we shall be received for his sake, and God will accept us together with our works, notwithstanding that they be not so exquisite as they should be, but have some blots and blemishes in them, so as they deserve to be condemned and utterly rejected. To be short, the faithful being justified by the grace of God, have therewithal this benefit and

privilege, that God accepts their works, and charges them not with this curse which they have deserved. After that manner then ought we to put this text in practice.

But I have told you that on the one side we must mourn and be afraid at the sight of our cursedness before God: and that on the other side we must trust in the grace which Jesus Christ offers us. For if we should soothe ourselves because God forgives us our sins; what a dealing were that? We should still enter into the said parting of stakes which men ween to make when they think to discharge themselves towards God in part. Now then, it behooves us to be sorry for all our sins: and if we perceive any vice in us, we must not suffer it to reign. True it is that we come short, I say not in some one part only, but in all. There is not any one point of the law, wherein we fail not. As for him that thinks himself clear from covetousness, and to be a despiser of worldly goods: surely he has yet some other affection in his heart, which holds him back in the world. He that is chaste and honest of his body, has yet some vanities that will carry him away. He that fosters not any hatred or rancor in his heart, is not so utterly clear from all wicked affection, that he lives so perfectly as he ought to do. To be short, we shall be found guilty, not in one or two points only, but in all: so as there is not any part or piece of the law, wherein God might not condemn us. And therefore (as I said) seeing we perceive such imperfection in us, we must not stand in our own conceits, but mourn before God: and having mourned, we must endeavor to give ourselves over unto him, praying him to increase in us the power and grace of his holy spirit, that we may so manfully

fight against our sins, as we may subdue them, overcome them, and get the upper hand of them, to triumph over them once when we be quite and clean rid of them. Thus you see how we ought to proceed in that behalf.

And this ought to make the faithful to rejoice, that although they perceive their own imperfections, yet must they not therefore cease to embrace God's promises with gladness, assuring themselves that they shall not be disappointed of them. And why? Because they have the enjoying of all good things in our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom and by whose means the curse that was due to them is done away. You see then how that on the one side it behooves the faithful to be utterly cast down: and again that on the other side they be lifted up again in our Lord Jesus Christ, forasmuch as they know that look what they have not in themselves, they shall find it, if they seek it there, whither God sends them. And therefore let us not beguile ourselves any more with the fantasies of Satan which reign in the Popedom, of being desirous to offer our own merits unto God, and to indent with him as though we had performed his law: assuring ourselves that on our part, all the covenants which are made in the law, are utterly vain; and that all the promises which import any condition of well-doing and of holy conversation, should be unavailable towards us, and never come to effect; unless we resorted to this free promise, "Whosoever believes that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and that God by his power has raised him again to make us righteous, believing the same in his heart and confessing it with his mouth; shall be saved." And thereunto also does S. Paul bring us

back in the tenth Chapter to the Romans, which is the very exposition that will give us the understanding of this place. The righteousness of the law shows us that we be all accursed, and that there is not any manner of way to save us, so long as we stay there. What are we to do then, that we may have access unto God? Let us with our hearts believe unto righteousness, and with our mouths confess unto salvation: that we put our whole trust in him which has acquitted us towards God his father; and let us embrace the righteous obedience which he has yielded unto God, and likewise his sustaining of the curse which was due unto us, to the intent to set us free from it.

Now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God with acknowledgment of our sins, praying him to make us feel them better than we have done, that we may be more and more touched with the true repentance which mortifies all our fleshly affections: and to draw us from the delights of this world, and to lift us up into a true desire of giving ourselves wholly to his law, so as we may daily profit thereby, knowing that the true perfection of all faithful folk, is to know how far they be off from perfection; to the end that all mouths may be stopped, and none acknowledged for righteous but only God; and that when Christ's righteousness once shines upon us, we shall not be bereft thereof, assuring ourselves that therein lies all our perfection. That it may please him to grant this grace, not only to us, but also to all people and nations of the earth, etc.

On Tuesday, the 10th of March, 1556.

The 154th Sermon,

which is the first upon the twenty-eighth Chapter.

1 IF thou obey the voice of the Lord thy God, in keeping and doing all his commandments which I command thee this day, then will the Lord thy God make thee head over all the nations of the earth.

2 And all these blessings shall come upon thee, and enclose thee round about, if thou obey the voice of the Lord thy God.

WE have seen heretofore, how God hath covenanted with his people, of purpose to bind them: that everyone should know his duty, and be the better disposed to do the same. Now he speaketh as a Judge having all authority. It skills not whether folks do plead guilty or no, when they have done amiss: for God gives here his determinate sentence, though they consent not thereunto. Neither does the case concern altogether the condemning of those that offend the law; but he begins with another matter, to wit, with right amiable promises: thereby to allure and to win men's hearts unto him. Thus therefore does he say: If ye hearken unto my voice to obey my commandments, and be careful to keep them: you shall be blessed all manner of ways,

and you shall be environed through my favor, with all manner of welfare and prosperity. I have already told you that GOD shows great goodness towards men when he goes about by such means to win them: for it were sufficient for him to say, This is your duty: and all creatures should tremble at his speaking. Therefore when he adds any promises, he forbearth part of his right, and therein humbles himself, that we should be the more inclined and better disposed to serve him. If we had done all that we can, yea and more than we are able: is GOD bound to recompense us? Surely no. We must always resort to that which our Lord Jesus alleges in Saint Luke, namely: That if a man have a bond servant, and he sends him to labor in the field all the day long, when the servant comes home at night; will he say: Well, now must I do my turn; you shall sit down at the Table, and I will prepare your supper, and give you your meat and drink, because you have labored for me, and my course is now come to serve you? Will the Master say so? No truly. But when the servant is come home, the Master will say unto him, Cover the table, dress my supper, and give me drink. Even so says Jesus Christ, When you have done all that is possible for you to do: think not in yourselves that God my father owes you anything at all, or that he is beholden to you: but proceed on still, and acknowledge, that all that ever you can do is but duty towards him. And indeed, seeing that God has made us, what is he that can do too much for the service of him? We see then that God might say plainly: Thus it pleases me, and this is my will, follow you that way. And therefore whereas he tells us that we shall be blessed and not lose our labor, but have reward for our serving of him: It is not to be doubted, but that in so doing, he

forbears some part of his right. In the meantime, we may see that he plays the good and kind-hearted Father to win his Children. For although a father knows well that his children are bound to obey him to the uttermost; and that he for his part, is not any way bound to them: yet will he not refuse to say: Lo, I love you, and I desire but your own welfare: do but so as I may have liking of you, and I will not forsake you. A father will be liberal of promise, saying: Go to, you know that all that ever I have is for you: for whom else do I travail? And to what other end? And if I see you take good ways, I will use you accordingly. Thus does the father that humbles himself in his authority. And wherefore? Because he would that his children should serve him of free good will, rather than be compelled thereunto by rigorous extremity. Let us mark therefore, that all the promises contained in holy Scripture, be as it were so many testimonies of the fatherly love of our GOD; showing himself to have a care of our health and welfare, in that he vouchsafes thus to apply and fashion himself unto us. By means whereof the Law of GOD becomes the more amiable unto us; for as much as we see that in keeping of the same we be not disappointed of a good reward, yea far greater than we can wish. For under this word Blessing, is comprehended all manner of prosperity.

Moreover, when God does make us prosper in this world, it is for none other purpose but to give us a taste of his love towards us. However, this is not the chief point whereupon he would have us to stay: but he leads us ever further: Insomuch that when we feel his goodness in this present life, and that he has care of us, and that he

reaches forth his hand to provide for us all things that are necessary: we ought thereupon to conclude much more strongly, that when he has taken us out of this present world, he will then pour upon us the Riches of his goodness, in other manner of sort than we be now able to comprehend. Indeed, we have in this life some small show thereof, but the abundant accomplishment of the same shall be in the kingdom of heaven. Thus you see what we have to consider, in that our GOD delivers forth his promises to train us the better to serve him of free goodwill.

Nevertheless, however the world goes, let us mark that all the promises which God makes us upon condition stand us in no stead (as it was told you yesterday) if we stay there. For why? Truly, God is faithful: and his speaking is not to deceive us: but yet let us look to ourselves. What is he that so discharges himself of his duty, that he may hope to be blessed of God? It is not said: You shall be blessed in keeping part of my law: but it is said in the text: If you hear my voice, and be diligent in keeping all my commandments, and fulfill them all: then I will bless you. Now that men endeavor themselves in all that is possible to keep the law of God, I speak not of their own power or natural motion. For so far off are they which be not regenerate by the Holy Ghost, from attaining to serve God, that they can know not so much as to conceive a good thought. What is the inclination of man, but a striving against God, and all his righteousness? So long as men follow the leading of their own spirit, they do nothing else but fight against God, as utter rebels to his whole will. To be short, we be not apt (as Saint Paul says) so much as

to think to do well. To think is a very small thing: and yet Saint Paul cuts us off from that power, and shows that we be so corrupted and frowardly bent, that in all things we draw contrary to that which God commands us. Insomuch that even when God has reformed us by his holy spirit, and changed our malice and rebellion, whereunto we be wholly inclined: yet it cannot be said that we proceed to the obeying of him in all perfection: for there is always some infirmity to let us: so that instead of running we do but halt, and trail our legs after us: instead of going right forward, we reel from one side to another: and it happens often to us, to trip and to stumble, as every man may well find in himself. How then can we hope to be blessed of our GOD, being so far wide from keeping of his law? That is the cause why I said, that all the promises which be upon condition are utterly unavailable, and shall never come to their effect, if God should rest upon that point. Indeed this matter was expounded yesterday, and this place was expressly alleged by Saint Paul, where it is said, that if salvation come by works, and the inheritance proceed of the law: then shall there be no performance of the promises. For we do fail on our part, and therefore the covenant is void, that God has made with us: yet may it not hereby be concluded that God mocks us, in setting down these promises: as the Papists do at the first dash, starting out of their bounds, and playing the madmen. For when it is said, that all the promises contained in holy scriptures, be not effectual, otherwise than by means of the forgiveness of our sins through the free goodness of God, and that we are justified by faith only: What (say they?) Seeing it is said, I will bless you, so you serve me and honor me, it seems that God uses but hypocrisy, and makes a dalliance with

men. To what purpose (says he so?) Thus do the Papists accuse GOD of falsehood, and blaspheme him, if they be not able to deserve the promises which he has made them. For otherwise [they think] it is but a mockery, to make men believe that he would bless them. But let us beware of such madness, and let us rather understand to what end God has given his promises unto men: and we shall see that it is not in vain. I said heretofore, that God has showed his great goodness, in humbling himself so lovingly unto us. We pertain wholly to him, we are altogether his, and yet would he not simply command; but command with promises, and gentleness to win us. If a man do thereupon reply and say, What does it profit us? Truly it profits us nothing at all, if we stay there: but we must go further. When we hear the promises that God has offered unto us, and see that all his seeking is to win us through love, and that he means not to enforce us through necessity, it condemns us of unthankfulness, if we bend not ourselves wholly towards him. But we cannot do it. Wherefore? Are we then excused? No. For it is our own naughtiness that does let us. Every man shall condemn himself, says Saint James, because there is nothing that provokes us to evil, but the concupiscence of our own flesh. Seeing then that the fault is in us, we must make no more allegations, and here you see we be confounded before God. Thus then have we cause to be twice the more lowly.

First of all, for that we are so lewd, that God's goodness moves us not to come near him, and to put ourselves under his leading: And secondly for that we search not out the bottom of the sin that is in us, after this manner: Alas, seeing I have every day so innumerable

thoughts, so many desires and motions, such store of affections, which serve altogether to turn me away from that good whereunto God does call me: by reason whereof I cease not to offend God in all things, so as nothing can be drawn from me, but utter evil, all offense, and all iniquity: alas in what taking am I? Men, when they see this, must needs feel themselves double confounded. And when they have well examined themselves, [they must needs be driven to think thus,] Well, God has laid before me all the means that I can wish, for to attain salvation, if I were not altogether corrupt and perverse. And now cannot I plead ignorance, seeing that the law is given unto me, and the way showed me, how I ought to govern me and how to lead my life. And to the end that I should be the more willing thereunto; my God trains me to it by gentleness, promising that I shall be rewarded for serving him. Is it so? What is then to be done? I must not in this case make any further protestation, nor stand pleading any more against GOD: for I am too much too blame already. Now when men find themselves thus condemned, then are they forced to seek their salvation out of themselves, and to resort to this second remedy; Alas Lord, if the case were so that I should obtain salvation by serving of thee, thou hast given me thy law, and also joined therewith thy promises; howbeit these things avail me nothing: I must therefore forsake myself, acknowledging that I am quite shut out of all hope of life, unless I find some other better help. See here I say, how we are led to our Lord Jesus Christ, and made to embrace the grace which is offered unto us in him that by obtaining forgiveness of our sins, we may be sure to be blessed of God. When we have once gotten that favor, that God is at one with us by means

of our Lord Jesus Christ; then does he accept our imperfect works, as though we had accomplished all the law. Although the good which the faithful do, be not worthy to be received of God: yet does he accept it in good worth. And wherefore? For he of his own goodness wipes away all the faults that are in them. So then, when we labor to do well, notwithstanding that it lies not in our power to attain to perfection, because of the overmuch frailty of our nature: yet will God receive our service as acceptable, as though he had nothing to say against it: and so are we made partakers of the blessings that are here mentioned. As how? We have not fulfilled all: It is true: but yet God passes it in his accounts, as if all were performed, forasmuch as we are made clean by the blood of Jesus Christ. And like as we be cleansed, so be our works also, and when they come before God, he accepts them, as though they were thoroughly good, righteous and perfect. Here therefore we perceive that the promises are not given in vain, but that they have their effect in the faithful: not at the first dash, but when we come thereunto by degrees, and circumstances, for then we shall feel the effect and force of them. As concerning the misbelievers, the promises stand them in no stead; but to make them the more inexcusable before God in the last day. For what shall they be able to plead, seeing that God has so familiarly offered himself unto them, requiring nothing but to have the fruition of their whole life: that they might obey him: and yet they continue hardhearted? See you not how they are double confounded? And therefore the promises and threatenings of the law, be always good and righteous, neither shall they be unprofitable, if a man can skill to take them as it were meet they should. But this shall be better perceived by the

discourse which I shall make thereof particularly. Now let us proceed to expound the words that Moses does use. If thou wilt hear the voice of the Lord thy God, and be careful to fulfill all the commandments which I command thee this day: all these blessings shall come upon thee and compass thee round about. As touching the first point, Moses shows that which we saw before, namely, that the beginning to live well, is to hearken unto God. For men must not have the rule over themselves, saying, I will govern myself after mine own liking: we must not take such liberty: For he that takes too much upon himself, shall at the last be rejected of GOD, for not yielding him this obedience, which is the foundation whereon we ought to build. Let us mark therefore, that all they which follow their own foolish devotions (as they call them,) are disliked of God. For this text of the Prophet Isaiah must take place. Who has required these things at your hands? Let us acknowledge therefore, that it is an inestimable benefit when God shows us his will, and that the state of the Papists is accursed. For when they intend to do well, they know not which way to turn them, but every one follows his own fancy with, I hope it will be well, for my meaning is good: and again common custom allows it, and our holy mother the Church does command it: but in the mean while the law of God remains forgotten. Whereby we may learn that there is nothing but confusion in the life of man, in which is nought else but a mingling without order, until they be taught of God, as we shall see hereafter. This is the way, walk in it. It is said that we must be careful. This word was set down once before by Moses, and not without cause is it here again repeated. For we are warned by it, that unless men be very heedful in obeying God, and

enforce themselves thereunto, and set their whole study thereon in good earnest, they shall never attain to keep the law. And we ourselves see what weakness there is in us, yea even albeit that God does govern us, and although we be reformed by his holy Spirit. For as for the unfaithful, they are so carried away and so furious in their willful stubbornness, that a man would think they should run mad against God. Yea and although that we be governed by the holy Ghost; yet are we so frail as is pity to see. God requires a great perfection, when he wills us to love him with all our heart, to eschew all the vanities of this world, and all our fleshly lusts; and (to be short,) to forsake ourselves, and to be altogether changed. This is a matter over high and difficult. Now let us consider what Satan does devise and practice to turn us away from the service of God: how many sorts of temptations are there? They are infinite. Again, how sore are the assaults that Satan prepares against us? When we have considered of all this; we may well conclude, that it is not without cause, that God says, that we must be careful, that every one of us must strengthen himself, and gather all our forces together; and not think to set forth negligently to the service of our God. For when we suppose to march one step forward, we shall go an hundred backward, if we be not very stout and courageous, holding ourselves in awe and restraining ourselves, & gathering our wits to us in such sort, as we bend our minds wholly thereunto, and even as you would say) labor for breath in traveling about it.

And moreover, seeing we are so laden with ambushes on every side, and should be soon surprised so as we should fall into the snares of

Satan ere we were aware: let us take heed and be watchful. That is the thing whereof we are warned. And would God we could well carry away this lesson. For then, whereas we now apply all our power, and all our endeavors to things not only frivolous, but altogether hurtful, tending to none other end but to deceive us to our destruction: every of us would be vigilant to walk in the obedience of GOD, and to give himself wholly thereunto. And seeing that we are warned thereof, there is no excuse. Will we then obey our God, and show that our affection is so bent without dissembling? Let every one of us incline to that which is given him in commandment: namely to be careful, vigilant, and attentive.

Now he adds: To keep all the commandments which I set before thee this day, or which I ordain for thee. Although Moses be the speaker hereof: yet takes he the authority and power to command, and to subdue men not to anything of his own forging, as who should say, it ought therefore to be received without gainsaying: but to God, because GOD speaks by his mouth, and for that he himself does faithfully deliver the doctrine that was to him committed. Therefore speaks he in such a high style, insomuch as he says, that they should keep his ordinances. It lies not in the power of a mortal man to bind folks' consciences. And yet is that the thing which wholly corrupted the Church; in that men have usurped the office of God in making laws and statutes, for spiritual government of men's souls. And that is a point of high treason to Godward. For the creature usurps to himself the thing which appertains to GOD only, whom the Prophet Isaiah terms the lawgiver,* and in likewise Saint James,* to the end

that we should learn to hearken unto him, and wholly to depend upon his word. Let us mark well then, that it is not lawful for men to enjoin laws unto men's souls. But whereas Moses says, I ordain unto thee, he presupposes that he preferred not anything of his own, nor forged any law of his own brain, or added anything to that which God had committed unto him: but forasmuch as he did his office faithfully, he might well say, I ordain for thee. As when we set forth the pure word of God, the same very word is a sovereign commandment. Now it is not meant hereby, that we should usurp any dominion or sovereignty over men's souls. But that in doing service to GOD, we may command in his name and in his person. Thus we see here what the meaning of Moses was. And indeed, does it lie in us to promise men life everlasting? or to denounce unto them the vengeance of God? And yet we do it nevertheless. Yea verily, howbeit no further forth than the word of God is put into our mouth, and that we have the testimony of him, being his witness bearers and his heralds: his witnesses (I mean) to assure the faithful of the grace and salvation which is promised unto them; and his heralds to pronounce and to publish his sentence against all the unbelieving sort and rebels. Therefore to be short, God meant to show forth the majesty of his word, when he appointed Moses to speak in that manner. And it was to the end that we should receive the word of God with so much the more lowliness and reverence when it is preached unto us: not respecting the person, as who would say, he is but a man that speaketh, he is like unto us, and as we are, so is he: but as though we thought thus with ourselves, It is God that speaketh by the mouth of this man: therefore let us tremble at his presence, let

us stoop, and receive that which he saith: and seeing he calleth us before him, let it serve to bring us to such obedience, that we may do him homage: thereby to show that we embrace that which proceedeth from his majesty. This is the sum of that which we have to keep in memory touching this text.

Now here might a question be moved, why it is said: When you have kept all my commandments: For it is impossible for us to fulfill the law, so long as we stand clothed with this mortal flesh. As I said before, we shall ever be full of vices and imperfections. It seems then, that it is to no purpose for God to require such a fulfilling of the law, seeing it is impossible. But here we must remember what has been spoken of before: To wit, that God in his law respects not our might, power, or ability, but our duty, & after what manner our life ought to be governed. And the same ought to suffice us, inasmuch as we say that a man shall never attain to the perfect obedience of God, but that we are ever far from the end of our way: the cause whereof, is our corrupt nature, being so infected through original sin, that when we think on God, we are troubled with many evil fantasies: & when we have any good motion, we are by & by plucked back from it, & we need not any other thing to draw us to the clean contrary. But now by the way, Page 946

does the impossibility of doing it, discharge us of our service which we are bound to do unto God? No. For the evil comes from ourselves. It is no marvel then, that God in his law should have no regard to man's ability or inability, but rather to the duty which we owe him,

or that he should require the right that belongs unto him: for who is he that can deny it him? He must not change his nature. If we be froward, what has he to do to meddle with our stains & filthiness? But he sets forth such a righteousness, as we are not able to reply against. And in his law he sets not down such a righteousness as is in himself, he has not respect to his own righteousness, but unto the righteousness that ought to be in his creatures, namely, such as is in his Angels. If we had continued in our integrity, and not been perverted and corrupted through sin, then should we have been able to have discharged all that God requires of us in his law. That is certain. Now then we see how it is not without cause that God will have us to keep his whole law. And yet we are not able to perform it. It is true: but the default proceeds of the sin which dwells in us, as I have showed heretofore.

Now herewithal we have to mark, that seeing God promises nothing, but unto them that have obeyed all the law, it were too doltish folly to suppose that we can merit or deserve by doing this thing or that thing: we must first of all have kept all the law, which is impossible. And whereas the Papists prate of their merits, enabling themselves to purchase the kingdom of heaven; they think that when they have done any good to their own seeming, God is bound to them, Oh (say they) I have been devoutly at Mass. It is certain that they provoke the wrath of God by so doing: for we know that it is a devilish abomination. Again, I have served such a Saint my Patron (say they), I have built such a Chapel: and they bear themselves in hand that in so doing they earn heaven. Truly all these things are but a spiting of

God: they are devilish superstitions, whereby the service of God is quite defaced. But put the case that the Papists did well in their dallying so with such pelting stuff: were God ever the more bound unto them for it? It would behoove them to consider first before what notary that evidence did pass. For it is not for us to bridle him, or to tie him to the stake, or to subdue him to our fantasies. It must proceed of his own good will. Now then, what says he? When you shall have kept all my commandments, then shall these blessings come upon you. Let every of us look how he has kept the commandments of God. Let the Papists brag as much as they list, can they say that they have accomplished the hundredth part of them? If they have kept one of God's commandments, they have offended him in a hundred sins for it: and if there be but one fault committed, though it be never so little a one, they are faulty in all, according as S. James says: he that fails in any one only point, is a breaker of the whole law. Seeing then that they are offenders, they are deprived and banished from all the blessings that God has set forth, yea even that concern but this present transitory life: much less therefore are they able to win the kingdom of heaven (as they imagine) being not able to deserve one morsel of bread to put into their mouth. Thus are they shut out of all. And why? For God has not promised anything but unto them that keep all his whole law. How shall we do then? We must hear God speak after another fashion: to wit: we must harken unto him speaking of the free promises which he offers unto us in our Lord Jesus Christ. God in the holy scripture uses a double speech: And when I speak of double speech, I mean not that he doubles on his part, or that he is contrary to himself, or the one

saying of his is repugnant to another: for God keeps always at one stay, and (as I have said afore) he changes not: all the speeches that proceed from him do very well agree together, without any contradiction. Nevertheless, as touching his law, there he has spoken as a Judge & not as a father. In his law he speaks as a Judge, saying: He that lives as he ought, shall not be deceived, he shall not lose his labor: for when you have done me service, I will cause you to prosper. After such manner does God speak in the person of a Judge. And when we have received this word, behold we are confounded, howsoever the case stands. And wherefore? For that instead of ability to obtain the grace that is offered unto us, we cease not to kindle God's wrath against us; and therefore we are all damned. What is to be done then? God comes now speaking as a father, and says: Well then, I am contented to forbear this rigor of mine, which I might execute upon you by my law; howbeit that the same is not over great: for I have applied myself so far unto you, as to promise that which is not your due: I have been willing as it were to entice you by amiable means: but I have won nothing thereby, because of your frowardness. What remedy then? I come now to tell you, that if you will believe in my Son, I will release you of all your debts. If you will receive him for your Shepherd, that he may guide you quietly, you shall perceive that I desire not to win you otherwise than by gentle & friendly dealing, as if I should say, Come unto me, and I will forgive you all your sins, and accept you into favor. And albeit that you are miserable creatures, deserving utter damnation: yet will I quite forget and bury all your offenses: when I have so done, I promise to beget you anew, by my holy spirit: and this grace shall be given unto

you by means of mine only son, if you labor to come unto him. And thereupon although you are driven to strive against many temptations, and that at the first encounter you have not full victory over them, but that you are encompassed with many spots and vices still: yet will I not lay any of all these things to your charge; I forgive you your sins: and the good that you do, shall be acceptable to me through my favor, although it deserves it not. Lo here the second order of speech that God uses unto us in the holy Scripture.

Let us mark therefore, that when we hear the voice of our GOD, and know what we owe unto him, and have heard the promises that he has made us in his law: we must needs rest there confounded and condemned, forasmuch as none of all those things can avail us by reason of our unthankfulness whereupon we must have our refuge to the free mercy which is offered unto us in our Lord Jesus Christ & hearken unto God when he speaks unto us, which thing he does both in the Law, in the Prophets, and in the Gospel, saying, I of mine own mere goodness am become your Saviour: and you must seek your salvation from somewhere else, than in yourselves. For the redeemer which God promised, was ever had in mind, that men might rest them upon him. And for that cause were the sacrifices ordained in the time of the law. For although Christ was not yet uttered openly to the world: yet did the Jews understand that all the hope of their salvation depended upon their reconciliation to God by means of the sacrifice that was to be offered. They brought brute beasts to the Temple: was that to cleanse the uncleanness of their souls? No: for what can corrupt blood do, what shall stinking grease do, can those

things purge the soul of her iniquity? No truly. But under those figures the Jews saw how they should be delivered from the curse of God, and admitted into his favour, and that all their life should be acceptable unto him. And now have we a more sure testimony thereof in the Gospel, for there we see the thing itself fully accomplished unto us: namely that although we have not kept the commandments of God, yet Jesus Christ has kept them. And wherefore was it? Because he was subject to it? No. But he became subject to the law: yea, but that was for our sakes. So then let us have our recourse unto our Lord Jesus Christ, and let us hear God speaking in such a phrase, whereby he does not only say, these be the things that I command you, and if you do them then you shall prosper and be blessed; but also where he says, Behold I am your father, come unto me, but come in the name of my only Son, whom I have appointed to be your mediator: and acknowledge that there is naught else in you but corruption: and trust not in your own power, nor in your own free will: but casting away all foolish fantasies of vain presumption, come with lowliness to seek the grace of my spirit: and then you shall be sure that I will always uphold you by my goodness, and from day to day confirm you in my fear, and make you to walk in my ways, so as I will not lay to your charge the faults of your works, they shall not hinder my blessing toward you: not that you should not confess your transgressions, and always acknowledge before me that you are faulty; but that your sins shall not be laid to your charge, although there be occasion why that they should be called to reckoning, and to be repented by me. Lo there the second voice of God, to which we must hearken, if we desire to become

partakers of the blessings that be here contained. But by the way we have to note for a conclusion, that although the faithful be exempted from the curse of God, and that he will not deal rigorously with them, but rather uphold them and make them to enjoy the blessings which he has promised in his law, as though they had fully accomplished the same: yet cease they not to suffer many stripes of his rods, and our Lord chastises them continually, exercising some after one manner, and some after another, so that all are smitten. And all the chastisements which God sends us, be curses every one of them, I mean as to outward appearance. If we be sick, if we be hungry or thirsty, if we be tormented in this present world, if we be troubled and persecuted: all these are the curses of God. Our enemies scoff at us, we be in reproach, in poverty, in vexation, and in many anguishes: one is troubled in his house by his wife, another by his children, and another by his neighbour: finally, the faithful be many ways deprived of the blessings of God. It is sure so. Howbeit this lets not but that we be evermore blessed of him, by reason that we have a continual taste of his goodness, to allure us unto him. Let us therefore note well, that when he cuts off his blessings, and gives them not as we do wish, the same is for our profit: because he sees we have need of some quickening up to make us to come unto him. And forasmuch as every of us do fall asleep in our sins: God is fain to waken us, and to make us feel, that so soon as we withdraw us from his service, he will in likewise absent himself from us, and that his grace shall be taken away from us, and we stand dispossessed of the same: howbeit never so utterly, but that the blessing of God shall always surmount, so as we may joy therein, acknowledging him to be

merciful, and waiting upon his fatherly goodness, more amply to be showed when he shall take us hence again to himself. Thus ye see how we may possess and enjoy the blessings of God, which are set forth for us in his law, insomuch that although our Lord does interlace the same with many afflictions, and many corrections, as though he had cursed us: his so doing is but to provoke us day by day to repentance, and to keep us from falling asleep in this present world: as we well know that our delights make us drunken and unmindful of God, except he constrain us by pricking and spurring us forward. Thus ye see how the things which at the first sight seemed contraries, agree very well. And in that respect does Moses say that these blessings shall light upon us, and encompass us round about, as if he had said that we shall always be sure of God's favour, yea even so sure of it that it shall never fail us, if we serve him. For the word Encompass, or to light upon us, does import that the grace of God is not fleeting, as though it fell at all adventure, and as though we could not catch it soon enough. No (saith he) You shall be encompassed therewith. And therefore let us assure ourselves of the goodness of our God, and that it shall never fail us, so that we for our part do come unto him. But let us note well, that we can never come there, unless he draw us unto him. And that forasmuch as we be subject to so many infirmities and vices, he by his bearing with us, showeth us that we must have our recourse to his free goodness, for the forgiveness of our sins by the reconciliation that he has made in our Lord Jesus Christ: and that we in straining ourselves to do well, shall perceive that the goodness of God ceases not to be free unto us, without owing us anything at all.

Now let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our sins, praying him to make us feel them better than we have done, that being beaten down, yea and as it were drowned in despair, we may be drawn to the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and knowing that we are altogether empty and naked of all goodness, let us beseech him to renew us by his holy spirit, even till we be fully changed, and that we may be more and more increased in his graces, so that we may have testimony that GOD regards us, and is near unto us, yea and dwells in us: and that we may be so confirmed in his adoption, that we may always wait for the heavenly inheritance, and not be weary in this world to walk in his obedience: That it may please him to bestow this grace not only upon us, but also upon all people and nations of the earth, &c.

On Wednesday the 11th of March, 1556.

The 154th Sermon

which is the second upon the twenty-eighth Chapter

2 And they shall come upon thee, &c.

3 Thou shalt be blessed in the Town, and blessed in the field.

4 The fruit of thy womb shall be blessed, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy Cattle, and the increase of thy kine, and of the flocks of thy Sheep.

5 Thy basket shall be blessed, and thy store.

6 Thou shalt be blessed at thy coming in, and blessed at thy going forth.

7 The Lord will make thine enemies to fall before thee, which do rise up against thee: if they come forth against thee one way, they shall flee before thee seven ways.

8 The Lord will command his blessing to be with thee in thy Cellars, and in all that thou putteth thy hand unto: and he will bless thee in the Land which the Lord thy God gives thee.

It is to be marvelled that men cannot be persuaded that they shall prosper by well-doing. But it proceeds of unbelief, because they do not acknowledge their life to be in the power and direction of GOD, and that it is his peculiar office to govern us. For if we were well assured that all creatures are in the hand of God, and also that he has care of us: it is certain that every one of us would rest upon him, waiting to receive all goodness from him, which is the thing that should encourage us to serve him, and to direct ourselves after his will. But although every man seeks and desires his own ease, yet we understand not that GOD is he from whom we must look for it. We can say it well enough: but the thing itself shows that we cannot

judge nor conceive it to be so. Every man would be rich by lewd practices: every man sets his felicity in offending God. We must needs therefore be without sense and reason, seeing that this article, wherein we should be resolved, cannot be imprinted in our minds, to wit, that all welfare proceeds from the hand of GOD, and that there is no means to prosper, but by giving over ourselves unto him, and unto his service. Yet notwithstanding, GOD has always left this engraven in the hearts of men, that the wretchedness and miseries whereunto we be subject, do proceed of the corruption of mankind, insomuch that the very Pagans have had the same opinion common amongst them. It is certain that they were not taught concerning the fall of Adam; they understood not how all mankind was accursed; for the devil through his wiliness, had put that out of knowledge. Yet notwithstanding, it was understood among them, and written, and these things were common unto them, namely that all the sicknesses and wretchedness that men endure, all the famines, and plagues, and such like things, proceeded of this, that men will needs rob GOD of more wisdom than is belonging unto them. They knew not that this came from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: they wist nothing of that.

Nevertheless, God has not permitted that knowledge so wholly to be buried, but that it remained amongst the Heathen, and Infidels, so as they understood, that because man would have usurped unto himself more knowledge than was lawful for him, that now all things are confounded in this world, and the life of man has become miserable, and so subdued to so many adversities as is horrible. Now, this is

sufficient to make us altogether unexcusable: but yet will God have us, (us I mean whom God has chosen to be of his household) to be more familiarly taught. This does God speak as it were mouth to mouth: and look what the Infidels had but by imagination, the same does he tell and testify unto us: I say, he tells it us, that we might know it familiarly: and he testifies it unto us, that we should be thereof assured. That is the cause why he says that he would make all manner of felicity to reign upon us, so we would hearken to his voice. Whereby he shows, that if it were not long of ourselves, he were ready and forward to entreat us as a father does his children: and that he delights not to vex us with multitudes of evils, but that he means rather to make us feel his goodness in all respects. Let us therefore be advised to walk in the obedience of our God, if we mean that he should pour upon us the treasures of his grace, in such wise as all our life may be blessed. Nevertheless, it is certain that God oftentimes afflicts his people for other causes than their sins: as we see it happened to Job, which is a notable mirror for us. We see the like in the holy Patriarchs, who although they did endeavor and travail to serve God, yet were they in as great troubles and griefs as could be. The same is yet more manifest in the New Testament. For seeing that God has revealed more fully, what is the perfect happiness of men: It behooves the faithful to be exercised under many adversities in this transitory life. But let us mark first of all, that if God does not punish the sins of the faithful, he does it to preserve them, as the Physician that waits not always till the sickness do appear, but if he perceive any likelihood that a man is in danger, he will prevent it. God then, in not punishing the sins that be

presently committed by his children, does use chastisements towards them, as preservative medicines. It may every day fall out, that a man has not offended against God in some particular sins. But what? If he were always in prosperity, he would forget himself: God therefore does cure such diseases by withdrawing his blessings: he will not suffer the fat to blind men's eyes, or to hinder our coming unto him, lest it should stay us too long in this world: he will not suffer us to be so entangled in our delights, as to fall altogether asleep in the same.

There is yet a second point, to wit: that when God forbears to punish us for our sins, it is not that he has not always just cause so to do if he listed. Let the perfectest folk in the world be chosen out, and yet if GOD would deal with them by rigor, he should lay many hard knocks upon their pates. But truly we think it not so: for we are not so sharp-sighted, as to know the faults which God does mark. But yet must we assure ourselves, that GOD utters his patience and goodness in that he spares men, and punishes them not, I mean, the most righteous that can be found. As for example, when David was cruelly persecuted of Saul and of all his enemies; when Abraham was stung and vexed so many ways; likewise when Isaac and Jacob, and all the Prophets were afflicted by the wicked and by the despisers of God, even to the very death: and finally when the Apostles and all the faithful [were cruelly dealt with,] it was not for their sins. No verily. But had it pleased God to have called them to account, he might have punished them a hundred times more, and they should have had no cause to have accused him of cruelty. He spared them, and in so doing he did them the honor to suffer for his name: or rather he tried

their obedience, killed their carnal affections, and drew them nearer unto himself. As for example, whereas it pleased God to make Job a mirror of patience, yet nevertheless he made him acquainted with his own frailty: but howsoever it were, yet was it his intent to make him to serve for an example to us all. We perceive then that God has other meanings in afflicting his people, than only to punish their sins; nevertheless he ceases not to uphold them, even by his own mere grace. And yet must we on our side resort back to this point, that the origin of all the miseries that we suffer in this present world, does proceed of sin. And why so? For were not this corruption in our nature, which God condemns, and of which also we be convicted: we should enjoy here a blessed life: all this whole world should be unto us an earthly Paradise. For we must not think that Adam was cooped up in a little corner for himself alone, but that all the whole earth was blessed of God, and that we should have felt the same to the end of the world. But where is the earthly paradise now? It is nowhere at all: For in very deed, the earth is accursed. It was the sentence that God pronounced upon Adam & upon all his offspring.* And therefore we must understand, that all the miseries whereunto we be subject in this present world, do grow from this root, that we continue not in the perfection, wherein Adam was created. And that God reforms us, when we have done amiss, or rather beholds the vices whereof he intends to purge us by fit medicines, and tarries not till we have offended him and provoked his vengeance, but prevents us and ministers the remedy in such season as he knows best. And in very deed, when he afflicts us for some other consideration, than for our sins; the same is a great honor, and a special preeminence unto us:

and we have cause to praise him in that he vouchsafes to mark us, and to make his adoption apparent in us by making us to suffer for the Testimony of his truth, and to receive wrongful persecution at men's hands, under any color or occasion, whatsoever it be.

Moreover let us mark, that it is not in vain that God promises that they who serve him shall lead a happy life even in this world. Not that they shall be exempted from all adversity, for that is impossible, yea and also against our salvation. But he will so dispose our life as we shall perceive that he meant not to feed us with a vain hope, when he said that he will cause all them to prosper that harken unto his voice. But by the way we must remember, that the blessings which are here contained, serve not to show what the sovereign felicity of men is: but to give us a taste of the heavenly life, to the end we should seek for the celestial inheritance which is promised us, there to set our rest. This must be laid forth more particularly, or else it will be dark. It is true, that there is difference between us and the fathers that lived under the Law: For God did there entreat them as little children: and it was meet so to be. For they had not yet our Lord Jesus, who has now set open the gates of heaven to bring us into the life and glory of heaven. Indeed they had as good part therein as we, but they were fain to walk in shadows and figures to understand it; therefore they had need of some aide, whereof we at this time have no need at all; neither may we think our state to be therefore the worse; as many do complain at this day, because that God does not dandle them, and that they are not (as seems to themselves) so much at their ease as the old fathers were: surely they

deceive themselves in this comparison. For if any one of us should reckon up what he suffered all the days of his life, and therewithal look upon the state either of Abraham or of David: doubtless he shall find himself to be in better case than were the holy fathers: For they (as says the Apostle) did but see the things afar off, which we behold before our eyes. God promised to be their Savior, he had chosen them, to be, as it were, of his household; But where was he in the mean while that was promised to be the redeemer? Where was the doctrine that is made so manifest unto us in the Gospel concerning the resurrection? They knew the same a far off: but now it is declared unto us in the Gospel, in such manner, as we may indeed say, as our Lord Jesus Christ gave us also to understand, That blessed be the ears which hear the things that are told us concerning him, and the eyes that see the things which we see: for the holy kings and Prophets have longed for the same, and could not obtain it. We therefore have a much more excellent state, than they had who lived under the law. This is the difference whereof I speak, which had need to be supplied by God, for the imperfection that was in the doctrine concerning the revealing of the heavenly life, which the fathers knew but by outward tokens, albeit that they were dear unto God. Now that Jesus Christ is come down hither, and has showed us how we ought to follow him, by suffering many afflictions, as it is told us, and that we must be fashioned after his image in bearing poverty and reproach, and all such like things; and to be short, that our life must be as a kind of death: forasmuch as we know all this, and the infinite power of God is uttered in his raising up Jesus Christ from death, and in his exalting of him to the glory of heaven; should not we thereupon take

good courage? And ought it not to be a sweetening to all the afflictions that we can suffer? Have not we cause to rejoice in the midst of our sorrows? Let us note then that if the old fathers were more blessed of God than we are, as touching this present life, we ought not to wonder at it at all. For the reason thereof is apparent. But howsoever the world goes, yet is this saying of Saint Paul always verified, That the fear of God has the promises not only of the life to come, but of this present life also. Let us walk therefore in the obedience of God, and then shall we be assured that he will show himself a father unto us, yea even in the maintenance of our bodies, at leastwise so far forth as concerns the keeping and preserving of us in peace, the delivering of us from all evils, and the succoring of us in all our necessities. God (I say) will make us to feel his blessing in all these things, so that we walk in his fear.

Yet notwithstanding we must return to this point, that God, in making us to taste of his favor here, means not that we should be so gluttoned therewith, that we should forget the everlasting rest whereunto he invites us. And so all the benefits of God which belong unto this transitory life, must serve us for ladders to mount upward, and not for cushions to fall asleep upon in this world. When God gives a man wherewith to live, endowing him with health, and suffering him not to be vexed of his enemies; what else should such a man do but be drawn by the grace of God, to endeavor to serve him so much the more, and not misbehave himself in this world; but go on forward, using that which is given him, as though he used it not at all, so as nothing stops him from keeping on his way still unto God?

But we do all things clean contrary, and therefore we ought to be more wakeful. When we hear the promises that are here contained, let us not think that the meaning of God was to pamper the old people in their transitory pleasures: but rather that the same should be a mean, to draw them up on high as he means nowadays toward us: For all the good that we receive of him, has this end and intent, that our minds should always be raised up to the heavenly life. Does God give us bread to eat? Therein he shows himself to be our father. Yea, but yet for all that we, being his children, cease not to be as wanderers in this world, having always one foot lifted up, and we have here no rest. Therefore let us have an eye to the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven, and let the bread which we eat to nourish us, be a mean to direct us thither. After the same manner is it with all other things. Now let us come to that which is here contained in the text of Moses, and then in the end we shall the better understand what has been said. Moses says here, That God will bless his people both in the town and in the field, he will bless them in the seed of their body: he will bless them in their cattle, he will bless them in the fruit of their land, he will bless them in their baskets and in their stores and in their granaries, he will bless them in giving them victory against their enemies. We know that the happiness of this present life, that is to say, such happiness as may be in this world, is for men to have wherewith to maintain themselves quietly, and to be preserved from their enemies. Here God sets down both the one, and the other: For touching the one he says, Thou shalt be blessed as well in the town as also in the field: and shalt be blessed in the fruit of thy womb, and in the fruit of thy land, and in the fruit of thy cattle. It is

certain that the chief blessing which we can desire of God, is in our own persons: that he provide us of such things as are requisite for this transitory life. And that is the cause why he begins at our persons, and then comes to our children, and from thence descends to our cattle, to the fruit of the earth, and to all provisions. It seems here at the first show that God meant to pamper his people, as though he would set them up in a sty, and there cram their bellies, as it were to lay them asleep at their ease, and to be short, that they should be here as in a Paradise. But I have told you heretofore, that it behooved God to bestow his benefits more largely upon the fathers that lived under the Law, because they could not otherwise be drawn unto him, seeing that the promises of the Eternal life, were yet obscure unto them. Howbeit we have to note herewithal, that when God speaks after this manner, he means not only to give men hope that they shall be blessed in all respects; but also to admonish us, that nothing lets us from enjoying a sovereign and perfect felicity in this world, whilst we wait for the life of heaven, but only that we be wrapped in vices and corruptions. And so did God thereby mean to train the faithful, that they should think thus with themselves: Let us serve God, and we shall want no manner of thing: And if we be vexed, and have not all our desires, if the earth does not yield such fruitfulness as may content us, or if our cattle prosper not as we would; let us understand that this comes to pass, because we be wretched creatures, and cannot abide the blessing of God so perfect as it might be amongst us, by means whereof he is fain to withdraw his hand, and to give us but a portion of his blessings, because that if we should have so much, as he could find in his heart to bestow upon

us, it should glut us, and in the end we should be choked therewith. This is the cause then why God does here so greatly magnify his blessings; it is done, not for that men have ever been blessed in all manner of respects, without feeling of any evil to vex them: this (I say) never happened. And wherefore then does God promise it? As we have said afore, it is to make us understand, that whenever our life is not so blessed as we covet, we should consider that God knows us to be unable to receive the fullness of his benefits, and therefore is fain to distribute them unto us by piecemeals, after the manner of sick folks or little children, which for want of discretion, are fain to be governed by others. But we be less advised than the infants, or sick folks: for we would devour the blessings that God does send, if he held us not in order, for our lusts are miserably corrupted. God bestows his blessings upon us sufficiently: but we like sick folks do refuse good meat, and fall to foul feeding, which cannot but hurt us: thus are we carried away by our wicked affections, and are never able to direct the use of God's benefits, nor to govern them as behooves; for we would infect and defile all, if he provided not for it beforehand. Let us mark therefore that God does here warn us to call our sins to remembrance, and to bewail them as often as we enjoy not such fullness of his blessings, as is here mentioned: Nevertheless he would have us to hope, that by serving of him we shall prosper, and have enough for our contentment.

And indeed, we see how all the faithful have in that behalf behaved themselves. It is sure (as we have said) that David was divers ways in perplexity and afflicted: no man more: but did he in all that while

murmur against God? No. True it is that he uttered his griefs and passions: but that was with all meekness: and yet in the meantime he omitted not to say, that the anger of God lasted but a little while, and that when he afflicts his people, he has done in the turning of a hand: but his goodness lasts long and continues unto life. As how? If we look into the whole life of David, what shall we find the rein? Behold, in his infancy he was brought up as a Shepherd's son of the country, and God says that he took him from the flocks, as he was among his cattle. When he came to the court of Saul, it is certain that, beyond all hope and opinion of the world, he was advanced to be the king's son-in-law: but it had been better for him to have continued still a shepherd in the field, than to have been in such travail and misery, so long time as we perceive he was: they sought his death by all means, and his life did not only hang as it were by a thread, but he was also held in reproach. In so much that they counted him the most wicked caitiff in the world, a Traitor to his Prince, a disloyal man to his King. You see then that David was as it were, abominable to every body. And when God had set him at peace [that way] then was he vexed with foreign war, insomuch as he had no sooner done with one people, but he was fain to turn him about to another; and to make up the measure, his own natural son chased him out of his kingdom, meaning no less than to cut his throat: and we see what other conspiracies he suffered, as the conspiracy of Shimei. Yet did David always confess without feigning, that all the chastisements, miseries, and afflictions that God sent him, were nothing unto him, and that they lasted but the turning of a hand, or for a minute of an hour, whereas his blessings endured forever. For why? David had not

in him such unthankfulness as we have. We embrace God's gracious dealings and make no account of them: of every little harm we make a great mountain: when God chastises us, we shrink away our shoulders, making great complaints and outcries. But let us learn to esteem better of God's goodness towards us, in such wise as we be not found unthankful for his grace. This is the cause (say I) why we conceive not the value of the blessings that are contained here: For why? If God sends us any vexation, we shut our hearts against it, insomuch that there is none of us who frets not against him. And though we murmur not in speech, yet fail we not to have some bitterness lurking in our hearts: there needs but one affliction in all our life, to put the grace of God quite out of cast with us. And when he has done us all the good that can be devised, yet does it ever run in our remembrance, we saying: yea but I have sustained such a harm: and our mind is never off, of it.

Thus are God's benefits unsavory to us, so as we pass them over or let them slip. Contrariwise therefore, when our Lord afflicts us, let us receive the comforts that he gives us to moderate our heaviness: and then shall we continue to walk on our way. And albeit we be fain to endure many things, and that by reason of our frailty and feebleness, we be not able to overcome the temptations at the first blow: yet notwithstanding through the grace of God we may get the upper hand. And when we be so oppressed with our miseries, then will we esteem of God's grace in such sort that even in the midst of darkness we shall perceive what light God gives us, so as we shall always feel him to be our father. Now when we find this, to wit, that God is our

father; it is out of doubt that he will sufficiently bless us, so far forth as is fit for our salvation. Thus you see what we have to do and to practice if we will rightly understand, that GOD has not said in vain, that he will bless his people, So they harken to his voice.

Moreover, we are warned hereby, not to seek anything that we desire, but at the hand of GOD. And this also is another very profitable admonition. For we see how men do err when they desire to be at their ease. It is the natural inclination of all men to covet to be this and that, but in that while, what course hold we? No doubt, but we turn our backs on God and kick against him. He that means to be rich, uses ruin and cruelty, deceits and wicked practices: he that desires to attain to credit and authority, practices treason, indirect wiles, and other sleights. To be short, Ambition rules him altogether: and finally, he that would compass any other lusts of his, cannot but provoke the anger of God. See at what point we be. And thus does our faithlessness discover itself every way, as I have spoken here before. Therefore have we need to be mindful of this lesson, to wit, that if we will prosper, yea even in this present life, there is none other mean for it, but to put ourselves under God's guiding, who has all goods in his power to bestow on whom it pleases him: hoping also that he will not be niggardly in distributing his gracious gifts unto us, at leastwise, so we hearken unto his voice. For (as I said even now,) seeing that we be his children, can we think that he takes pleasure to vex us? Moreover, he diminishes not; be he never so liberal towards us, yet he fears not that he shall have aught the less, or that he shall feel any want. For he is a fountain that can never be drawn dry.

Let us therefore be persuaded, that our life shall always be accursed, unless we return to this point where to Moses leads us, namely, to hearken to the voice of our God, to be thereby moved, and continually confirmed, that he has care of our salvation, yea not only of the eternal salvation of our souls, but also to maintain us in the state of this earthly life, to make us to taste presently of his love and goodness, in such sort as may content and suffice us, waiting till we may have our fill thereof, and behold the thing face to face which we be fain as now to look upon as it were through a glass and in the dark. That is one thing more which we have to remember upon this text, where it is said that we shall be blessed, if we hearken to the voice of the Lord our God.

And this is to be applied to all the parts of our life: as for example when a man would prosper in his own person, so as he is desirous to employ himself in the service of God, and to obtain some grace, to the end he may not be unprofitable here, but that GOD may be honoured by him: let him bethink himself thus, Lord I am thine, dispose thou of me, behold here I am ready to obey thee: for that is the point whereat we must begin, if we desire that GOD should take us to his guiding, and dispose of us to serve him, in such wise as his blessing may appear and lighten upon us, and upon our persons. So is it concerning every man's household.

When a man is desirous to live in peace and concord with his wife, or to have children in whom to rejoice; let him understand that all this is in the hand of God, and that it lies not in our own power nor skill

to order our household after our hearts desire. For they that think to compass it by their own power, deceive themselves very much, and commit sacrilege in robbing God of the honor that he hath reserved to himself. It is said that the fruit of the womb is a special gift of God, and so is every thing else that pertains to household. According whereunto it is said to be but vanity for a man to build unless God builds also with him. They therefore that will possess a quiet state for themselves and their children, let them turn unto God, and commit themselves wholly unto him and to his guiding: knowing that there is none other mean, to attain to the same, but by his blessing: so is it also, as concerning cattle, food, and all other things. For we see here was nothing forgotten. And God meant to make us to perceive his infinite goodness, in that he declares that he will deal with our smallest business, which one of our own equals would be loath to meddle with. If we have a friend, we would be very loath, yea, and ashamed to use his help, unless it were in a matter of some importance. But see here, God goes into our sheepfolds and into the stalls of our Kine and Oxen, and he goes into our fields: yea he has care of all things else. For as much then as we see him abase himself so far, ought not we to be ravished to honor him and to magnify his bounty?

Moreover let us conclude, that whereas God says, that he will bless us in the fruit of the earth, that he will bless us in the fruit of our cattle: it is a most sure argument that he will not forget the principal. These things be contemptible and of small reputation, and many times mortal men do despise them; and yet we see that God

notwithstanding takes care of them. Seeing that it is so, will he forget our souls, the which he has created after his own image, the which also he has so dearly redeemed with the sacred blood of his son? Surely no. First of all therefore let us acknowledge God's favor towards us, in abasing himself so far as to direct and to govern everything that belongs to our life and sustenance; and from thence let us mount up higher, and understand that he will not fail us in the things that surpass this present life: but rather that in the chief things that belong to our life, yea even in this world, God will stretch forth his hand to furnish us always with all things that are needful.

There is the second point: which is; that we shall be upheld against our enemies. We have said, that the first point is, that God provides for us, so as we want not anything that is requisite for the passing of our life in this world. But if our Granaries were never so full, our Cellars never so thoroughly furnished, and our purse never so well stuffed, so as we want no manner of thing: yet if in the meantime our enemies be able to scratch out our eyes, and we be as people set out to the spoil, so as we be daily assaulted, and have no defense; what boots us our great abundance? Therefore it was God's will, shortly to show here, that his blessings should extend themselves so far and wide in all cases and all respects, that nothing should be missing to such as do him honor and service. But let us mark, that God has not exempted us quite from our enemies, neither did he exempt the people of old time. For why? It is impossible for us to live in this world without some vexation at other men's hands. True it is that as much as in us lies we ought to procure peace, for our part. But

forasmuch as the devil is Prince of this world, he will not leave God's children in rest. And he has supporters enough to serve his turn: for all the despisers of God, all the wicked, and all the hypocrites that be in this world, the number of whom is in manner infinite, are Satan's darts, swords, and arrows.

Seeing then that we must dwell amongst the contemners of God, and amongst the wicked; let us make our reckoning that we shall be troubled, and have enemies, let us endeavor to appease them so much as we can, and let us give them none occasion of hatred: but yet in the meantime let us not be unprovided, howsoever the matter stands. Thus much concerning that one point. For God has not said, "I will utterly root out your enemies, so as you shall have the world by yourselves, wherein to lead a happy and quiet life, and to have all the felicity that can be wished": he says not so: but he says, "Albeit that you be compassed round about with your enemies, yet will I not suffer them to have the upper hand over you."

Now he says further, that if our enemies come forth by one way, they shall flee seven ways. Whereby he gives us to understand, that our enemies may well conspire by great numbers, so as it may be like that we should be swallowed up of them; but yet they shall be filled with fear, as shall be showed more at large in another text. Here we have to mark, that the sustaining and maintaining of our life is in the hand of God, and that our rest and quietness depend also of him. And although that men do continually devise to hurt and annoy us, yet is God ever strong enough to disappoint them when he has once

received us into his protection, and to hinder them, so as they shall be able to attempt nothing against us, but the same shall be overthrown. That is a thing which we have to bear in remembrance. Now when God permits us to have enemies, thereby he calls us unto himself, and we ought to be the more provoked to call upon him when we see ourselves driven thereto by necessity. For if the world should laugh on us, and rejoice at us on all parts: it would seem unto us, that we had no more need of God's protection. But when we be beset with perils and dangers, and see that men lie in wait for us, seeking nothing else but to come in to vex us; it stands us in hand to resort to God, and to commit us to his tuition, praying him to be our shield and fortress, and (finally) to be our defender. Let us mark therefore that God, in permitting us to have enemies, does thereby draw us unto him, that we should pray him always to succor and defend us.

But to conclude, we must remember that God is mighty enough to maintain us. As how? If our enemies came upon us with great fierceness, it were enough to daunt us and to put us out of courage: but however we fare, although he suffer them to rise against us, and to be as furious as wild beasts; yet shall they not know what to do, but be as folk amazed. And although they have never so great advantage at the beginning, and be never so full of craft and wiliness; yet will God stop their eyes, so as they shall cast themselves wilfully into the snare, and there be taken. Again, even when they be armed with malice and boldness to set upon us, God will in the end confound them, no man can tell how: he will destroy all their devices

and attempts, yes and when they band themselves against us, and have never so great multitudes on their sides, yet will God scatter them. Like as when we see a cloud threatening rain, and it seems that all should be drowned; God scatters it, and the tempest is gone; even so will he deal with our enemies. Thus you see in effect what we have to remember concerning this text, where it is said that we shall be defended against all such as set themselves against us, and that our God will make them flee before our faces, if we do him the honor to acknowledge him to be the Lord of hosts, and that his power is infinite, and that therefore the whole world can nothing prevail against him. Finally, what have we now to do but to submit ourselves under the obedience of our God? Also let us understand, that all the misbelieving, and all the despisers of God's majesty (albeit that for a time their life may seem happy) are appointed to perdition, and that all the goods which they possess shall become a curse unto them, so as they must needs be in a forlorn state: according to this saying, that their very Table shall be turned into snares and gins wherewith to take them, and all the benefits of God shall become deadly poison unto them. Lo what we have to carry in mind.

Moreover, so often as we be afflicted, let us humble ourselves, and acknowledge our sins, and bewail them before God: and in the meantime let us not omit to qualify our griefs, knowing that amidst the afflictions which he sends us, there always appears a certain testimony of his goodness, and that it is necessary that he should so hold us in awe. Yet notwithstanding, we must not be cast down nor be discouraged, when we be vexed and troubled though we be

enviored with never so many miseries. And why? Because God fails not for all that, to show himself a father towards us. That is the thing whereon we must altogether rest, so as all the afflictions of this world may quicken us up to aspire to the heavenly heritage: and when we have bewailed our sins, let us not doubt, but God of his mercy will bless us, even in Jesus Christ the fountain of all goodness and blessedness, by whom all curses are quite taken away. To prove that it is so: what may be the chief curse that has fallen upon mankind, but death? And yet we see that the same has become an entrance into life. And wherefore? For that in the person of Jesus Christ it is now made blessed. Wherefore let us learn to rejoice, since we see that God has so provided for our salvation, that although he make us to feel our sins, and would have us touched with some sorrow, thereby to bring us to repentance, yet he ceases not amidst all these to show himself a father evermore, and by all means to advance our salvation.

Now let us humble ourselves before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of sins, praying him to touch us to the quick more and more, that we may dislike them: and that acknowledging the evil which is in us, we may seek his mercy: not only to forgive us the sins that we have already committed, but also to mortify us, and by the power of his spirit to give us grace so to forsake ourselves, as we may seek his righteousness, and more and more profit therein, until it be perfect in us, at such time as he shall have taken us out of this world: And so let us all say, Almighty God, heavenly father, etc.

On Thursday the twelfth of March, 1556.

The 155th Sermon

which is the third upon the twenty-eighth Chapter.

9 "The Lord thy God will make thee a holy people to himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou keep the commandments of the Lord thy God and walk in his ways.

10 And all the nations of the earth shall see that the name of the Lord is called upon over thee, and they shall be afraid of thee.

11 And the Lord thy God will make thee to abound in substance, in the fruit of thy womb, in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the Lord thy God hath sworn to thy fathers to give thee.

12 The Lord thy God will open unto thee his good treasure, even the heavens, to send down rain upon thy land in due season: and to bless all the work of thy hands, and thou shalt lend unto many people and borrow of none.

13 The Lord God will make thee the head, and not the tail: And thou shalt be only above, and not beneath, if thou obey the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day to keep and to do them.

14 And that you swerve not, neither to the right hand nor to the left, from any of all the words which I command you this day, in walking after other gods to serve them."

Moses, continuing the matter which was handled yesterday, shows upon what condition GOD chooses us when he takes us to be of his Church: that is, that we should be separated and set far off from the common curse of mankind. True it is that God's goodness extends over all the men of the world; we see how all are fed and maintained by his liberality. But in the meantime, we see to how many miseries men are subject. For this cause, it behooves us to be sundered, and that God watches over us and bears us a special love as to his own children: for without that, all our life is confused, as it is seen how the wretched infidels, albeit that God bestows never so many blessings upon them, yet cannot profit by them, but they stand always in doubt; and not without cause. Whereupon may they repose their hope, seeing they are not certified of the love of GOD? How can they hold him for their father? Therefore it is a word well worth the marking, where Moses says that GOD has separated us from all other nations of the world. It is certain that this word holiness does import that the image of GOD should shine forth in us, and that we should serve him purely in virtuous conversation; but yet from thence, he proceeds farther, as he does in this text; namely, that God will give unto his people a certain mark to show that they are privileged above all other folk. Therefore, in beholding what the state of man is in this present life, let us learn to resort always to this promise, that God has not only created us after the common course of the brood of all

Adam's children: but that he has also chosen us to himself for his heritage. And let us not doubt at all but that he watches over us and will make us perceive that we are of his household, and that he is near unto us to succor us: let us be well resolved in this.

Moreover, Moses adds, "Other people shall see that the name of the Lord thy GOD is called upon over thee, and they shall be afraid." It is certain that the idolaters can vaunt themselves enough of the name of God, and we see how they pretend it, even in their fighting against him when they cast off all doctrine. Inasmuch as being as fierce as wild beasts, yet they look to be counted of the Church. But Moses does here take the word "call upon" for naming or calling upon; yea, and that in truth; meaning that the people were truly and indeed called after God's name, or named his People. If we walk in the fear of our God and frame our life after his calling, then shall it be seen how it is not in vain that he calls himself our God, and avows us to be his people. Now it is certain that this word does presuppose that we have our recourse to God, as being under his protection. For it is said that a man is called upon or named after the name of a prince when he becomes his subject and is under his tuition. Even so it is said that the faithful have GOD's name called upon them in protesting that they are his, and that, there they are all safe under his wings. And this cannot be unless we call upon GOD and have our refuge unto him in all our necessities. But whence comes such boldness, that we glory in this: that we belong unto God, more than any other? For we know that the state of men is alike by nature. Wherefore then are we preferred before them that are descended of the self-same race? It

comes through God's election: It may not begin of us. For what is he that can advance himself to come nigher unto God than others come? What desert can any man bring with him? None at all. Then must God make choice of us through his own mere goodness: and when he has declared himself to be our God, then may we also of our part be bold, in all assurance and without doubt to call upon his name. Now we see what is the effect of this sentence. And Moses means to declare what preeminence GOD gives unto those whom he has adopted for his children: to wit, that albeit they are mingled among men and encompassed with many miseries, yet are they preserved, as being under his hand and protection, even because he does hold and avow them to be of his household: not for any other cause than only his own good pleasure. Let us therefore courageously defy Satan when we see that he practices all that he possibly can against us, and let us count ourselves assured against all the dangers of this world, seeing that God has done us such favor, as not to leave us to fortune, as the unbelievers do imagine. And why? For we are unto him a holy people. And from whence shall we fetch this preeminence? We have it because he has testified unto us that he is our GOD. If we had not gotten this word of him, we should be always in perplexity, we should still doubt, through questioning of this and that, and our life should hang as it were by a thread; as we shall see in this Chapter. But seeing that God has uttered his fatherly love unto us, and it has pleased him to open his mouth, to make us to understand that he has given us familiar access unto him: seeing (I say) that we have such assurance: let us call upon him (that is to say) let us not doubt to glory in this: that he is our Savior: and that seeing we are his, we

cannot perish. Howbeit let us beware that we call not upon the name of God falsely, as all they do which abuse it, and yet in the meanwhile make a mock of him and are despisers of his majesty. If we claim the name of God, let it be because we are grounded upon his promises and have received them through faith: and then let us call upon him, let him be our refuge, and let us not give ourselves to fond bragging as they do which think it enough for them to bear the bare name of Christians. Nay, let us follow the call of our GOD: as Moses shows here; saying: "If thou wilt keep the commandments of thy GOD, as I have set them before thee this day." For it is good reason that seeing God has so bound himself unto us, we in like manner for our part should yield ourselves to his direction. And that we should not only profess with our mouths that we are his people, but also show it by framing our whole life agreeable to the same, and by keeping his commandments, make it apparent that we have received the grace which he offered us: For that is the true proof thereof.

Now he says moreover, "That other people shall see how the name of God is called upon over us, and that they shall fear us." It is not enough for us that GOD does promise us to make us feel that we are in his keeping: but he says that even the Pagans, our mortal enemies, and the despisers of his majesty shall be made to know the same. Now it is certain that the Infidels know not the arm of GOD, in such wise as it ought to be known unto us: they come far short of it. For in seeing, they see not a whit: and how then should it be possible that they should perceive that GOD has blessed us, that we live of his favor, and that we be nourished at his cost? For they are blockish and

think not that anything comes unto them from the hand of God. We see well how the Infidels are fed and clothed; they enjoy the light of the Sun, yea, and they have abundance of goods. But as for the worshipping and seeking of God, there is no tidings at all among them thereof. And if besides their despising of the benefits of their God, they have no understanding whence they come unto them: how should they then know that the name of God is called upon over us? Their knowing of it is not through any persuasion of mind or through any such true understanding of it as we ought to have: but Moses says that they shall have it proved to their faces: as, for example, we see the wicked grind their teeth when they behold the faithful to prosper, and see that God upholds and keeps them. And whence comes that? Truly, they shall be astonished at it: and they shall not be able to think otherwise but that God favors the contrary part: not that they do settle upon it or are rightly resolved thereof in their hearts: but for that they are confounded in themselves.

He says that they shall perceive that God's name is claimed [or called upon] over us: and that it shall put them in fear. For albeit that they fear not God: yet does he bridle them secretly, insomuch that when they would practice anything against his people, they cannot, for they feel their courage broken. This is to be wondered at, that God sometimes does give the wicked the bridle so far as to cast out the foam of their rage against us: they devise what they can, and work their spite. But have they once done that: then shall it appear that they are underlings to him, and cannot withstand him. And what is the cause thereof? If God should suffer the faithless to have their own

will, it is certain that the world should not last three days, but that they would bear down all things before them. Therefore, it is necessary that he should restrain them with some secret bridle and not suffer their headiness to have full scope. And we see it before our eyes. Whereof comes it that we have not been swallowed up a hundred thousand times within these twenty or thirty years last past? Only of God's defense, which consists not in signs that may be seen, but in his secret holding of the wicked as it were in prison, maugre all the mischievousness that is in them. By reason whereof, when they have devised anything, they wash away like water, and all their thoughts do vanish, and they lie as with their arms broken, and though they undertake great things, yet can they not attain to their purpose. And so you see what Moses meant in saying, that the wicked, (inasmuch as they are our enemies) shall perceive that the name of God is called upon over us, and thereby be stricken in fear. Whereby we see that there is no such fortress nor defense as to have our recourse to God. So long as he takes the care upon him to save us, let us boldly trust that we stand in safety, yea albeit that the wicked conspire against us, and lie in wait and watch for us: yet shall we be as in an invincible fortress, so we can call upon the name of our GOD, and be thoroughly assured in ourselves that he avows us to be his people, whereof we have good warrant, so we break not our faith which on our part we have plighted unto him. But we must feel the protection of GOD otherwise than the wicked do; that is to say, in hearing his word, we must embrace the grace which is presented unto us, and rest wholly upon it. After that manner must we be ascertained that the name of God is called upon over us.

Now Moses repeats again that which he had said concerning the fruit of the womb, of Cattle, and of the Earth. Truly it had been sufficient to have promised at once that all bodily blessings proceed from God. But on the one side we see the mistrust that is in men, how that when God speaks unto them, they cease not to argue and to reply; "Yea, but shall we be sure of it?" And therefore to resolve us the better, God confirms the matter which he had spoken of. Again we see our unthankfulness to be such, that we attribute the things to Fortune, and to our own skill and travail, which God has done for us. Therefore he calls us unto him, and shows that it is he who does it: and on the other side, he would have us to understand that if we intend to prosper in all points, we must hearken to him and obey him. For all men, yea even the wickedest in the world, are desirous to have issue of their own bodies, increase of cattle, and great revenues. But what? In the meanwhile we despise God the author of all goodness, and seem as though we labored on purpose to thrust his hand far from us: which is as much as if I should ask a man for alms, and he give me a whirret on the ear: or as if he should come to succor me, and I should spit in his face: even so deal we with our God. God, therefore, perceiving such malice in us, and that we cannot be taught at the first, but do stop our ears against that which he says; repeats the same things again which he had spoken to us before. Whereby he warns us that if we want anything, we must lay the blame thereof upon our own sin, and not upon him. Why so? Because he is ready for his part to bless us as well in issue of our bodies as in revenue of land, and in cattle, and is liberal and rich enough for us, neither will he be strait-laced towards us of the blessings that are in his

possession. Let us therefore acknowledge that the fault is in us when he withdraws his benefits and gives them not unto us so largely as we would.

Moreover, it is a notable manner of speech when he says, "That God will open his good treasure, namely the heaven, to give us rain, that the earth may bring forth food." Here Moses sets forth the order of nature which we see with our eyes, that we might the better understand how God is our father and our nourisher: and that although the sustenance whereon we feed is gathered from the earth: yet it is only God that sends all things. How so? The earth indeed has nature given unto it to bring forth fruit; but if it should continue dry, what would come of it? We see that unless there fall both rain and dew, the earth does open, as though it would cry out that it were athirst, and it dries up for want of moisture. And therefore David, intending to utter his earnest desire of God's grace, uses this similitude, saying: "Lord, I am unto thee as a dry ground." We see before our eyes how the earth becomes barren and parches for want of moisture, and finally has neither strength nor substance. Had it so pleased God, could he not have given property to the earth, to have of itself substance enough? For as we read in Genesis, there was not such rain in the beginning as we have in these days: but GOD caused a certain vapor to rise up to moisten the earth: and cannot he do the same now, or else that the earth should have some certain moisture proceeding from underneath? And indeed, whence comes the rain? If you ask the Philosophers, they will say that the rain comes of the vapors that ascend out of the earth, which being drawn up into the

air, are sent down again upon the earth. Thus then, after the opinion of the Philosophers, the vapors do ascend: But now wherefore comes it that GOD cannot make the heavens to yield rain except it come first out of the earth: or the earth to keep still that moisture which it has, so that it may always have strength and substance of itself? What is the cause of this rising up of the vapors, that when the earth has yielded them forth, they are held up in the air as in Bottles: as is mentioned in the Psalm? What is the cause of all this? It is for that he sees us to be so blockish and gross, that although he show as with his finger that it is at his hand that we receive all goodness; yet it is his meaning to make us to perceive it in a more visible manner. And that is the cause also why he says, "That he will hear the heavens, and the heavens shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and all the seeds that be committed unto it." When the husbandman sows his grain well, he lays it up as it were in prison: and it seems to be as at the mercy of the earth. The earth then must conceive the corn, nourish it, and make it to spring, and in likewise give it substance. But does the earth hear the Corn? It is deaf: that is to say, it has no power to make it to prosper, except it be heard of others. And how is that? The earth, as I have said, looks up to heaven, and after a sort opens her mouth, it cleaves when it feels extreme heat, and is not watered as it would. The heaven then must be fain to answer to the earth. The heaven? What can that do? Can the heaven give water? It has none except GOD draw it unto it by his secret power. In very deed we shall see hereafter how God threatens to give a brazen heaven: It is needful then that God do hear the heaven, and that we repair thither. So then, as often as it rains, we must understand that

God opens his Treasures, which are else shut up. God (as I have said) could even without rain or dew cause the earth to bring forth fruit: but he uses such means as he knows to be convenient for our dulness: and he does so, to the intent that we should have the less excuse: that if we be unthankful unto him, and close our eyes against so apparent a matter: we should be so much the more blameworthy at the last day, and be sure to yield account for our wilfulness in refusing to know the thing which ought to be thoroughly known unto us. Thus you see what we have to bear in mind.

Whereupon Saint Paul, speaking of the ignorance which was in the old world before the Gospel was preached, says that all people went astray like brute beasts. And what was the reason? Because the doctrine was not yet taught, which is the true light to show us the way of saving health, as we shall see in the thirtieth Chapter. Notwithstanding, he adds that God nevertheless left not himself without witness. And his using of this manner of speech "He left not himself without witness," is as much as if he said: Wherefore? For he has sent rain upon the earth in due time and season; he has sent fair weather also. These are God's witnesses, which declare that as he has created the world, even so he upholds and preserves it: these are the witnesses that speak with a loud and clear voice, saying that we must look unto GOD for all the nourishment that he gives us. And that is the cause why I said that we should mark well this saying: that God will open his Treasures. For although we see what great riches God has set in this world, what sundry sorts of beasts, what herbs, what trees, and what a number of all other things: yet should all these

things go to decay unless God sent us daily from heaven the things that are requisite for the preservation of this life. Could we abide three days without the light of the Savior? If God gave not the natural virtue to every seed, what were it? We should quickly perish. And if there were none other matter but that whereof I spoke even now concerning the earth, it would soon dry up, unless God remedied it. These therefore are the good Treasures which God bestows on us. And when it is his will to show himself a father towards us, he lays the heavens before us, that we might see it there. And it is as much as if God should lift us up by the chin, and say; "Poor creatures, when you seek to be fed, you look whether you have laid corn enough into the ground or no. Indeed, that is a thing which you must look unto: but yet you must first of all go higher, and lift up your eyes to me, and even nature itself does compel you so to do. For you know that without rain the earth cannot prosper. And therefore forget not the things which I show you day by day, and whereof you are convicted by experience. This is the good Treasure whereof Moses speaks: and he expressly adds, The heaven. For what cause? For if he had said, GOD will utter his bountifulness, both from above and from beneath; truly it ought well to have contented us: but yet because of our infirmity, we see how God is fain to express the matter more plainly: as he also shows that we must come unto him, and look up to the heavens because he calls us thither, and has set such order that he will have us to think ourselves to be as barren and hunger-starved folk, until he has poured his goodness upon us from above.

Now having spoken of this good Treasure, he says: "He will give rain in due time, and will bless the work [or labor] of thy hands." By speaking of due season, he shows unto us that this God's giving of rain unto us in due time proceeds of a special care. For sometimes rain is very hurtful, as we see before our eyes. Whereupon we must conclude that if GOD had not the power and skill to stay the rain, the fruits of the earth and also the bodies of men should rot. What does the rain of itself? It engenders but rottenness. On the other side, we see that the rain refreshes in season, and gives strength unto the ground, whereby we see that it is the Treasure of God to give us sustenance. And why is that? Because God knows it is good for us, that he causes it to rain. Let us therefore when we see it rain out of season, let us mark how GOD shows us that it is very requisite for us that he do watch over us, and that no drop of rain fall without his commandment; according to this which we have heard before, namely: That he holds the waters above, as it were in bottles. The clouds are dreadful bottles. But the Prophet would have us to consider, that it must needs be a wonderful power whereby the rain is shut up there, or else we should be drowned out of hand: at leastwise it would serve but to rot us, as I have said already. And here by the way we are admonished, as shall be said hereafter, to consider our sins and trespasses: and to think that when God gives us extraordinary rains, they are as punishments for our offences. Moreover, when the rain comes in season, let us acknowledge that there falls not one drop but by God's appointment, assuring ourselves that it is necessary for us. That is the cause why Moses did expressly add that saying.

Afterward he says that God will bless the labor of our hands: to do us to understand (as he has shown in another text) that it is not our own labor and travail that feeds us, as we have seen in the eighth Chapter, where he says thus: "When thou art come into the land which GOD gives thee, remember that by the space of forty years thou wast fed with Manna that fell from heaven, to the end thou shouldst not say: It is mine own labor that finds me." Let us therefore learn by these texts that when we have travailed and bestowed our labor to till the earth, and consideration is had of all that we see requisite: yet nevertheless we must lift up our eyes, and not stand in our own conceit to say, "I have done this, it is mine own labor and policy," but acknowledge that it is God's office to give increase, and that without that, all our labor is in vain: as we might well enough break our arms and our legs, and yet instead of going forward we should still go backward. The sum of the matter which God meant to show us is that we should labor in all lowliness, and that when every one of us has travailed for his living, we should understand that it is not in us to give the success, but that GOD must wholly guide it, and give it good issue: not only to the herbage of the earth, but to all things else in general. So then, when a man applies himself to any kind of labor, let him not go about it presumptuously; but let him call upon GOD to help him, saying, "Lord, it is thy pleasure that I should take pain: well, I go about it; but I know that I shall not prevail unless thou guide me, and unless thou give me good success: Through thy mere grace and goodness, let my labor prosper." That is the thing whereof we are admonished in this text. Let us not then think that man's care and skill, or his travail and endeavor can make the ground fertile: but

that the blessing of GOD rules all. Yet notwithstanding it puts us in mind of our duty, to wit, that GOD will so help us, as we may not be idle for we are not made as logs of wood: men must (I say) employ themselves when GOD promises them his blessing. For these two points go together, namely that the Lord will bless thee, and yet nevertheless that he will have thee also to labor. It is certain that GOD can feed us, though our arms were broken, he could make us to live without any care, and without having regard to maintain our household: GOD (I say) could give us food of free cost: but it is his pleasure to exercise us, with care and travail, and that every man according to his vocation, should apply himself to that which he sees meet for him. I say that God's matching of his blessings without travail, is to show that he will not have us to be sluggards, so as every man should sit on his tail, and neither deal with tilling of the ground nor with any other trade of occupying, and take the bridle in our teeth: but that we should do this honor unto GOD, to say, "Lord, albeit we have done what we can, yet is it nothing, unless thy gracious goodness rule it." But this is ill put in use. For we see how men are given to darken the grace of God under color that they do something of themselves: for so they bear themselves in hand.

And this devilish arrogance is not only in matters concerning the nourishment of our bodies, but also touching the salvation of our souls. Whereupon is it, that freewill is grounded? Even upon this, that God requires men to study and labor to do good, to withstand temptations, to have such a fervent zeal as to give themselves wholly unto him, and to forsake themselves. Forasmuch as God requires all

these things, it seems that we can do them. Yea but we consider not, that God for all his commanding, says also that he works by his holy spirit, so as he is forced to write his laws in our hearts, and to engrave them in our minds, and to make us walk according as he commands. O it is true, but yet therewithal, we also must do our endeavor. And whence comes that endeavor? These wretches do not understand, that it is God that drives us forward and stirs us up, and that all the endeavoring wherewith men endeavor, is that they be instruments of the holy Ghost. Now then, forasmuch as under this color of working we seek nothing else but to darken the grace of God, so much the more diligently ought we to note this doctrine, whereby GOD does stir us up, and would have us to work, and yet shows us therewithal that we cannot profit, unless he give us good success. Truly there is great difference betwixt the handy work, and that which the faithful do in endeavoring to live well. For (as I have said) men are created to labor by nature: but we be so wicked and froward, that instead of obeying God, we be borne to nothing but to offend God, until he has reformed us, and made us new creatures. So then God does not only bless our labor, when we endeavor to serve him, through the grace of his holy spirit: but we labor also through his only virtue, according as he does guide and govern us. This is the sum of that which we have to bear in mind concerning this text.

Now it is also said, That God will make them the head and not the tail, namely them that endeavor to serve him: he will set them above, and not beneath. This is as it were the top of all prosperity. Now surely it was more behooveful (as it was treated of yesterday) that the

old fathers under the law, should have more promises concerning the transitory life, than we have. For they had not such opening of the heavenly life as is given us in the Gospel. Therefore it was God's will to draw them after that fashion like little children. For inasmuch as an infant is not of capacity to understand the goodness of his father: therefore to encourage him, he will say unto him; "I will give thee a trim cap, and I will buy thee a gay new coat": this is agreeable to the capacity of the child, and because his heart is tender, such talk is used unto him: howbeit the father means to lead him on farther. Even so did God deal with the old fathers: He did set forth his benefits which they should enjoy in this world: meaning to draw them from thence to a higher hope, namely, to the hope of the heavenly heritage. And so the Jews were made as a head when the kingdom flourished amongst them, when they overcame their enemies, and when God showed himself to fight for them. As nowadays we must not look to have either kingdoms or principalities as they had; neither have we in like manner the temporal kingdom of David: it is sufficient for us that Jesus Christ is given us, and that we reign with him, and that he being our king, causes us to flourish under his conduction: I say it ought to suffice us, that we be a kingly Priesthood under our head; which is the Son of GOD. Nevertheless, our Lord has made promise to all the faithful, that if they walk in his obedience, they shall not be oppressed by the tyranny of men, but be maintained in liberty, which is also a blessing as much to be desired as any can be in this world. Knowing therefore that this is a special gift of God, as it is here showed, let us learn to serve him and to give him the whole authority over us: that by his governing of us, we may

be set free from bondage of men. We shall see hereafter in this present Chapter, how he threatens them that will not fear him nor shrink at his terribleness, accordingly as is said in the psalm; "God must needs lay the fear of men upon all them that will not fear him, and be his willing subjects." Let us mark therefore, that if in case we yield to the reigning of God over us, we shall be maintained by him, in such sort, as men shall not be able to oppress us. And if at any time the wicked have their scope, and seem to set their feet as it were upon our throats; let us understand that God does bring us low, because we have offended him, and because we have not rendered him the praise that belongs unto him; and that he chastises us according to our deserts. But yet must we ever come back to this point, that if we cast not off GOD, we shall be received of him, in such wise as he will be unto us as an armie, and make us able to walk with our heads upright: as it is said in the third psalm. So then, this blessing served not only for the fathers that lived under the law, but it continues also unto the end of the world, and we shall understand that it is not vain, so we follow in likewise that which is added here: "Keep the commandments which I set before thee this day," says Moses, "that thou swerve not neither to the right hand nor to the left, to go to seek strange Gods and to worship them." We see how GOD does ever put us in mind of obedience to his word: and that is to the end we should serve him, not in hypocrisy, whereunto we be too much inclined. Let us remember therefore this lesson, which is, that to worship our GOD sincerely, we must evermore begin at the hearkening to his voice, and of giving ear to that which he commands us; for if every man go after his own way, we shall wander, we may

well run, but we shall be never a whit the nearer to the right way, but rather the further off from it. And God will not only be heard, but also obeyed of all men without exception, yea even without adding anything to his word, or without taking anything from it. And this is expressly said: For that men dare be so bold as to bring in their new manner of serving GOD, and to do that which they suppose to be good. Contrariwise let us understand that when GOD has once showed what he will have us to do, we must simply hold us there, without presuming to add thereunto or to diminish it by any means at all. But above all things he would have us to acknowledge him to be our GOD. For the very cause that makes men to stray, and altogether to vanish in so many superstitions and idolatries, is that they know not what GOD they ought to worship. We have therefore profited greatly in the Gospel, in the Law and in the Prophets, when we have the skill to say, "This is the GOD that showed himself to Abraham, the GOD that showed himself by Moses, the God that lastly showed himself fully in the person of his only son, and the same is he that is our God." As it is also said in the Prophet Esay, where he speaks of the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Lo, this is he; Lo, this is our GOD." Then let us have a settled faith, that we be not rovers; let us not be like unto little children, nor like wavering Reeds that are carried every way; but let our faith be well stayed, by taking root in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God with acknowledgment of our sins, beseeching him so to teach us with true repentance, that we may bewail them, and be heartily sorry for our

corruption, to the end to withdraw us more and more, and therein to reform us. And forasmuch as we be not only frail but also altogether froward: it may please him to bring us home again unto him, and to underprop our weakness with his mightiness, so as we may overcome all the hindrances that serve to turn us from him; and that we may with perfect constancy go on to the mark whereunto he calls us, until we attain to the perfection of righteousness. And that in the meanwhile, it may please him to uphold us in such sort, as that albeit we should fail, yet he cease not to take us still for his children, and make us to understand more and more, that he does confirm us in the trust of our salvation. That it may please him, to grant this grace not only to us but also to all people and nations of the earth, etc.

On Friday the thirteenth of March, 1556.

The 156th. Sermon

which is the fourth upon the twenty-eighth Chapter.

15 But if thou wilt not obey the voice of the Lord thy God, in keeping and doing all his commandments and ordinances, which I command thee this day, then shall all these curses come upon thee and take hold of thee.

16 Thou shalt be cursed in the city and likewise cursed in the field.

17 Thy basket shall be cursed and thy store.

18 Cursed shall be the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy cattle, and of the flocks of thy sheep.

19 Thou shalt be cursed in thy coming in, and cursed in thy going out.

20 The Lord will send upon thee cursedness, trouble, and destruction in all that ever thou puttest thine hand unto, and in all that thou doest, until he hath destroyed thee, and thou quickly perish, because of thy evil inventions, through the which thou hast forsaken me.

21 The Lord will make the pestilence to cleave unto thee, till it hath consumed thee from the land, which thou goest to possess it.

22 The Lord will strike thee with swellings and with fevers, and with hot diseases, and with burning sicknesses, and with drought, and with sword, and with blasting winds, and with the yellow jaundice, and he will pursue thee until he have utterly destroyed thee.

23 And the heaven which is over thy head, shall be brass, and the earth underneath thee shall be iron.

24 Instead of raining upon the earth, the Lord will give thee dust and ashes: and he will come down from heaven upon thee, until thou be destroyed.

WE have seen these other days past how God entreated his people by promises: now on the contrary part he adds threatenings. And that is not without cause, for we see what slowness is in us when the case concerns the submitting of ourselves to the obeying of God. Our feet are swift enough to run to evil, as the Prophet Isaiah says, and as it is spoken in the Proverbs, but God cannot make us to set forth one step, to behave ourselves as becomes us: and therefore we must be compelled to it, as of force. Nevertheless, it is certain that God begins with gentleness and goodness. And that is the cause why he keeps this order of setting forth his blessings to them that serve him. He might very well have begun with threatenings, but he did not. And why? He tries to see whether we are apt to be taught, by showing himself fatherly towards us, and by making it to be seen that he seeks nothing but our benefit and welfare, prosperity, and quietness.

Thus we see how God does first make a trial of us: and if that prevails not, then he uses threatenings; and it behooves those two to go jointly together. For to what purpose is it if we serve not God with a free will? Albeit that men cannot find any fault with us: yet if we go to it unwillingly, all our life is detestable. For the chief point is that we have a pure and free good will to give ourselves over unto God. For we must not have our eye to the reward: and therefore does it much more follow in reason that if we go to it by constraint, all our

life is cursed. Yet notwithstanding, this desire of serving God, because it is not lost labor, is not all that we have to do. For when we come to that point, we are but at the halfway. Although a man receives the promises which are here contained and offers himself to God to serve him: yet his so doing is imperfect, and deserves to be cast off. Wherefore? Because, as I have said, we may not be hirelings: but our yielding of ourselves unto our God must be because we are his, and because he is worthy to have our life employed in his obedience, and especially for that he is our father. He begins with the promises because of our infirmity, to set us the more forward. And when he has brought us on so far, then he manifests unto us a greater perfection.

But to be short, we have to mark that there are three sorts of people which keep the law of God in outward show. One sort does it by compulsion, with gnashing their teeth at it, and they discharge it after a fashion. And wherefore? Because they know well that they cannot escape the hand of God, they fear his anger and his vengeance; and therefore they serve him; but that is by compulsion. But as I have said, all this is reproved. Another sort takes the middle way: for they know that God is faithful, and that such as serve him shall not lose their labor: these hearken to the promises which are expressed in holy Scripture. And so a great many yield themselves to serve God, because he allures them thereunto by promising them reward, as we have seen before. But, as I said, we may not stay there; but we must rather consider that forasmuch as God has made and fashioned us, redeemed us, and is our father, the same ought to

suffice us although we had no respect unto that which he promises us: and forasmuch as he has prevented us with his mercy: and shows himself so bountiful towards us: his so doing ought to inflame us with an ardent affection to serve him. This is one of the principal points of our life. But (as I said before) our Lord in his law has respect to our rawness: and therefore he promises to reward us, to the intent we should have the better courage. And indeed, though we serve God with affection never so pure and freely employed, yet must we always wait for that which is promised us, and stay thereupon. We must (I say) hope for his blessing when we have served him with a good courage: but we may not do it to that end: we must not be drawn by this respect only. For (as I have said) we must be his children, and honor him as our father. And as it is he that upholds us: so must we assure ourselves that it is not for us to imagine any merit in ourselves, but that he accepts us of his own only infinite goodness; and therefore that we for our part must seek nothing but to vow and dedicate ourselves wholly unto him. However the case stands, let us learn that when God has set his promises before us, he must also be fain to spur us forward. Wherefore? Because our nature is full of rebellion against him: we are not only slow: but also there is in us an inclination to draw quite backward from that which God commands us. If there were no more but slothfulness, yet were that such a vice as were worthy to be corrected, and therefore we should have need of the threatenings that are mentioned here. But seeing we are so froward to be ruled, that we are always kicking, so as God cannot reclaim us nor allure us to his yoke: it appears that the menaces be doubly necessary. And herein there is very just cause to

condemn us, seeing that God cannot win us to love, but is fain to show himself dreadful, to make us afraid, without which we would lie still asleep. Seeing then that God does so little prevail with us when he trains us gently, seeking nothing but to make us follow him with a willing heart; let us acknowledge our frowardness and condemn ourselves: and therewithal let us also confess the fatherly care that God has of our salvation, seeing he uses all the means which he knows to be meet for us. For it is all one, as if he should (as you would say) transfigure himself. His only respect is to reclaim us. One while he smiles on us, and another while he frowns at us. But yet all tends to this point, namely, that we may be drawn unto him, to give ourselves to his service.

Now will some man say, Seeing that it is so that our life displeases God, & that he reproveth the same when we serve him by compulsion: if the threats leave us there, what do they avail? It were better that God should forbear them. But let us mark that he trains us by degrees according as he knows it necessary for us. It is certain that if nothing but fear do bring us to serve God, it is nought worth: however, it is a good preparative that leads us farther on, after having begun at it. As for example: before that God has meekened us, we be full of pride, & our flesh is altogether rebellious: & to be short, we be as colts that were never saddled nor bitted. God must be fain to prepare us & to bring us in order, which thing to do, he uses threats. But this (as I have said) were nothing at all, unless he inured us to a voluntary obedience & subjection afterward. And when we tend thitherward, we have greatly profited in that this pride of ours is

beaten down, & we be no more so wild-headed, but that we know that there is a Judge before whom we must make account; & that the same consideration restrains us from using such looseness any more, & from being so heady in doing evil, as we have been. This is a beginning, & indeed it is but a beginning; in so much that if we should stay there, we were not yet plucked out of the mire. But when we have thus begun, then does the Lord match his threats with a taste of his goodness in such sort as we be drawn unto him. And in so doing he shows himself to be our father. Now when we understand that God indeed is ready to reward us when we have served him, albeit that we be not able to deserve anything, but rather do provoke his wrath: thereupon we must have our refuge to his mere mercy, to obtain remission of our sins, as it is offered unto us in our Lord Jesus Christ, and as he has purchased it for us by his death & passion. When we be thus reformed, and rid of all trust in our own works, then ought we to offer up ourselves willingly in sacrifice unto God, as Saint Paul also does exhort us in the twelfth Chapter to the Romans. He sets us forth no reward, but says: I beseech you brethren, by the mercy and compassion that God has showed towards you, that every one of you renounce this world, and also himself, that you become lively sacrifices unto God: for that is your reasonable service.

But yet some man will reply again and say: If threats make us ready for the promises of God, it seems that they should be placed in the first rank, and that the promises should follow them. But the answer to this doubt is: that God will hold us more convicted before him, when he begins with us by his promises. For we cannot say but that

there is a shameful thanklessness in us, seeing that whereas our Lord seeks only to win us by love, we notwithstanding deal frowardly with him, and draw backward, when he comes so lovingly towards us. You see then how the promises are set before us in the first place, that we might be the better reprov'd of our frowardness. But has God showed us that his goodness would not avail us, except he threatened us? then does he use rigor, and the same rigor does profit us, inasmuch as we be touched therewith, and our hearts are daunted. I mean not all; for there be many that take the bridle in their teeth to strive against God: but I mean the faithful. Those are they that be prepared for the promises of God, through threatenings. Afterward God turns yet again, and allures them new again with his goodness, as is said afore: in so much that when he has stung them with his threatenings, to tame the stubbornness of their flesh; (as surely it is requisite that God should show some sign of his wrath:) thereupon he sets before us his mercy, which is the accomplishment of all, to the end (as I have said) that we should learn to yield ourselves wholly unto him with a free disposed affection.

Now let us come to the words that are set down here. If thou wilt not obey the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments & statutes which I set before thee this day: all these curses shall come upon thee, and take hold of thee. Here Moses speaks expressly to such as have been trained in the word of God. True it is that they which offend without the law, shall perish nevertheless,* as Saint Paul says in the second Chapter to the Romans. And indeed we see that the ignorant and blind escape not unpunished at God's hand.

Albeit that they might plead that they were not taught: yet are they faulty enough. But let us note, that here our Lord doubles his curse upon those unto whom he has showed such favor, as to manifest his will unto them, and to show them the way of saving health, had they obeyed him, and yielded themselves unto his doctrine. This then is not general to all men. But God does first of all show, that when he has given his law, and published it abroad. The fault is in the people that they understand it not. This is the cause why Moses does expressly say: the commandments and statutes, which I set before you this day. When he says, Commandments and statutes, it serves to show that they contain a sufficient instruction, accordingly as we have told you here before; that God has not spoken by halves: but that he has so taught his people, as they cannot reply and say, We wot not what these things mean. Lo here the Statutes & commandments which I set before you, says Moses. If you apply your endeavor to them, you cannot do amiss. And therefore let us bear well in mind, that according as God has delivered us his word, our ungodliness is doubled before him, and our punishment must be so much the more grievous, if we be not willing to do good, yea, and also profit therein, and from day to day be established in his obedience. That is the thing which we have to consider upon that saying.

Moreover when he says: If thou wilt obey the voice of the Lord thy God: it serves to touch us thoroughly to the quick. For seeing that God vouchsafes to speak unto us: is it not meet that we should at the least give ear unto him? And if we play the deaf folks, is it not a

matter contrary to nature? For if we would not hear our equal, he would take it in disdain, and much more would our superior. And whereas God has all sovereign dominion over us, and has done us the favor to deliver us his word, and acquaints himself familiarly with us, if he find us stubborn against him, disdaining to hear him; is it not meet that he should avenge himself of such a contempt? Specially when he sees such a villainous stateliness in us, which are but worms of the earth. The thing then which we have to remember upon this text, is that here Moses intended to condemn the ungodliness of men that do still continue hard-hearted, notwithstanding that God give them the means to return, by setting his word before them.

Now, when he says that these curses shall take hold of us, it behooves us to remember that which was spoken of here before.* For in speaking of the blessings of GOD, he said; Thou shalt be compassed round about; and now he does in like wise join the curses in the same manner, so that we may not think to escape the hand of God. However sly we be, we shall be always entrapped, it will not boot us to seek strongholds, according to this saying of his by his Prophet, If thou go into thy house, and shut thy door and double bar it,* yet shall the serpent come in and sting thee there: If thou go into the field, & seek means to escape, thou shalt meet with a lion upon the way: if thou slip aside from the lion, a bear shall meet thee, and to be short, whatever men do, when God is against them, & is become, as it were, their enemy, they must needs find that they be surprised, caught, and entrapped, and environed round about with these curses, without any hope to get out. Therefore, let us not deceive

ourselves in seeking worldly means to save us: for if the hand of God be lifted up against us, (as we shall see in the song here at hand) He hath his storehouse full of rods,* and not of three or four sorts only, but of infinite: and if we suppose that we are escaped, when we have overcome some one evil; then we deceive ourselves: for God hath by and by an hundred more. Let us then look for all manner of woe, if we obey not God's law. But it were a miserable appeal if we should come unto God by compulsion, only for fear of his punishments. What must we then do? We must submit ourselves willingly unto him, praying him to keep us from procuring his wrath, and from warring against him, and from enforcing him to come to defy us. That were as if some petty lord would attempt war against a great Prince; having neither strong town, nor munition, nor aught else: and yet would need presume to defy one that is able to swallow him up, if he did but lift up his finger against him; and were not that a madness? Likewise, when we provoke our God, by setting ourselves against him wittingly, he must needs beset us, and hold us as in prison. Wherefore, let us pray him not to suffer us to be so far overseen, as to fall to defying of him: but that we simply obey him, so as we may be crowned and encompassed with his blessings; according as it is said in the thirty-second Psalm. He that putteth his trust in God,* shall be crowned with his benefits: that is to say, God will make him to possess his blessings round about him, and he shall be so thoroughly fenced on all sides with his safeguard, that he shall not need to fear. Albeit that we be laid open to never so many dangers, yet shall we be preserved through his goodness. Now as touching that which he addeth; we have expounded here before.

Concerning the curses, he says: Thou shalt be cursed in the town, thou shalt be cursed in the field, thy coming in shall be cursed, thy going forth shall be cursed, the fruit of thy womb shall be cursed, and the fruit of thy cattle and of all thy flocks. Hereby are we again done to understand that all the evil which we see in this world proceeds from the hand of God. By the word evils, I understand all the punishments, and all the wretchedness whereunto we be subject, according also as he speaks thereof by his Prophet Isaiah,* saying: I am the Lord who made both light and darkness, who have in my power both life and death, and who does both the good and the evil. He uses this kind of speech purposely: not that the evil, whereof we be faulty, does proceed from God, nor that it ought to be imputed unto him: it is not so. But he means that all the miseries and calamities which we suffer in this world, be as it were so many chastisements: we may not attribute them to happenstance, as shall be more plainly touched hereafter;* where God says, If you will needs come against me at all adventure, I will in like wise come against you at all adventure. He uses the same very words. And wherefore? Because that men do blur their own eyes, and say; Lo, what misfortune has befallen me? When they are anyways afflicted, they cast out spiteful speeches against God and overshoot themselves, not considering that God is a Judge, and governs the world by his providence; they are not able to perceive that, so dull and senseless be they. And that is the cause why Moses uses this kind of declaration, and so large in this text. And it serves to bring us to that which I alleged even now out of the Prophet Isaiah; where GOD shows that he made both light and darkness, and did both the good

and the evil. We may not here conceive vain thoughts, saying, Whence comes this unto me? It is a misfortune. Would God it were not so. But we must acknowledge the hand that smites us; for that is great wisdom. And for the same cause does God complain thus by his other Prophet:* This people have not regarded the hand that smote them. You see then how we must understand that all the afflictions and miseries which we endure in this world, be very strokes of God's own hand. And even in that respect is it said by the Prophet Amos:* Is there any evil in the city which God has not done? That is to say, can there happen either war, or pestilence, or famine, or diseases, or poverty, or any other calamity whatsoever it be, that comes not to you from God? Wretched people, are you so foolish and beastly, as to imagine, that God who created the world, does leave it at random, and has no care to watch over his creatures, or to bestow on them, that which he thinks meet for them, sometimes to show his goodness, and sometimes to make them feel that he is a Judge, and to punish men's sins, and to make them to know what his office is? Think you that he dwells idle in heaven, and that he utters not his virtue, or that the world is not guided and governed by his providence? So then, like as heretofore God has showed that we cannot prosper,* but through his grace and love that he bears us, in that he has chosen us for his children, and will also accept our service; so now he shows in like wise, that if there be any affliction, poverty, or other misery, they come not by happenstance: but are very punishments of God's sending: and therefore when things fall not out after our liking, we must fall to considering and examining of our sins. If we be grieved with any manner of thing, so as one is

troubled with his household, another with the loss of his goods, another with some disease, another with some vexation of mind, and another with the forgoing of something that he loved: let us acknowledge, saying; Lo, it is our God that has lifted up his hand, and holds it up still. And wherefore? Because that we have offended him. The first point then is, that men may not flatter themselves when God visits them: but they must know that by this means they are made to understand their offenses, to the end to humble themselves, and to bewail them. Thus much for one point.

The second point is that we must not think to escape the scourges of God, be we never so subtle, but that we shall ever be caught by the back if God be against us. And well may we make us shields and ramparts; but when we have practiced what we can: yet will not our Lord miss to find us, he needs but to blow upon all our defenses whereby we think to guard ourselves against him. It is not like as if we should have to do with creatures. Against them we might fortify ourselves both behind and before; but God will knock us on the pates from heaven. We can have neither shield nor rampart against him, in hope thereby to stop his hand from touching us, when it pleases him to punish us.

Again, to what end shall all the fortifications serve that we are able to build against him, but to overthrow ourselves? Let us therefore understand that all that ever men can do against God shall turn to their own confusion and utter overthrow. That is the thing which Moses meant when he said that we shall be cursed in the town and in

the field, that we shall be cursed in our going forth and in our coming in if we obey not the voice of our God. And as he said before, that God will open his good treasure from heaven to give us rain in due time; so now he says that God will make our heaven as brass, and our earth as iron, and that in stead of rain he will send us drought, he will send us dust and ashes, and there shall be nothing but barrenness among us. Here we must call again to mind the lesson that has been laid out briefly before: that is, that according as every one of us is visited by the hand of God, we should benefit ourselves thereby and every man apply that to his own use which is here mentioned. For God uses many ways to chastise us. One is punished in his own person with diseases, reproach, and I know not what else; another has some secret heart-aching, so that although he be whole in body, yet he ceases not to be tormented in mind; another is plagued with his wife or with his children; and another is troubled with his substance. According therefore as every one finds himself afflicted, so let him resort to this that is told us here, saying: Alas, I see how my God calls me unto him, I may not now provoke him: for what shall I win by using many windlasses as the worldlings do, who desire to fall asleep in their miseries: and the only comfort which they seek is to have no regard to God. Now if we do so; then must that which is spoken in the two and thirtieth Psalm be practised upon us, to wit, that God will deal with sturdy and hardhearted folks as with restive horses, and mad mules. As hereafter we shall see more at length. So then yet must we come to the said point of feeling of God's hand according as every one is afflicted, first in his own behalf, and then in common. When we see a drought, let us not

accuse the heaven nor yet the air, saying it was the disposition of them. Let us not do as the fantastical folk do, which look no higher than the stars; but let us think upon the hand of God: that as many afflictions as fall upon us, may be unto us as visible signs and marks that God executes the office of a Judge toward us: and that although he condemns us, as often as he punishes us, yet the same is not a condemnation to the death, but a summoning of us to appear before him, there to frame new process against us. This is a point which we ought to mark well. Therefore when we feel any evil or grief, let us understand that we have offended God: but let us think therewithal, that God nevertheless means not to execute a final sentence upon us when he calls us again unto him. To what end then is it? Is it to condemn us without mercy? No: but he does us this favor, that we might be our own judges. When he does summon us, it is to the end that every one should plead guilty of his own good will, and thereupon ask him forgiveness, and flee for refuge to his mercy. Lo here an inestimable privilege. And so let us benefit ourselves both privately and publicly by the things that are told us here: That when we see the heavens burning hot, and we ask rain, and yet go without it, so as the fruits do fail upon the ground, and the heat dries up all things: let us understand that it is the hand of GOD which visits us, and let us confess our sins with one common accord. And if any man feel any household vexation, let him confess; Well, GOD does awaken me by this visitation, because I have offended him. Thus the chief study, wherein God would have the faithful to exercise themselves, is the examining of their sins, after this manner: whereby it will come to pass, that (as Solomon says) Blessed is the

man which does trouble and quicken up himself,* not that we must so trouble ourselves as to fall into unmeasurable despair: but we must quicken up ourselves with fear, because the devil seeks nothing else but to make us dull and blockish, to the end we should offend God, and bleare out our tongues against him like as we see these despisers do, which set themselves against him, dashing at him with their horns, and vomiting out their blasphemies. To the intent therefore that we come not to that pass, we must quicken up ourselves with fear and trembling: which cannot be done unless we profit under the correction of our God, and consider, that when he visits us, it is to call us unto him. It is to the end that we should make our own inditement, and not tarry the last laying of his hand upon us, but present him, that (as St. Paul says), they which condemn themselves may not be condemned of him (1 Cor. 11:31).

Now finally it is here declared to us that the course of nature, as we call it, is nothing but the disposition of the will of God, and that He bears such rule over both heaven and earth and over rain and fair weather, that He changes them at His own pleasure, and not without cause. If there were a permanent order in nature, it would seem unto us that God did not meddle with it; we would grant that He made the world, but we would then say that He does not govern us. We would think thus: "What? When the springtime comes, we see that the rest of the year goes on in the same course as did the year before. It is always one and the same. But in fact we see one winter is longer, and another winter later, and another earlier yet longer; we see one winter rainy, and another dry; we see abundance of snow in one year,

and another year none at all; one year is hot, another cold. Now, does not such inequality make it manifest that God is at work? For the sun performs his office in one year as well as in another, and always keeps his just course better than the best clocks in the world. How, then, comes such variety of weather? It is God's doing, to call us to Himself.

Truly the philosophers do seek out causes as they term them. There is such a meeting of stars (say they), and this proceeds of such and such a conjunction. But where does all this come from, if not from the hand of God? We must always resort to the first cause. And indeed, such men are nothing more than beasts if they will not yield to that!

Yet it is not sufficept to know that God guides all His creatures, and that He holds them bridled in order to make them bow, just as a horseman makes his horse to turn on this hand and on that, to stop, and to run. It is not enough to know that God looses and binds and sends such changes as He likes; rather, we must also understand further that God does nothing without cause. For if we say that God governs the world and do not know why He plagues us, we shall quickly be inclined to murmur against Him. And meanwhile we shall not profit under His chastisements and corrections, but continue dulled in our sins. So then, let us mark that in shutting up the heavens that it yjelds no rain, and in drying up the earth as if it were iron, He is showing us our sins and that He is our judge. This is what

we have to bear in mind concerning the course of nature, as it is here declared to us.

Nor is God content simply to say that the heaven will be as brass, but He goes on to say that He will send us ashes and gravel or sand instead of rain. Just as we see caterpillars that eat, mar, and destroy all that is on the earth, so it only takes one blasting or mildew to eat the corn and consume it wholly. It is worse than if God should sow salt. And these blastings and mildews are of the same substance as the rain. God only needs to make little changes. He can send a little sharp cold and that same cold will make a clean riddance of all things. When we see such things, then, let us always take warning from this teaching and let us be no longer entangled in our follies. Let us never say, "Ah, evil fortune, evil fortune." But let us understand that our Lord is calling us back to Himself, and has His Hand stretched out; and let us know that it is He that smites, as if He should say, "I have gone about to draw you to Myself by fair means, but you have not humbled yourselves before Me. Seeing then that you will not be brought to it willingly, I shall now compel you, as if I drew you by the hair on your heads." Let us, I say, be admonished by this teaching, here mentioned, to prevent the wrath and vengeance of God, as often as He gives advertisement of the same.

Again, when God makes the earth fruitful, let us acknowledge it to be His work, and that there does not spring up a blade of grass except He has put His Hand upon it. Let us then take our daily food from Him, not cramming our ourselves like brute beasts, which fill their

bellies not knowing whether there be a Creator that causes the earth to bring them forth food; but let us understand that God blesses the earth and causes it to yield fruit for our nourishment and sustenance. Let us bear it in mind, that in affliction as well as in prosperity we may turn our eyes ever more unto God.

And it is expressly said further that God will make pestilence cleave unto us and that He will send other diseases and that they shall continue upon us until we are consumed by them. This should waken us even better, seeing that God does not strike as it were a single blow and then quit, but that His curses shall follow us and cling to us unless we forsake our sins and wickedness.

Finally, let us learn that those who stay away from God and hide from Him day after day, only deceive themselves. For example, we see many who, when God sends them some affliction, take some notice of it, but soon they forget it. They shake their ears and think it is over, and like a dog that has been stuck with a whip they turn their backs and run away, thinking that they may appease God by some means. Thus deals the world. But let us beware of such stupidity, for we see what is said expressly in this place. God has spoken of His curses, and added that they shall hem us in on every side, He concludes that they shall cling to us. And why? Because if we cling to our iniquities, so that they reign in our bones and in our marrow, and are fixed in our hearts and minds, then must God's curses follow us similarly. When a man will not do away with his evil affections, but is delighted in them and continues to soak in them, God for His part

must then shut him up in them. And when we so do, then He must send up His curses to stick fast to us like a leprosy that they may consume us utterly, so that they do not respond to medical plasters, being so deeply rooted within us and in away, incurable. Therefore, let us be afraid at the hearing of these things.

And so we see now to what purpose Moses adds that the curses of God shall cling to us, namely to warn us that if the mischief has taken root, we must strain ourselves the more in praying to God to show us the favor of the cleansing of His Holy Spirit, whose property it is to search the bottom of our secret affections; that it may please Him to reprove us in such a way that this fear may cause in us a marvelous purgation, expelling our sins from us that we may no longer be wedded to them.

And therewithal let us realize that when diseases begin to reign, or any other afflictions, we may not hope for any end thereof unless we cease to offend our God. It is said in a common proverb that diseases come on horseback, and that they return on foot. But even though the reason for this is readily apparent, we consider it not. And as I have said before, it is because we do not look to the hand that smites us. Nor can God win us to Himself by the first stroke, when He punishes us. Sure, we are full of fine words: When a man is sick he will protest that his whole desire is to serve God, and that if he may only recover his health, the world will see him a new man. But all is quickly forgotten.

Therefore, it is no wonder that instead of mitigating our punishments God at various times increases them and suffers us to languish in our adversities. It is because He sees that our diseases are so deeply rooted that He must come again more often than only once or twice to purge us of them. And therefore let us learn to pray to Him to vouchsafe to cure our faults in such a way that they may not proceed to the extremity here expressed, but that as soon as we feel a little stroke of the rod of His hand, the same may be sufficient to bring us again to Him; indeed, to Him with the kind of repentance that will show that we are honest, acting in simple truth, and that we continue therein to the end.

Now let us fall down in the sight of our good God, accusing our whole life of the malice and rebellion that is therein, beseeching Him to vouchsafe to chastise us with gentleness and to spare us in such a fashion that we are not cast down into despair but rather are brought home again to Him. And therewithal, since we cease not to offend Him and it is also necessary that He should daily call upon us and awaken us that we may fare the better by His corrections, let us continue to lament and mourn until that time when He has rid us from all the corruptions of our flesh and has brought us to the perfection of righteousness wherein lies our true rest, which is the heavenly blessedness we hope and long for. And since we cannot obtain any such matter except by means of our Lord Jesus Christ, may it please Him to reconcile us to God His Father by His death and passion and in the meantime so to mortify our old Adam that His own Image may be restored in us, and His glory shine forth in us.

That it may please Him to grant this grace not only to us but also to all people and nations upon earth; etc.

The 157th. Sermon

which is the fifth upon the twenty-eighth Chapter.

If we were threatened by a mortal man, as God threatens us in his law: surely we would be moved, albeit that he had no great power over us: wherein our ungodliness is to be seen, insomuch that although we endeavor to cloak it, yet it betrays itself, in that we attribute more power to mortal creatures than we do to the living God. But hereby God intended to try the honor and obedience that we bear him: to wit, namely in this, that he assures us of his love, we should rest wholly thereupon, and hold ourselves contented therewith. And likewise on the contrary side, that when he gives us any certain token of his anger, we should quake thereat. Let us take good heed therefore of the thing that is here mentioned: namely that we be not so blockish as to make a scorn of God's wrath. But let us return to that which has been said already, to wit, that his hand must needs be against us if we live not according to his law. It is certain that men will naturally give liberty to their lusts, to do whatever God has forbidden them, and that they will not stick to make war against

him. Indeed, they will not say so, yet does the thing show itself to be so. For when we on our part have defied him and assaulted him; is it not reasonable that he should arm himself against us? True it is, that so long as we live in this present world, the infirmity of our flesh is such, as we are not able in all respects to satisfy the law of God. Nevertheless when men pass their bounds so far that good and evil are to them all one; and that they strive not at all against their lusts: they show themselves open enemies unto God. And to that end also is it that Moses speaks. Although we do our endeavor to resist the evil, and that the fear of God does bridle us, yet cease we not to deserve to be chastised of him: as we see the faithful are not exempted from many afflictions: and that God reclaims them much rather than he does the despisers of his majesty. For as they are his children, so has he the greater care over them: and therefore does he chastise them the more earnestly. However, Moses in this place speaks but of such as harden themselves in stubbornness, flinging out of course in such wise, as they make no conscience at all to do evil. They never think that there is a Judge in heaven until he makes them to feel his hand. And therefore he says not; God will chastise you as a father does his children: but God will strike you mainly; you shall feel his hand, so roughly and lively, that you shall not be able to abide it: and that not for one day but continually till you be consumed and perished. Seeing then that we hear such threatenings; let us understand that they be prepared for such as are hardened in evil and are not restrained with any fear, to sigh when they feel any evil temptation in themselves: but go on, taking the bridle in their teeth, and make a mock of God. And what shall follow of that? Over

and besides the things which we have seen here before; Moses adds, that God will smite such despisers with diverse plagues. First that he will send them enemies; and give them power to destroy and to consume them, insomuch that they shall persecute them even in their dead carcasses, so as when they be discomfited, he will not do them the honor to suffer them to be buried, but leave them for mere for the crows, and for the beasts of the earth: and moreover that he has diverse other means to plague them in their bodies; by sending them diverse diseases, as cankers, and other bots and scabs, whereby they shall be brought to such an after deal, that they shall not have as it were any more understanding, but be utterly out of their right wit, so as they shall grope at noonday, as the blind do in the dark. And surely the sorest point of God's vengeance, is when men be so overthrown that they have no more the heart to return unto him, nor be able to recover themselves to acknowledge their faults, and to perceive that when the hand of God does visit them, there is no help except they make their refuge to his mercy: but abide astonished as men besides themselves. By which means God shows himself to be a mortal enemy unto them.

Now as touching that which Moses speaks here of enemies: we see again how God holds the hearts of men in his hand: so that if we be in peace and anon war is made against us, and we wot not wherefore: (as I have already showed) it is because God is angry with us: and that forasmuch as we have spited him, he must also war against us. He has soldiers enough. As soon as he makes any sign (as says the Prophet) all the earth is moved; even though a little while before, no

man thought to have stirred. Let us therefore understand that when wars are toward in the world, God shows tokens of his wrath. It is certain, (as we have already said) that albeit we serve God faithfully, and stand in his protection: yet we shall not cease to have enemies. For it is his will to exercise us by that means: and it is the state of the Church, as it has also always been. But this good comes thereof, that God will maintain us against our enemies. When they have devised wonders against us, yet shall they not bring their purpose about. They shall be disappointed. And though they be as fierce as lions, and full of desperate rage: yet will God tame them at the last: all though they continue in purpose to devour us, yet they shall not have the power to do it: But (as has been said afore) if they come against us one way, they shall flee seven ways. But now it is said contrariwise that although we be of power above our enemies, and do set upon them in never so good order: so as the victory may seem to be already gotten on our side, (as we see how the wicked be enflamed with pride and presumption) yet when we think ourselves to have gotten the goal, God will touch us with such a fear as we shall not know which way to run fast enough, but every of us shall be at his wits end. Let us understand hereby, that when God stirs up wars to chastise us, though we be never so well furnished, and have all the means that may be to resist; yet must we needs perish if God be against us. For victory is not obtained by the force and valour of men, but by the power of God, who for that cause is called the Lord of hosts. And there is none other help for us, but to be at peace with God, that he may brood us under his wings: accordingly as he uses the same similitude, that he will play the part of a hen towards her

chickings. For then shall we be safe though all the world conspired our destruction. And albeit that our enemies be never so mighty and strong, and fully minded in their malice to destroy us utterly: yet is it sufficient that God does warrant us and that albeit we have no succor of men, yet are we sufficiently fortified by his only power. But if we proceed to offend him: and he sees that when he has spared us to recover us unto him; we have lever to be adversaries unto him and to continue in our rebellion: then after he has borne with us long enough, he must needs bring us to this point of being consumed by the hand of our enemies. And although others seem as wicked as we, and that God does not prosper them more than us: let not that deceive us. For God will sometime give victory to the wicked, which are no better than we, but peradventure worse; yet will he not fail to destroy us by their hands, and yet they shall have their turn as well as we. But in the meanwhile, we must not think that this threatening is delivered in vain. Therefore let us not compare ourselves with others, saying, O, are not they offenders as well as we? And has not God good cause to punish them? Yes, he has for but he knows the due time and season, and he can use them as seems good to himself: but let us prepare ourselves to abide his blows if we stop our ears against his threatenings, and sleep when he would waken us. For if we give no credit to his threatenings, we must feel by effect, that he who pronounces them, has power to put them in execution, and that he speaks not, as they say, to scare little children. It is certain that God will threaten often before he execute judgment. But therein let us consider his long patience in tarrying for us. And if we abuse the same, it will be nought else but a heaping up and a doubling of God's

wrath towards us: insomuch that it had been better for us that he had rooted us out the first day, than so long to have forborne us. Let scoffers say, that respite is worth gold. But there is no respite so long which we would not redeem with a hundred deaths, if it were possible, when we have been so stubborn against our God, and so disobedient to his word, that we have made but a laughing matter of his giving of some token of his anger. Let us therefore consider, that whilst that God does spare us, he gives us leisure to return unto him: and that if our enemies have forborne us, it is of his favor showed unto us, that we might prevent his wrath. But if we will not hear him when he speaks, nor receive his warnings: it behooves us to give ear to these his threatenings here denounced, and he must be fain to send us to another school. It is the wonderful goodness of our God, that when we have thus provoked him, as we see; yet he forbears us, and all to recover us unto him, not by forcing us with main strokes, but by alluring us after a loving manner, being ready to receive us to mercy, as though he were not a Judge to vex us and to condemn us. But what? When we have contemned all this, it must fall out in the end (as I have said afore) that our Lord must stir us up other masters, so as the wicked may rise up against us, and seek to make a slaughter of us by butcherly murdering of us, being in very deed the executors of God's vengeance, whereof we were warned long beforehand, and made but a laughing game of it, continuing still in our sins and wickedness. That is the cause why I said, that so long as God speaks unto us, and we condemn ourselves, and acknowledge our sins, and seek atonement with our God that we may live in peace in this world: although it be God's will, that we should have enemies

and be kept occupied with wars, yet notwithstanding he holds us still in his keeping and we be maintained and defended by his power and goodness.

Now as to what Moses adds, That the dead carcasses should be eaten of crows and of wild beasts, and that there shall be no man to drive them away: it seems to be a vain threatening: for it is no matter whether it be so or not. If a man is buried when he is dead, what is he either the better or the worse for it? It seems then, at the first blush, that this should not be greatly regarded. But GOD meant to show that he will make his wrath felt even in the bodies of them that be dead. And in very deed, burial is a privilege that GOD has given to mankind for a warrant of the resurrection. Let us not think that the use of burying the dead is proceeded of a foolish superstition, or that men devised it. It is true that the heathen have used it, and that was a witness against them: And at the last day, they shall be convicted by their using of that Ceremony, which should have taught them to look for the last resurrection; and their not considering of it is inexcusable. For our burial ought to be unto us as a lively glass or portraiture, to show unto us that we be not created to go after such a sort in corruption, as though there were not another life, and that we should not be restored unto a new state. And it serves always for a larger declaration, that mankind perishes but for a time, and that their bodies shall be renewed. Now forasmuch as burial is as a memorial of the Resurrection as I said afore; therefore is it given to men as a prerogative, to be buried: in respect whereof there is used an honest comeliness, as who should say that we which remain are

taught as it were by eye sight to look continually for a second life. For the dead also bears a certain mark in his body, that he is as it were laid up in safe keeping, until the day come that GOD will raise the dead again. Now on the contrary side: whereas it is said that men shall not be buried, but that they shall be eaten of beasts and fowls: it is as much as if God meant to deprive them of the common benefit that he had granted to all mankind: and as if he had showed openly that both in life and in death they were accursed of him. And that is the cause why it is said: Thou shalt be Buried with the burial of an Ass; which thing was spoken by the Prophet to a King, even the King of Judah. But yet, because he would not be corrected, and that whereas GOD had given him the honor to bear in his lifetime the figure of Jesus Christ: yet notwithstanding forasmuch as he had abused the same and given over himself to all ungodliness: thou shalt be buried with the burial of an ass (says the Prophet.) We be hereby warned to have very great regard of all the corrections that GOD sends us: yea even of the very least: that we may always be stirred to fear. For what is the cause, that we pass over so many chastisements of GOD, without profiting by them? Because we shut our eyes willfully, and unless we are compelled by utter force and necessity, we are contented to bear ourselves in hand, that it is not GOD that chastises us: and (as we shall see hereafter) we fall to such blockishness, as to attribute all to fortune. Let us therefore be admonished to mark all the corrections which GOD sends us, both upon ourselves, and upon our neighbors, that we may receive warning by them. It seems to be but a small matter, not to be buried: yea but yet will God have it noted, and to be understood that it is his

hand, and that he shows himself as Judge against such as have offended him. Seeing that GOD will have his Judgments known in so small things? let us be advised to have more wit and discretion. As often as GOD gives us (as you would say) but a fillip, let us be moved to think on him and not tarry until he draws his sword, or bends his bow to hit us with a mortal wound: but let us by all manner of means humble ourselves under his hand. Moreover we have here, a Testimony of the life everlasting. True it is that this point was not so plainly declared in the law, as it is to us in the Gospel, neither that we should rise again to the heavenly glory, nor that we should live with God after our death. But yet for all that, the old fathers did not lead the life of beasts, neither did God leave them in such ignorance, as to have their faith closed up in this present world and in this transitory life. For here we have a record, that when we have finished the course of this life, there is yet a greater Judgment prepared for all men. And if GOD does forbear us here, and notwithstanding that we escape all the curses mentioned in the law, even to the end: yet must we come to a greater reckoning. For it were a needless matter, for GOD to speak of depriving men of their burial, if (as I said even now) he had not a farther meaning in it. Therefore let us so use this doctrine, as we may be provoked to have an eye to the life that is yet hidden from us, and which we look for by faith; and let us not think it shall greatly avail us, when GOD punishes us not in this world. For it is far better for us to linger here beneath, and to be always in miseries: than to enjoy our ease and delights, and that in the meanwhile GOD should but tarry for us, to thunder upon us when he has taken us out of this world. Thus you see whereunto this Text of

Moses does serve us, where he says, That the birds and beasts, shall eat our carcasses, and that no man shall drive them away.

Now if God gives such tokens of his wrath on the bodies that have no feeling: what shall become of the souls, wherein is the very seat of evil, and the kingdom of Satan? For our hands, our feet, our eyes, and our ears, offend not of their own proper moving; but by the direction and provocation of our wicked thoughts and affections. And whereby all those things, or whence proceed they but from our souls? Seeing then that the bodies which were but instruments, do feel the wrath of GOD, and do answer to the same as we see: let us not suppose that the souls go quit. Let us therefore look evermore higher than to this transitory life for to waken us. and to make us to walk in such obedience, that after we have fought against sin, and against Satan, and have been exercised in patience, and in diverse afflictions in this world, having done our endeavor to serve GOD with all diligence, our souls may be taken up to rest, and that our Lord in likewise may show the self-same favor upon our dead bodies. Notwithstanding, this favor and blessedness of having their bodies buried, does not always happen to the faithful, whereas it falls out that many of the wicked are very honorably buried; howbeit that the same is nothing to them, neither is their state any whit bettered thereby. We see what is said in the Psalm concerning them that have faithfully served GOD: namely, that their bodies were laid out for a prey to the fowls, and the beasts; and yet were they the children of GOD. And albeit that this be a testimony of God's wrath upon the wicked: yet may it oftentimes come to pass, that our Lord will use the

same manner of chastisements upon his own people: And yet it shall be nothing to their hurt.

True it is, that we must evermore humble ourselves, when such a thing happens, and we must understand that such things be as it were marks of Adam's sin, and of the corruption that is in us, and also of the offenses which we have committed: and yet for all that our Lord in the meantime turns this evil to good, when he permits the faithful to be deprived of burial. We see what is said of the wicked rich man and of Lazarus. It is said, that the rich man died and was buried: behold how the worldly pomp is bestowed on the reprobate. It seems that his soul should have been received into paradise when his body was sumptuously carried and used with great ceremonies. And what of Lazarus? He died too. But what mention is there of his burial? None at all. Whereby our Lord Jesus does us to understand, (for it is he that speaks it) that we must not stay altogether upon these visible things. But yet this threatening (however the case stands) is not in vain. What is to be done then? Let us gather generally (as we have said) that burial serves to lead us to the hope of the heavenly life, and of the resurrection which we must hope for. Thus much concerning that point.

When we bury them that be dead before us, let it serve always to provoke and to stir us to understand that we are not created to live only in this world: but that there is another better life prepared for us. And again, when we see that our Lord deprives any of their burial, let us understand that he therein shows his wrath.

Nevertheless it is better sometimes for a man to be devoured of beasts and birds, and to be chastised of GOD after that sort in his body for the sparing of his soul, and to have a temporal condemnation, than to perish forevermore: It is better sometimes for a wicked man to be hanged, than to die in his bed. For how many do we see to gnash their teeth against GOD, when he has patiently tarried for them, and given them so many plain and apparent tokens of his wrath for their conversion; and yet nevertheless they make a mock of him, and still continue obstinate in their rebellion? When a wretched ill-doer is condemned by men, he is ashamed of it and cast down in himself, and acknowledges and bewails his sins. This condemnation then, which he bears in his body, albeit that it is an execution of that which is here spoken by Moses: does serve to his salvation; and therefore let us bear away these things. Moreover when the faithful, even the very martyrs are burned, and their bodies consumed to ashes, so as they have not that which should be common to all mankind: let us understand that GOD converts the same to their welfare, and that their glory is thereby doubled. As how? It is certain that this is a threatening of God, as be also all diseases. But when our Lord saves so, he means that they be the ordinary means, which he uses to correct our sins: but yet nevertheless he fails not to chastise those so with his own hand, which have not offended him: or at leastwise whom he means not to pursue with rigor. This is in sum that which we have to bear in mind concerning this Text.

Now let us come to that which Moses says further. He says that GOD will strike the despisers of his law with many diseases. He has spoken heretofore of fevers, and of the hot disease, and of the yellow jaundice, and of such others: now he speaks of the Itch and canker and of other worms and scabs. Where also mention is made of the Hemorrhoids, as some do expound them; all these aforesaid things be the weapons of GOD, to punish the offenders of the Law. To be short, they be his men of war to encounter with us, when he sees that we take heart of grass against him. And truly when we favor our own lusts to violate his righteousness, and to break the order which he has established among us: and when he sees our lusts to be so inordinate which are thieves and robbers: he arms his people and substitutes which be the diseases that are here spoken of, and other sorts. Let us therefore learn, that whatever diseases we suffer in our bodies, the same be all messages of GOD to make us to feel his wrath, because we have offended him: but especially the extraordinary diseases, as when GOD sends upon us the sicknesses that are not usual amongst men, for the curing whereof they can hardly find any mean, or else it is altogether impossible to do it, by reason of the strangeness of the things: then means GOD to make us to feel his anger toward us double, and to show us that we have provoked him too too much. But we think very slenderly of this. For contrariwise concerning the common diseases, the ordinary having of them makes us to think that they proceed not from God. They say: there is a man that has a fever: and there is another that has the murre & the pox, or some such other disease. Well, these be things wherein we be hardened. As how? By custom. And must God in the meanwhile lose

the possession of his right? If he does still show himself a Judge towards us, in chastising us: is that a reason why we should forget him, and have no regard of his hand? But however the case stands, such is our blockishness. I would God that the examples thereof were not so notorious as they be. But let every one look to himself, and see if the customableness of sicknesses cause us not to turn our back upon God, & to have the less regard of his judgments and of our own sins, so as none of us finds any fault with himself. Thus much touching the common and usual sicknesses. And as for the extraordinary diseases, we see how men are hardened by them also. I pray you have we not seen that God within these fifty years has brought up new diseases, against whoredom? Whence comes the pocks and all these other filthy diseases, which are not to be reckoned up at this time? Whence come all these things but from GOD, who utters such vengeance as erst was never known? The world wondered at it, and for a time, men were greatly afraid of it: but yet of all this while they have had no consideration of the hand of God. And at this day it is become so ordinary a matter, that the despisers of GOD, I mean the lecherous sort and the whore hunters, which give over themselves to all lewdness, do but wring their groins at it. Though GOD smite them with that kind of leprosy (for it is a kind of leprosy in very deed) so as they be eaten with the fretting thereof and with other filthiness; yet they cease not to follow their trade still and to mock at it: and truly it seems a very strange case, that such a punishment of GOD should be so turned to a scoff. What a jesting make they nowadays of their bawdry when they be thus punished at the hand of God? How comes it to pass, that they

themselves do make a jesting and scoffing at it, as it were in spite of God, and that whereas he calls them to humble themselves in sackcloth and ashes, they do but blurt out their tongues at him, and are so far from being ashamed of their doings, that even as it were in spite, they make a sport of their own filthiness and miseries. We see then how froward men be, seeing that they can profit no better in God's school. I mean not in the school of his doctrine, where he speaks unto them, but when he smites with heavy strokes, and also raises up wars and troubles, which ought to make men besides themselves for fear: but yet in the meanwhile this is not written in vain. Let us therefore be better advised: and when GOD sends us any strange diseases; let us understand that our sins be multiplied and that GOD must therefore be more moved than ever he was. Wherefore let the same bring us to repentance, and let us not double our iniquities: for in the end, we shall find the thing by experience, which we saw even now; namely, that when the evil shall stick to us, yea even in our marrow and in our bones, until we be utterly consumed. Besides this God has other manner of means to punish us, and when he perceives that the usual means prevail not, then has he other rods laid up in his storehouses; as it is said in the Cantic. Yea and we shall see what it is to walk at all adventures against him: namely that in the end he will overtake those folk overthwartly with a crooked measure, which play the ignorant fools after that fashion, and do nothing but scoff and shake their ears, when he has punished them one way or other. Let us not tarry therefore till GOD use such extremity towards us: but being warned beforehand by that which is mentioned here, let us look to it, and consider that look how many

sorts of diseases he sends us, so many witnesses he sends to prove that we have sinned against him: that we might think thereon and turn to him again with all lowliness.

I said erewhile, that the very uttermost of all, is this which Moses adds in the end: to wit, That GOD will smite us with astonishment, and that we shall be blind groping at full midday, as the blind in the dark, and that our heart shall be amazed. Hitherto we have seen that God shows a singular favor towards men, in afflicting them in their bodies, when they have their minds still in quiet, that they may be patient. For they feel their sins and bewail them, and they cease not to call upon him that chastises them. And in very deed it is sometimes seen, that the grace of GOD is much more manifested towards such people, than if they had no such great afflictions. As for example: If GOD spares a man, and he serve God: we see that God blesses him. When we see a sound and holy life in one, we will say, here is a man that serves GOD, and God also shows himself gracious towards him. Again we see another that is visited with great diseases, every man has pity and compassion on him; he pines continually, and has vehement pains, he is vexed with diverse maladies, and the very remedies that are given him are so grievous that nothing can be more: yet notwithstanding this man ceases not to hold himself in quiet, confessing his sins and craving pardon of GOD: we see such a patience as moves us to glorify God; and the party continues still in prayers and supplications. When a man is thus mortified, and GOD holds his heart still in awe, so as the party continues in obedience under his hand; then perceive we a great grace of GOD in the midst

of those chastisements. But when we be without reason in our sickness, and play the mad bedlams, and stand chewing upon the bridle and wot not which way to turn us; and of all the while never make any countenance of fleeing unto God for relief, it is even the full measure of all misery.

Therefore it is not without cause, that Moses having spoken of the sicknesses and griefs that GOD sends upon men's bodies, and likewise of extraordinary chastisements, which constrain men in spite of their beards, to feel their sins, adds here; God will strike thee with blindness, yea and he will so strike thee, that thy wits shall be amazed: thou shalt grope at noondays as in the dark: thou shalt have no more sense or feeling in thy heart: but thou shalt be altogether blockish. And here we be warned again, that the chastisements which happen to us in our minds should be more dreadful unto us, than all that we can suffer in our bodies. It is true that our nature draws us clean contrary; for we be so tender and nice in our bodies, that as soon as we feel any grief, by and by we cry out, and lose our patience; and therein we see a part of our brutishness. For if we had any drop of stayed understanding, we would a hundred times be more afraid of the chastisements that God threatens to our souls, than of all that ever we can endure in our bodies. In what case is a man, when he is forsaken of GOD, so as he seeks him not any more, but endeavors by all means to hide himself from his presence? Surely when we come to that point, if we could pluck God out of his seat, we would gladly do it. He that seeks such hiding-holes to convey himself from coming

unto God; does what he can to rob him of his majesty, and he is loath to come to present himself before such a Judge.

And truly, although a man have no further harm than this blockishness, so as he feels not his own misery; is it not a token that God has already given him over to a reprobate mind? Yes: for there is not a more evident sign of reprobation, than to be without remorse or scruple of conscience. Moreover, when a man is frightened and out of his right wits, in such wise as he knows not which way to turn him, and has no more taste or feeling of God, nor can any skill to lament for his sins, or to ask forgiveness of them, and to repent of them: but gnashes his teeth, and bites the bridle like a Mule: is not that a dreadful thing? When we behold such glass, our hairs stand upright, and even nature forces us to it. And yet for all that, if we think not upon it, that we may stand in awe, and walk in fear and humility, is it not a tempting of God? Let us learn therefore not to harden ourselves in such wise as God should be forced to fall to this rigor, wherewith he does here threaten his people: namely, that he will make them grope as the blind in the dark, and that they shall have neither understanding in them nor discretion: that he will make them to fall in such a fear, as they shall not know whether they be living creatures or not: nor perceive whether there be a God that will receive them to mercy, and whether they shall prevail in calling upon his name, or not. Let us not tarry till such evil does come upon us. For it is a deep pit, out of which very few can get forth. Indeed God will sometimes bring his people to that point that they shall not know where they be, and they shall be so greatly afraid and so troubled

therewith, that they shall become dull and blockish: this is well seen. But he lifts them up again after that he has brought them low. However, for as much as this example is very rare, let us not tempt our God; but when he afflicts us in our bodies, let us understand that he spares us greatly, and that he mitigates the rigor of his wrath, and let us be no more so impatient as we have been wonted to be. Albeit that the grief be hard and bitter to us, yet let us confess: alas: but yet God has not touched me in my soul. Let this come always in our remembrance, to the end that we, acknowledging the goodness of our God in that he forbears us, may return unto him; and not doubt, but that he is ready to take pity upon us, when we seek unto him unfeignedly. Let that serve for one point which we have to remember in this lesson, where mention is made of the said blockishness.

Now Moses says expressly, that the transgressors of God's law, shall grope at noonday. As if he should say: notwithstanding that God give them many occasions to rejoice, yet shall they be frightened in such sort, as they shall not take hold of any grace, but be as blind wretches. Seeing it is so, let us mark farther that although God does mitigate our griefs, and comforts us; yet does that serve us to no purpose, if he give us not the wisdom to understand his goodness. And we must understand, that we are not able to enjoy the good that God offers unto us, when we be destitute of his holy Spirit. And this is one execution of that threatening that is here mentioned. True it is that we should always return to this point, that our Lord desires not the utter confusion of sinners: but that for so much as such miseries do happen oftentimes, we should not tarry till they light upon our

heads; but rather seek the remedy, to the end that God have not occasion to withdraw himself from us. However the case stands, let us first of all mark, that God directs this doctrine to such as have been trained in his word, as we have already said. It is certain that he is Judge of the world: yet notwithstanding we well deserve to be chastised, after a more boisterous fashion, when we have been taught at his mouth, and have rejected his will, and be so far forth corrupted that we make but a jest of his word: and that whereas he sought to retain us as his people; we have despised him. It is very meet therefore that we should be grievously punished, and therefore let us think, that seeing God does us the favor to let us have the pure doctrine of the holy scripture, the same serves to bereave us of all excuses, and also to quicken us up to walk so much the more in fear.

But herewithal let us mark farther, that God does not only use threatenings towards us, but also daily exhort and allure us unto him, to reconcile us to him: showing that for his part, he is ready to come to atonement, so we condemn our sins, and return to his mercy. What else is the Gospel, that we hear every day, but a message of reconciliation, as Saint Paul calls it in the second to the Corinthians?* Seeing then that God sends us a herald to declare peace unto us, and to show that he is ready to do away all our offenses, let us take heed, that we use this time of our salvation, to receive the grace that is offered unto us in due season, as the Prophet Isaiah tells us, and as Saint Paul says,* using the same testimony. Again when we have been overmuch hardened, and that God has patiently waited for us, and we still continue in our sins: let us not

think that he in the end has either given over or forgotten his office. We must needs yield an account of such unthankfulness. When we forsake the salvation whereunto he called us, and despise him out of measure: such willful stubbornness must of necessity come to reckoning. Then let us stand in fear: and as often as we hear speaking of the grace of God which is offered unto us in our Lord Jesus Christ, let our hearts be inclined to receive it: and let us give way unto God to come in. And when we go unto him, let it be done with bewailing our sins, and with yielding ourselves guilty, not only in word of mouth, but also with such grief of heart, as may prove that the evil displeases us. And when we thus dislike of ourselves, let us not abide till our Lord put in execution the threatenings that he sets forth here, but let us turn them to our commodity. And when we hear the promises of the Gospel, let us remember the threatenings also: that we may be so much the more provoked, and every man make haste to receive the good which is offered unto us to enjoy and to possess, unless the fault be in ourselves.

Now let us cast down ourselves before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our sins: beseeching him to make us to feel them yet better, until we be utterly beaten down in ourselves, and seek for the remedy whereunto he calls us: namely, that being guided by his holy spirit, we may increase and profit more and more in all holiness and righteousness, and that we may endeavor so to glorify him in all our whole life; as in the end we may attain to that same everlasting glory, unto which he calls us: And so let us all say: Almighty God heavenly father, etc.

On Monday the 23rd of March, 1556.

The 158th Sermon,

which is the sixth upon the twenty-eighth Chapter.

29 And thou shalt always suffer injury and oppression, and no man shall deliver thee.

30 Thou shalt marry a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build a house, but thou shalt not dwell in it: thou shalt plant a vine, but thou shalt not gather the fruit thereof.

31 Thine ox shall be killed before thine eyes, but thou shalt not eat of it: thine ass shall be taken away before thy face, and it shall not be restored unto thee: thy sheep shall be delivered to thine enemies, and there shall be nobody to save them.

32 Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given to another people, thine eyes shall see it, and dazzle at it all the day long, and thy hand shall have no strength.

33 And a people which thou hast not known, shall eat the fruit of thy land, and all thy labor: and thou shalt do nothing but suffer

revilings and oppressions always.

34 And thou shalt be amazed at the sight of those things which thine eyes shall behold.

35 The Lord will smite thee with a sore swelling in the knees, and in the legs, of which thou shalt not be healed from the sole of thy foot to the crown of thy head.

WE ought well to remember the meaning of Moses, whereof we have spoken heretofore; namely, wherefore he continues in uttering so many curses. For we are slow to be moved: when our Lord does threaten us, we make a game of it: and albeit we confess that we should think thereon, yet it escapes us. And furthermore, we suppose that we shall always find starting holes, and that if God does follow us one way, we by flying another way shall be able to avoid his blows. Thus do men deceive themselves, and thereupon wax hardhearted. Now Moses (or rather the spirit of God speaking by his mouth) perceiving that men be so careless, and that they shrink not at the first, when the judgment of God is set before them, continues his matter still and adds threatenings upon threatenings. Again, on the other side, perceiving also that men seek starting holes, and thereby deceive themselves, bearing themselves in hand, that they can save themselves by flinging over the Fence (as they say:) he shows that God has infinite means to punish us with all, both above and beneath, before and behind, on the right hand and the left, and that we shall be so hemmed in on all sides, that it shall not be possible for us to escape his hand.

Now after the threatenings, which we have seen here before, he presently adds that they who so resist God shall be afflicted and tormented, so as men shall spoil them, and they shall be laid open to all violence forever, and no man shall deliver them. We see here that God serves his own turn by the wicked, and that although their intent be nothing so, yet does he apply them to a good use, when he listeth to punish us. Whereas there be thieves and robbers, albeit that they be given over to Satan, yet fail they not to serve God's purpose; yea truly, for we see in this text that our Lord leaves them not at random, to rob and to spoil, whether he will or no: but he threatens his people, saying, They that disobey me, shall be vexed and robbed. And whence proceeds that? It must needs come from him.

Now albeit that God suffers oppressions, robberies, and violence to be done, he can very well condemn them, according as he is righteous, and must needs hate Injustice: yet notwithstanding, by his wonderful wisdom which to us is incomprehensible, he turns those things to his own service: so that when we have offended him, he must needs punish us by the hand of the most wicked: which is the more to our reproach. For if he himself should have punished us, and we saw before our eyes, that he revenges himself of our iniquities, well would we say, seeing that we have offended him, it is good reason that we should come to account for it. But when he stirs up lewd folk, and despisers of his majesty, and such as are given to all naughtiness, and makes them our Judges: it is to make us so much the more ashamed. Let us therefore consider, that whencesoever the evil comes, we have evermore to deal with GOD: and we must think

that there is nothing done in this world but by his direction. And thereupon let us enter into the examination of our faults. For it is not enough to know that God rules all things: but every one of us must also make his own indictment, and consider that all afflictions and adversities are tokens of God's wrath. Now when we speak of his wrath, we must in like wise remember his justice; and thereupon conclude that we very well deserve to be punished. But yet he threatens us before he strikes, to the end that we should not stand gaping till the things were come to pass; but rather prevent them beforehand, as Saint Paul also does admonish us. Whilst God spares us, let us be advised, so to walk in his fear, that we provoke him not to stir up thieves to torment and vex us: but that rather (if men attempt such injuries against us) we may stand in his protection, according as he promises to uphold all them that walk in his obedience. Then let us see that we do so; and let us remember that which is spoken by the Prophet Isaiah, to wit, that they which have robbed, must be served with the same sauce. And that is the cause why violences and extortions do so continue in the world.

Men wonder to see that the mischief grows worse and worse: but they should note the cause thereof. For they that bear chief sway and preeminence, do let themselves loose, seeking nothing but to enrich themselves, and to swallow up other men's substance. But have they robbed? God must send a revolution, so as other robbers shall come and bereave these of their booties: and afterward, a third sort must step up to spoil them again. And so there is never any end. And why? Because the world never ceases to provoke the wrath of God. And for

so much as we be headstrong, it is reason, that our Lord should continue to show himself our Judge. But (as I said even now) let us be well aware to walk in such wise, as innocent blood cries not out for vengeance against us. Let us not do injury or outrage to any person, that our Lord may bless us for so doing, and not pay us with like measure, according as we see how our Lord Jesus Christ says, that it shall come so to pass. Let every of us therefore bridle himself in such wise, as this curse come not upon us, to be robbed for using of robbery and extortion against the innocents. But for as much as men imagine that their adversity shall be short, and that they shall be soon rid of it: Moses adds, That it shall be forever, and that when the hand of God is against us, no man shall be able to save us.

It is certain, that like as God is slow to anger, so is he soon pacified; but that is but towards the faithful. As for the wicked, he must hold on with them, and they must feel their burden every day heavier than other. And wherefore? According as they harden their hearts against God, they must in like wise feel him the harder against them. And albeit that this is not always, yet do we see it often come to pass, God will at some times withdraw his hand after he has menaced the wicked; or else when he has given them some stripes with his rod, he will let them go again: and that is, as it were a respite, that they may have leisure to turn to repentance. Notwithstanding, because he knows them to be unreformable: that dealing of his must of necessity be turned to their sorer condemnation. If GOD then do spare the despisers of his law, and them that be obstinate in malice, it does not therefore follow, that they shall be saved: but it is to the end that the

plague shall come double upon their heads, for their abusing of his patience after that manner. For when he has waited for them, and they proceed still from evil to worse: he must needs put to his hand at the last. Howsoever the case stands, it is not in vain that Moses tells us here, that when GOD is our enemy, our life shall not be miserable only for a day, or yet for a little while; we must not limit ourselves any term in that case: but we must look for one mischief to draw another, and that there shall be none end, until he has laid us quite under foot, unless we turn to him to obtain mercy. Wherefore let us weigh well this word which Moses adds, where he says, that if GOD do begin to smite us for despising of his justice: it shall not continue for a little while, but we must be miserable forever. And why? For in as much as the majesty of God is everlasting, he must needs take endless vengeance of them that despise his justice. Therefore so soon as we see the blows come near us, let us be afraid, and let every of us make haste to return unto him, whom we have offended, to wit, our GOD, to obtain forgiveness of our trespasses. That is the only remedy, without which there will be neither end nor measure of our afflictions, except we take order to reconcile ourselves to our God.

Now where he alleges that none shall save them: That is to cut off all the vain hopes which men do forge to themselves in their own brains, when he punishes them. They look hither and thither, and if they find any comfort in this world, it seems to them that they shall make a stoppage against God, and that they shall be able to win the goal in the end. Indeed they will not say so; for it is a blasphemy which all of

us do hold accursed; but yet we be so doltish, that we hope to turn away the hand of GOD when we find any help here: in so much that if men bear us any favor, and we be supported in any thing, we arm ourselves therewith against God. But Moses tells us here, that it is in vain for men to seek diverse succors after that fashion, when GOD wars upon them. For why? All creatures are in his hand, and without him they can do nothing. Moreover, that which is for our benefit, shall become our bane, and all things shall redound to our confusion. Let us not therefore look to be saved by any means that may be, when our Lord takes part against us: but let us return unto him, seeing that there is none other remedy but that, and let us rid ourselves of all such things as may hinder us to come to repentance.

Let us then be quickened up by these two sayings of Moses, that we sleep no more in our vain fantasies, as we have been erst too much accustomed. But what? There are very few which think upon that. For every man martyrs himself, if his grief continue, and he find no help in men. In all our afflictions, we can complain well enough: but we consider not that GOD withholds men's help from us, when he intends to punish us, in such wise that we shall (after a sort) be utterly overwhelmed. And again, if our sorrow continue; it is, because we have persisted too much in our stubbornness. We think not a whit of all this. But yet are not these things written in vain. And therefore let us learn to profit better thereby, than we have done in times past.

Finally, Moses sets forth by this threatening, how we shall be vexed and robbed, if we offend against the law of God. He says: Thou shalt marry a wife and not lie with her: Thou shalt build a house, and not dwell therein: Thou shalt plant a vineyard, and not gather the fruit thereof. Yea, they shall take thy Beef, and thy Muttons and kill them, and thou shalt continue still a hungered: and not only all thy cattle shall be made a prey and a booty: but thy very children also shall be delivered into the hands of thine enemies, and thou shalt yearn after them, and thine eyes shall dazzle for very grief and sorrow, & in the meanwhile, thy hand shall be without strength or power to recover them. It had been enough to have said in one word, Thou shalt suffer robberies, extortions, and wrongs: but because men are slow, it behooves them to be so much the better touched, and to behold the thing as it were before their eyes. That is the cause why Moses speaks here of houses and vineyards, of wives and children, and of cattle. As if he should say: Some shall bewail the taking away of their houses which they had builded, the putting of them from their vineyards and their other possessions, the spoiling of their goods, and the driving away of their cattle: And some shall bewail the wrong that is done unto them in their children, and in their very wives. But we be to consider that all these things be the scourges of God, wherewith he punishes us for our sins.

It is certain (as I have said already heretofore) that GOD at sometimes, for the exercising of the faithful in patience, does send them the very chastisements here mentioned, and yet punishes them not for their offenses. For Job was not punished for his sins: Not that

GOD had not just cause so to do, but for that he had no respect to that: however the case stand, surely it is an ordinary matter.

Indeed we may allege many examples of men that are tormented and vexed by the wicked, so as they are driven from post to pillar, and robbed of their goods: such examples do happen every day: but this proves not, that this doctrine takes not place, and that it is not true in itself, as an ordinary rule, to wit, that God punishes men's sins by such means. Now when we have walked in the fear of God, and endeavored to serve him: and yet notwithstanding, our substance is taken away, and the robbers possess it: let us consider, that if this be not done for our sins, our Lord gives us a great preeminence. For first of all, of whom was it long that we offended him not? We were preserved by his holy spirit. And moreover, notwithstanding any good affection and zeal that we have had to live uprightly and uncorruptly; yet we cease not to be guilty before God. But what for that? He spares us, and yet he means to try our patience, for to humble us. When it is his will that we shall bear the miseries, which are punishments for them that despise his law, and that we must feel them: well, we must stoop. And thereby he tries us, how pliable we be under his hand to yield unto his government, as shall stand with his good pleasure. Moreover, this always takes place, (as we have said before) that our Lord punishes the offenses and transgressions of his law, by the things that are specified here. So then, when a man builds, let him take heed that he build not with extortion, pillaging, and robbery, unless it be his meaning to have his house taken from him, according as it is spoken by the Prophet Habakkuk. For the

Prophet brings in the walls singing and answering one another. For inasmuch as men's palaces and houses, are often built with blood, robbery, extortion, and wicked practices: and the very walls themselves do cry out that they were builded with pillaging and polling: it must needs awaken up God's wrath and vengeance against such builders. Desire we then to be harbored in peace? Let us look that we build without doing wrong to anybody, whatsoever he be.

And moreover let every of us in his dwelling, dedicate himself in such wise to God, as he may dwell with us. For they that are driven out of their dwellings, have commonly driven God out before: that is to say, they have followed some lewd trade, so as GOD has not reigned there. Is it then any wonder, if they be driven thence in the end? No: For why? Shall GOD be thrust from his right; and we in the meanwhile possess every man his dwelling in rest? Were that reason? Therefore, when we see such changes to happen, as they are to be seen in the world: let us understand that GOD drives them out, which erst would give him no lodging: and let such examples admonish us to stand in fear of the threatenings here specified. And let us not tarry till our Lord banish us from the place where we be harbored: but let us rather endeavor to serve him, so as he may continue always with us to maintain us. And if it come to pass, that we be driven out, let us understand that the same is for our sins: for it is better late than never. Moreover, if we be driven out for any other cause, as at this day we see the poor faithful people, in state like a bird on the bough, as though the earth could not bear them: as Saint Paul speaks of his time, and as it is known at this present time

that the children of God be as vagabonds, having not a hole to hide themselves in: when we behold these things, let us understand, that for as much as our Lord leads us this walk, he does us great favor that the same is not because of our sins, but for his name's sake, and for our better establishment in the hope of the heavenly inheritance, seeing that there is nothing sure nor stable in this present world, but that we must always aspire to the eternal life, and to the rest that is prepared for us on high. Let us then acknowledge the good that he does unto us in this point. But in any wise, let us take good heed that we provoke not his wrath against us in such sort as I have said before.

Now, whereas he says: "Thou shalt marry a wife, and another shall lie with her": let every man take heed to walk in such chastity, as he draw not upon him this curse of God, in such wise as to be deprived of the wife that he thinks to have: and the wives in like case of their husbands. We see how men are given over to all unchastity, and God must needs yield them their reward accordingly. David himself was not spared in this case. We hear how it was said unto him: "Thou hast done this in secret, but that shall be done openly." He was fain to abide reproach before all the world, in having his wives ravished openly. Since it is so then; let us take good heed, that we walk in such chastity, that when men take wives, they may so live together as they may feel the blessing of God, and that their marriages be not broken through the committing of any offense. For, as I have said: it is no wonder that there be so confused changes in the world at this day, because men do more and more kindle the wrath and vengeance of God. It is even in like case with adulteries. For what is the cause that

they reign so rife, and are come (as you would say) to their full pride? It is because wedlock is so little regarded, and that there is no fear of God: there is neither faith nor truth: and therefore must men needs plunge themselves in all misfortune, so that in the end there will be nothing but disorder. So much the more therefore ought we to take warning to walk so in all cleanness of life, as every one may keep him to his own wife, and the Lord bless their marriages and maintain them in quietness.

Moreover, seeing that God is matched with us in the person of his only son, and would have us to keep fast the faith of wedlock towards him, according to the simplicity of his Gospel: let us stick thoroughly to that which he has commanded us: and to be short, let us be hallowed unto him, and follow his holy calling. For if we do so, our Lord will grant unto husbands the grace to live quietly with their wives and households, and unto the wives that they shall learn to live in good agreement with their husbands. For we must mark, that if man and wife do not join in one mind, there must needs be discord in the whole house, and one shall bite and snatch at another like dogs and cats, and the one would wish the other a hundred feet under the ground, so as they shall live in continual misery and disquietness. And why? Because that neither the one nor the other has any regard to God, to yield themselves to his direction. Therefore let us learn, not to provoke any more the vengeance of God in this case.

As concerning the lands and possessions he says: "That the

transgressors of the law of God shall plant vines, but they shall never gather the fruit of them." Now we see that they who have thus offended God, are the stoutest and boldest sort, bearing themselves in hand that no harm can come near them. And that is the cause why we see that the greatest getters, and the doers of greatest enterprises, are those who willfully give themselves to pilling and polling by hook and by crook, having no care what poll and extortion they commit, and offending both God and man without end or measure. Such persons as these, therefore, must afterward yield an account. They bear themselves in hand that when they have planted vineyards, they shall enjoy them without controversy: and that when they have built houses, they shall dwell in them without putting out again. Thus do men harden themselves against God. But Moses, contrariwise, declares: That when they have planted vines, other men shall gather the fruit of them. And indeed, whereas we see at this day so much thievery in the world; let us understand, that it is because there are so few that have clean hands, and are able to protest that they have not encroached upon the goods of other men by unjust means. Truly, there is so immeasurable disorder nowadays, that the children of God are fleeced though they abstain from all manner of injuries. But we must evermore have recourse to the ordinary course whereof I have spoken, to wit, that our Lord will not fail to punish the sins that break out after that fashion like a water flood. As for them that have lands and possessions, they will not go to steal other folks' goods, nor to pick a few grapes: it is for beggars to do so; and we see in these days, that the most part of poor folks are pilferers, filching and stealing all that ever they can finger. But yet they that have lands and

possessions, are the greatest thieves: for the things which they possess, they get by unlawful means. It is no wonder then, if God do requite them with the like; and that they be so vexed in their goods and possessions. God therefore shows us by experience, that his uttering of such speeches is not in vain; but we think not thereon. Men can well enough complain, as I have said before: but they have no regard to the principal point, which is; that GOD puts the things in execution which he spoke by the mouth of Moses. Let us therefore bethink ourselves; and whereas we see so much stealing, both of vines, of corn, and of such other things; let us understand that our Lord punishes the ravenousness and extortion that is committed both in merchandise, and in all other trades of occupying: and let us not tarry till GOD does punish us in very deed; but let us walk uprightly, if we will have him to defend us. For although that all places be never so full of thieves; yet will our Lord keep our goods in safety, if we walk in his fear, and abstain from all manner of evil doing. That is the thing whereunto we must have our recourse; and we must not think to escape evil, by evil doing: but we must use the remedy which our Lord sets forth in this text. As much is to be said of our cattle, and also of our children. Yea, and Moses proceeds still with enlarging, to the end that men should so much the better perceive, what the effect is of this speech which he uses: namely, that this shall be forever. As if he should say, that the hand of God shall ever wax heavier and heavier. In so much that if a man who is driven from his dwelling, does think to remove to his possessions, and to his lands; GOD will persecute him even there: and if he think to cheer himself with his wife, she shall be taken from him by force: and if he

think to find some comfort in his children, they shall be delivered into the hands of his enemies; and if he think to have any recourse to his cattle, they shall all be stolen or taken away by force. Moses therefore besets us here on all sides, to the end we should learn to resort unto our God; for as much as it is in vain, for us to labor to escape by any other way. This is the matter in effect which we have to bear in mind of this text.

Now, whereas he adds moreover, to the increase of the mischief, That the fruits of the earth and the labor of our hands shall be eaten by a people which we have not known: and that we ourselves shall be distraughted by reason of the miseries which shall so light upon us. That is to say, we shall be as out of our wits, beholding the mischief before our eyes; and being amazed thereat, whereby we shall be enforced to perceive that the hand of God is against us. That is, in effect, the matter which he meant to say in this text.

Now I have told you that the misery is so much the more grievous to bear, when a people unknown comes to ransack all. Truly if we be robbed by our own neighbors, and by them that should be at amity with us: the same is very hard to bear. But if there come a strange people, there is less mercy. For when men be so separated one from the other, and have no intercommuning at all: there is the less likelihood of any means of safety. And we see how this repetition here is often found in the Prophets: insomuch as it is said sometimes, that the people which shall persecute us, shall be a barbarous people without language whereby to have any take with us: by reason

whereof, when we shall ask them mercy, and cry alas, it shall seem unto them that we curse them; and that shall be an increase of their cruelty. So then let us mark, that his speaking thus of a strange people, is to make us to understand, that GOD will send us such chastisers as will have no pity nor compassion of us, until they have quite and clean rooted us out.

And now, by the way, we are warned, that although the plague be not yet come near us, we must not therefore fall asleep. For we always measure God's threatening, by our own conceiving of them, and by the things that offer themselves to our sight. When men speak of war, and do threaten us with the Turk, But how can he come at us, say we? He is too far off. Again, can such a Prince invade us? Tush, he shall be letted by such a means: the plague cannot come that way, by reason of such a cause. He may be dealt with by such a means; it cannot be. When we have such kind of worldly shifts to defend ourselves with, thereupon we despise GOD, not in word, but in deed, for we continue unreformable and froward, and fear not that the plague can come at us. Therefore says God, that he will stir up strange people against us, even people of far countries. When men doubt it least, then shall they wonder to see how GOD will come in upon them on that side which they never thought of, and bring them enemies to spoil them. Let us then mark by this text, that God's scourges lie sometimes hidden, and break upon us on a sudden, so as men are taken tardy by them, according to this saying, that they be like to a woman that is childbearing. For a woman that is with child, is utterly abashed when her hour is come; even so fares it with them

that are puffed up with their iniquities, and delight in them: they forecast not that the hand of God is near them. It comes upon them like a tempest; when they say, Peace and all is safe, then comes their ruin and utter destruction. Therefore whereas we be told of strange people, let us learn to look far before us when GOD does threaten us; for like as faith must advance itself above the world to take hold of God's promises, that it may rest altogether upon them: so likewise when GOD threatens us, our faith must look further off than we can see with our eyes, and we mistrust the thing which we see not at all: like as we may perceive that Noah tarried not till the flood broke out, and that GOD did unlock the Rain of heaven, and opened the watersprings of the earth: but as soon as he heard the word, he did nothing but think upon the vengeance of GOD: and by virtue of that word, he beheld the flood as if it had been present: and he lived in such fear and carefulness, as if he had seen the rain both evening and morning to destroy all things before his eyes. Even so should we do: and we be warned thereof by this saying, where God speaks of far countries.

Moreover, we are therewithal warned to live in peace and concord. For seeing that GOD hath associated us and we be intermingled together: we must learn to live in such unity, as our Lord need not to bring strange enemies to chastise our churlishness in resembling cats and dogs. For when men who ought to agree together, do vex one another; it causes GOD to stir up strangers to be their enemies; because the nearer that our Lord comes unto us, the more would he have us given to do good one to another. And if we do the contrary,

then must GOD stir up a people to come to spoil us, because we have not lived in peace like brethren, nor knit ourselves together like fingers of one hand. This is the thing which we have to bear in mind concerning this text.

Now where he says, "And you shall be amazed at the sights which you shall see:" it is according to that which was said before; namely: that men should be distraughted, and grope at noonday, as does the blind in the dark. For if we are borne with so far as to gather and pluck up our spirits to call upon GOD, and to be patient in our afflictions; it is a great grace, and such a one as cannot be sufficiently esteemed. But if our Lord encourages us not to repentance, nor gives us wherewith to assuage and diminish our sorrows, but all hope is taken away, and we are as folk already forlorn, so as we are besides our wits to see the naked sword continually before us, having no means of remedy or succor at all: that is a dreadful threatening. Nevertheless, it is not sent without cause, considering the hardness of heart which is to be seen in all men. For until GOD have brought us to this distraughtedness, we are altogether blockish, and we have the contrary vice, which is, that we can very well complain when anything does trouble us: yea, and sometimes we lie as beaten down, but yet does not that make us come again to God: for we see how every man takes the bridle in his teeth, so as they shake off all fear, and never think upon that which is set down here. And so we see how men become blockish. Now our Lord would fain draw them to repentance, at leastwise if they were teachable, that is to say, if they were not willful stubborn. For he tries all manner of ways to draw us

unto him. This is the cause why he does correct us gently, and as it were within compass, as with his little finger. But when he sees that that will nothing prevail; then must he bring us to this kind of woodness. For until he has lessened us as men distraughted, we will never have our minds peaceable and obedient, we will never be won.

Therefore let us mark well that this threatening is directed to such as stoop not at the first blow when GOD hath warned them, but go on from evil to worse: for then must they of necessity come to this woodness. Now he speaks expressly concerning the sights of the eyes. For men do blind themselves (as I have said heretofore) persuading with themselves that they can escape by some mean: in so much that although we see the evil at hand, yet you would wonder to see how we hold on our course, and care not for it, according as the prophet Isaiah speaks of the wicked: saying that when the scourge passes over the whole earth, and the storm overtakes them all, they are not any whit moved thereat. After that manner do the despisers of GOD speak, and the number of them is infinite. So then, when men do thus blind their eyes, and have no respect at all to the plagues whereunto they be subject: but notwithstanding that they fall into infinite troubles out of which they cannot get out again, yet they hold on still: forasmuch as they be so froward, Moses says expressly in this text: "You shall have a sight before your eyes:" that is to say, after that you have been a long while hardened in your vain fantasies, and have flattered yourselves in your sins, imagining that GOD should spare you and that you be (as it were his mates, and have made a league with death and with the grave, according as the

Prophet speaks of it: when as you have been thus a long while untouched with any awe, and have deceived yourselves in bearing yourselves in hand that your plague shall not last: There shall come a sight that shall make your eyes to dazzle in beholding the infinite mischiefs which you must be fain to endure: and whichever way you turn your eyes, whether it be upward or downward, forward or backward, you shall see God's hand continually pursuing you; by reason whereof you shall be driven into a madness. Let us learn therefore to convert this text to our benefit: and while GOD does forbear us, or at the least so moderate his plagues that we be not thereby altogether overthrown; let us fear him, and let us bethink ourselves how sundry ways we have offended GOD: insomuch that if he listed to deal rigorously with us, we should then perish every minute of an hour. And therewithal let us not tarry till he thunder down upon us, and pour out his curses upon us in such sort as they may sink into our very bones: but let us return to him and to his goodness. And above all things when he gives us the grace to foresee his plagues afar off, so as we may say that others be punished for our instruction: let us take warning by their example, and in such wise by faith receive God's corrections wherewith he threatens us, as it may preserve us from that sight whereof Moses speaks here: to the intent that our Lord strike us not with such fear, as we can not in any wise think to receive any record of his goodness by reason of our sins. Nay rather, that by putting this lesson of obeying him and of submitting ourselves unto him in ure, we may eschew this foresaid amazedness, and not be so oppressed as we should become like folk that were out

of their wits. Let us not come to such an extremity, neither let us compel GOD to execute such Threatenings against us.

Now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgement of our sins: beseeching him to vouchsafe to make us so to understand them, as every one of us may be his own judge, and turn to him, before we be thereunto constrained: and that having willingly condemned ourselves & bewailed our sins, we may seek to return to his obedience in such wise, as the same may be to dedicate us wholly unto him. And that in the meantime it may please him that like as he has sent us the message of reconciliation by his gospel, he will also give us that grace to obtain mercy of him, & forgiveness of all our sins in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: and that resting thereupon, we shall not to walk always in fear: and that his bearing with us through his fatherly goodness may not cause us to sleep in our sins, and to flatter ourselves in them: but that every one of us may quicken up himself, until we be quite and clean rid of them. And that forasmuch as we are to pass through so much filthiness in this world, we may be taught to amend our misdoings continually until that we be thoroughly rid of them, for the full uniting of us to himself, and to make us partakers of his heavenly glory. That it may please him to grant this grace, not only to us but also to all people and nations of the earth, etc.

On Tuesday the 24th of March, 1556.

The 159th. Sermon,

which is the seventh upon the twenty-eighth Chapter.

36 The Lord will carry thee and thy king which thou shalt have set over thee, to a people which thou hast not known, neither thou nor thy fathers: and there shalt thou serve other gods, of wood and of stone.

37 And there shalt thou be a gazing stock, a scoffing stock, and a byword to all people, to whom the Lord shall bring thee.

38 Thou shalt lay much seed in the ground, and shalt gather little: for the grasshoppers shall devour it.

39 Thou shalt plant a vineyard and dress it: but thou shalt not drink the wine of it, nor gather any fruit of it: for the worms shall eat it.

40 Thou shalt have Olive trees in all thy coasts, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with the oil of it: for all thine Olives shall be shaken off.

41 Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, but not for thyself: for they shall go into Captivity.

42 The worm shall destroy all thy trees, and the fruit of thy land.

43 The stranger which dwelleth with thee, shall rise above thee very high: and thou shalt stoop under him very low.

44 He shall lend unto thee, and not thou unto him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail.

45 And all these curses shall come upon thee and follow thee and take hold of thee, until thou be utterly rooted out, because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the Lord thy God, by keeping his commandments and ordinances which he hath commanded thee.

WE know when the people of Israel chose themselves a king, with what affection they were led; even of pride, for that they would not be inferiors to their neighbours. Moreover, they thought to be very sure, by having a head over them, that should have the whole authority. And so you see that the children of Abraham could not content themselves with their liberty, but desired to have a king. Because they saw the Egyptians, the Syrians, the Moabites, yea and the Tyrians, and other like people to have kings: they bore themselves in hand, that if they also might have a head, all would go well with them. Now like as pride and ambition was the cause that they chose a king in Israel: even so became they hard-hearted thereupon, supposing themselves to be out of all perils, by having such a defense: by means whereof we see that they despised the prophets, under pretense that they thought themselves well fenced.

The spirit of God foreseeing this (albeit that it was not yet come to pass) said in this Text, That the king which they shall appoint should be led captive into a strange country: As if God should have said that they might well seek starting holes to save themselves: but they should stand them in no stead at all against his hand. This is the thing that we touched yesterday; namely, that when God is our adversary, we may not think to maintain ourselves against him by the means of creatures, knowing that he will surely apply them to our destruction. Therefore let none of us deceive himself, neither let us make our defense of that which is nothing but smoke and leasing. It is true that the king which was first chosen by the people of Israel, namely King Saul, was not brought to captivity: however, that he died in battle: but the successors of David were handled cruelly and with great reproach, notwithstanding that God had ordained them, yea and that they were a figure and Image of our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is a horrible thing, that the kingdom which God had dedicated unto himself, (as witnessed the anointing) should be laid forth to such a reproach. You see how the successors of David which had received the promise that their seat should be everlasting, and in the meanwhile were as the figures of our Lord Jesus Christ: were handled in such a sort that they were led prisoners in chains, were arraigned as offenders, had their eyes put out, had their children's throats cut in their own presence, were cast into a deep dungeon, there to rot or to be eaten to death with vermin: and that, as you see is a very strange matter. But the vengeance of God was to extend so far even of necessity, because of the frowardness of the people, whereof was none other remedy. And the more that God had suffered

them and patiently waited for them, the more were they to be brought to the extremity of all confusion, for despising so great goodness, and for being so froward and hard-hearted against it. Now we may hereby gather a good warning, to wit, that (as was declared yesterday) albeit that according to the world, we seem to stand in no peril: yet does it behooove us to seek to have God's favor: for if he be not on our side, and we under his safeguard, cursed are all the helps which we suppose to have of creatures; for they serve rather to overthrow us. And therefore let us take heed that we put not our confidence in the greatness of Princes, or in any other defenses; for we see how they be but means to blind such as might else turn to God, and obtain forgiveness of him: and that in the end it shall overthrow them utterly. Let us then be better advised, and though we seem to be never so well guarded to the world: yet let not that be a let to us to walk always in the fear of God, knowing that all the favor which we are able to purchase in the world is nothing at all; and that if God does but blow upon it all vanishes away in the minute of an hour. That is the thing which we have to mark upon this text.

Now it is said expressly, That as well the king as the subjects shall serve strange Gods yea even of stone and of wood, that is to say, puppets and Idols. No doubt but that God by these words meant to utter how dreadful punishment was to come upon the Jews. For albeit that the nourishment that God gives us, and in like wise, all the Testimonies of his fatherly love and goodness appertaining to this transitory life, are to be highly esteemed: yet the most singular benefit that we receive as long as we live in the world, is that we have

Religion well ordered, that his service be pure amongst us, that we call upon him, and that it be lawful for us to claim him as our GOD, and that we be not betrayed and defiled with superstition and Idolatry. That (say I) is the principal good thing whereunto the faithful should aspire: and we be very blocks and beasts, if we prefer not the same before all manner of riches and pleasures, and before all our ease and commodities. Now then on the contrary part, the plague which ought to be most dreadful to us, and the horriblest calamity that can fall upon us, is to be deprived of God's service, and to have our mouth shut, so as we can not call upon him: and not only that, but also through Tyranny to be compelled to honor Idols, and to defile ourselves with their abominations, and to pervert that which GOD has ordained for the magnifying of his name amongst us. When things be thus confounded, let us understand that GOD is departed from us, and declares himself to be our mortal enemy, and has quite forsaken and refused us, and is loath that we should thenceforth have any token or inkling at all, either of his presence or of his favor. And so, whereas Moses says in this Text, That the Jews shall serve strange Gods, he means to threaten them more dreadfully than before. As if he should say; Right grievous will it be unto you when you shall be famished and want bread to eat, and water to drink, when your enemies shall rob you of all your substance, and make havoc of all your possessions, when you shall pine away in grief and sorrow, without any mean to help you: surely these will be very hard things for you, specially when you can obtain no favor of your enemies, who shall be as wild beasts against you: but yet is all this nothing in comparison of the other curse, that whereas in stead of

honoring the living GOD, and of confessing that he has chosen you to be his people, (which is an immeasurable blessing) in stead of such things I say, you should serve Idols, and be conversant amongst the superstitions of the Pagans, and have no more prayers neither Psalms nor Sacrifices, but be dispersed and forlorn.

Now seeing that we perceive the natural sense of Moses, let us understand that amongst all the blessings of GOD which we enjoy in this present life, this ought to be preferred above all the rest: namely, to have liberty to serve our GOD, and to make confession of our faith, and to declare that we are his people, of his Church and of his flock. Truly it is slenderly known: howbeit, it is not in vain that we be admonished thereof. Seeing then, that it has been the will of God to plant his Church amongst us, and that we should have his word and his sacraments, by which he declares that he dwells amongst us: let us accept such a blessing according as it is worthy. It will serve us to a double use. First of all, when we fare the better by the doctrine that is preached unto us every day, such a treasure perishes not but through our own unthankfulness: as we see that many folk think it enough to be at sermons, and it seems unto them, that God has his due, so they have used some ceremony. But in the meantime the seed of life does perish without yielding any fruit. To the end therefore that we may apply the blessing that GOD bestows on us, to this use: when as we have liberty to hear his doctrine, and to be trained therein, and have the Sacraments for an establishment of our faith, and may declare that it is the living God whom we worship and that he governs us: I say, let the same profit us: and so will it, if we

acknowledge that our Lord cannot bestow on us any greater blessing than that is. And in the meantime we will take it patiently if other things do fail us: as where many want their commodities, let them not be grieved at the children of this world, which have their delights, and do triumph, weltering themselves in their earthly pleasures, if the children of God have not the same, let them know that they enjoy a thing which recompenses double, yea an hundredfold: that is, that they can serve God. For to what purpose is it, that these wretched people which dwell in papistry may lie slumbering in their nests, and in the meantime be banished from the kingdom of GOD, and that Christ Jesus himself and his word be banished from the country wherein they dwell? What avails it, that they be served in their houses, and in the meantime be not suffered to serve GOD? What avails it, that they have whereof to eat and drink till they burst, and in the meantime be starved for want of ghostly food? What avails it, that they be in honor and credit, and in the meantime be constrained to defile themselves with these treacherous dealings whereby GOD is despised, and his honor spoiled, and conveyed over to Idols, and they be guilty thereof? Alas: is not this a cursed state? Let us therefore take it patiently, albeit that we be had in contempt toward the worldward, and counted as underlings and castaways, not having our ease, nor that which our flesh desires: seeing that GOD gives us this special liberty, that we may purely worship him and serve him, and be delivered from this cursed servitude of Idols; let us be contented, and esteem this said benefit, according as it is worthy, so as we be not grieved toward them that enjoy the goods of this world, and in

the meantime are destitute of the grace of God, which remains amongst us.

Besides this, here is a warning that seeing God has put us in possession and fruition of this liberty, we must take good heed that we are not deprived thereof through our own lewdness: for this threatening which was made to the Jews, is likewise directed unto us. Let us understand therefore, that seeing we have the Gospel preached unto us, if it prevail not with us, God must deliver us into the hands of other teachers when we shall have refused to obey him. And in very deed, we may not think that the horrible confusion which is in the Papadome, befalls for any other cause, than that whereas they have been taught the pure doctrine of the Gospel, yet they have been rebels to God, and have not bound their necks to bear his yoke; and therefore GOD could not otherwise do, than deliver them over to such tyranny as we see. And truly the same was told them beforehand by Saint Paul: "It is good reason (saith he) that the world, seeing that it will not believe the truth, should obey lies: and that they which would not be subject to the living God, should be obedient to the creature, even to the Idols, which be nothing." Beholding therefore the examples before our eyes, and hearing the threatening as it yet here: let us learn, while GOD does keep us in his school, so to walk in his fear, and awe, as we may not be bereft of the welfare which we now enjoy; but that God may rather augment it, and cause it to prevail. Moreover, let us mark that they who do serve Idols, shall not be excused therefore, although the same be a punishment of God. We know that one sin is punished by another,

according as it is spoken in diverse Texts of scripture: and as we see it specially avowed in the first Chapter to the Romans, "That they which served not God in giving themselves wholly to cleanness of life, shall be shaken off and given over to all manner of shameful lusts, and have no more understanding to discern between evil and good, than brute beasts, but shall run into all manner of infamy." Hereby Saint Paul does very well declare that when GOD gives us head to be plunged in the depth of our iniquities, it is for that we should be the more guilty before him. They therefore which worship Idols, notwithstanding that they are compelled thereto, and do sigh and would fain be at liberty: yet cease they not to offend God: and thereby they should understand the better, how heinous their sins be, seeing that they must receive such correction for them. As how? Whereas I should glorify my God, I must offend him, he is fain to cast me off, because I am not worthy to serve him, and he must deprive me of the liberty and mean to dedicate myself wholly to his obedience. Let all them therefore that be in the captivity of Popery and mingled amongst the superstitious, understand that the vengeance of GOD lies upon them, and that they shall be more and more guilty for their serving of Idols. It is a poor reply for them to say, we do it not willingly, we wish that it might please God that the right and pure Religion were over all: but for all this, our Lord does not exempt them from condemnation. And he is the competent Judge. Let us therefore rest upon his word: and seek no more starting holes, but let them that endure such a state, understand that it is now time or never, to turn to God, forasmuch as they be as good as drowned therein, and have a token of his wrath against them, in

that he is gone far away from them. Therefore let them think thereupon, and be moved therewith to the quick: according as the meaning of GOD is in this Text, and as we have touched it heretofore.

Now Moses says: That this people shall be a gazing stock, and an example, and a byword, and a scoffing stock unto the nations, among whom they shall be dispersed. Here our Lord shows that as his goodness should be known in the people of Israel, and every man should rejoice in the seed of Abraham, so should the very same people be abhorred and detested. The promise was thus: "All Nations shall be blessed in thy seed." The truth is that we must resort to our Lord Jesus Christ, which is the very bond of the seed of Abraham; or else this blessing has no place, nor ground to stand upon. Yet notwithstanding, they which were descended of the race of Abraham, should have been blessed of God, so as they might have been an example, that every one desiring grace might have said, O God take pity upon me, as upon the children of Abraham, whom he has chosen and adopted. Such was the promise. See here the threatening that was laid against it, that seeing God did smite so rigorously upon the people whom he had chosen, men might be astonished at it and think thus with themselves: Is it possible that they whom God has chosen, should now be cast off, and be persecuted and thrown underfoot with all manner of reproach? And hereupon men may say: O God keep me that I fall not to such case as this people is in, or else when they intend to curse, they might say, GOD do unto thee as he has done to these vile Jews. This much is to be understood of this place.

Now let us mark that whereas the holy ghost spoke thus by the mouth of Moses, it was not his meaning that this doctrine should serve only for two thousand years or thereabouts, which time the law lasted until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: but that we at this day must apply the same to our own use: that insomuch as God is come nigh us, we must walk in his fear in despite of Satan, so as his goodness may shine in us, and be perceived to remain upon us: and contrariwise that when we be unthankful, and our God is as it were mocked of us, it behooves us then to think thus: Well may we shrink back, but we shall gain nothing by all our shifts: for in the end we shall not fail to come to shame. Verily we see how it is said that the name of God shall be blasphemed among the misbelievers, because that they which were counted faithful before, be so cast down, as GOD may seem to have falsified his promise and to have deluded them, so far forth must the vengeance of GOD extend. Now seeing it is so, let us learn to submit ourselves to our Lord while he allures us unto him with gentleness, and so to hold us under his obedience, as we may not become a byword and a jesting stock to all the wicked, which seek nothing but to blaspheme GOD and to make a mock of us. Let us (I say) look well to that.

Moreover, where Moses says, That GOD will thus disperse his people: it serves still to confirm his matter, to the end that the Jews, should not think that they were carried away by a storm, as it were by haphazard; but that they should understand that it is the hand of GOD that is upon them: and that for as much as this threatening prevailed not with them, therefore the thing that is happened unto

them should stand us in some stead. For look what vengeance we hear GOD speak of in this place; the same we see executed before our eyes. Is it not a horrible thing that the Jews be abhorred at this day throughout the whole world? Yet were they the people whom GOD had sanctified for himself, they were his heritage, they were the royal priesthood, according as they be termed in Exodus, and they were the blessed Generation, and yet for all this, they be rejected of all men, insomuch that men do as it were shudder to behold them as though they ought to be cut off from mankind. If it be said, O this may very well happen to the faithful, and the like befell even to the holy Patriarchs; it did so indeed, howbeit after another sort. For the faithful may well be put in fear, according as it is said in the prophet Isaiah, that folk shall point at them with the finger, and shun them afar off: and that is because GOD is not known, and his grace is despised. But whereas we speak of the Jews at this day, it is very well seen that God is against them: for they be as rotten members, and their body is torn in pieces, and there remains not any token of this blessing which God had bestowed on them. Therefore when we behold such a looking glass, let us learn to make our commodity thereof, and let the example of them serve to seal this doctrine and to ratify it, that we tempt not GOD, and that we continue not hardhearted so long till he be fain to wrap us up in reproach with all the rest of the nations of the world. After this, Moses returns to that which he had touched afore: which is, That the people having tilled their grounds and their possessions, shall not drink of the wine of their grapes, nor eat of the corn of their harvest, nor enjoy the fruits of their trees. This has been spoken afore: but there is here a certain

difference to be noted. For therefore God had showed, that when the Jews had labored for corn and wine, the enemies should come and take all away, and that all the same should be made a prey: but now he says, that without any force of man, and without any troubles of war, they should nevertheless not fail to be famished, and to be destitute of all things that might do them good. Why so? Because that worms, beasts, Caterpillars, locusts, and all other things shall eat up the fruit of the earth. Lo what armies God stirs up against the wretched. Again, on the other side, there shall come blasting and singeing, so that all must needs perish: albeit that men touch not the Jews, but let them alone in rest, yet shall they understand that GOD has other means to punish them, and that he is always armed infinite ways. That is the thing which GOD meant to declare. And therefore let us take warning by this Text, that when we have escaped one plague, GOD will find out another for us: and if we step aside to the left hand, & he nevertheless is armed against us, and before we have gone three paces, he stops us of our way. Lo how men prevail, when they seek lurking holes; according as we see how the Prophet Isaiah mocks them that think by their subtlety to escape the hand of God. Dream on, dream on your fill (saith he) yet shall the curse always overtake you. And in like case, although we have no enemies to trouble us, & to rise up against us to spoil our substance: yet let us understand that God has other means, which we know not, for to bereave us of that which he has put into our hands, and that we shall be abashed, to think how we have wherewith to satisfy us, and yet that the bread shall be plucked out of our mouths: and that when we think to drink, we shall be dry. And whereof comes that? Even of

this, that it is our Lord which gives increase to the corn when it is sown in the ground: It is he that sends the Grapes; It is he also that causes all things to prosper for our nourishment. We be taught by this text, first of all, that when we till the fields, sow them & reap them, we must make prayers always unto God to bless the earth, that we may be fed through his grace; and we must hold it for a certainty, that it is his peculiar office to feed us like as a father does his little children. Thus much concerning that point. Whereof because I have treated more at large heretofore, it suffices as now to touch it in one word.

Now furthermore let us mark, that whereas God speaks here of Locusts, worms, Caterpillars, & other beasts, & whereas he speaks of blasting & of burning which comes thereof, he shows that he has men of war of a strange sort, when he vouchsafes not to do men good: & this also serves to pull down the pride of men. For if we be spoiled by the enemies: very well (will men say) this was done by violence and plain force. As for example when war is, the whole country is spoiled, the richest folk become beggars: and all this is wited upon the war, man is not blamed for it. But when it comes to pass by other accidents, so as men wot not by what mean their substance is wasted, though they see it melt away before their eyes, one year by hail, another year by frost, and one while one way & another while another, so as all things consume between their hands; God by this means makes it more manifest unto men, that he means to confound them utterly. And indeed if we mark the course that he kept with the Egyptians, we shall perceive it much better. For we discern God's

judgments better in other men than in ourselves. If God had stirred up a great army against the Egyptians, in stead of the lice and vermin: they would still have continued in their pride and presumption: and albeit that they had been a hundred times discomfited, yet would they not have failed to have been stiff-necked still. When they were persecuted with lice, and that there were such Soldiers in Egypt; they should have been ashamed. Therefore let us well note, that God by sending men such chastisements as be set down here does warn them to think on their frailty. If Herod had been slain with a thunderbolt from heaven; it had not been so fit a punishment for the blasphemy which he committed in suffering himself to be called a God, and not a man, as when God caused him to be eaten and consumed with vermin, till he was as rotten as could be, insomuch as he was compelled by that disease to say (as he that lived at the time and was his familiar bears witness:*) Oh see here a goodly God, which is so rotten that he is enforced to feel that the hand of God does persecute him for his pride. Let us therefore mark well, that God, after he had threatened the Jews to send them enemies, which by violence and force of arms should spoil the country of all manner of food: now he adds moreover that although they were not vexed nor troubled at all by man's hand, nor anything were attempted by man against their possessions and lands; yet notwithstanding they should not boot themselves by their labors, nor by the well tilling of their grounds. And why? Because the vermin shall waste all. And he says again expressly, Thou shalt sow much and gather nothing, whereby he shows that when men make never so good provision beforehand, thinking undoubtedly that all shall go as

they would wish, yet shall they be never the better for it. And it serves to this end that we should not fall asleep when we see fair likelihoods, according as we be commonly wont to despise God: as who should say, that if there be a good seedtime, we are past danger, and God had no more to deal with the things that be upon the earth, or if we have reaped and laid up the Corn in our barns, it should make us to be the more proud, because we see no likelihood of any more danger. But in stead of this, we should evermore have an eye to Godward, saying, Lord, behold, the earth waits for rain as though it were a thirst, and when thou givest it, it is to make it to bring forth sustenance for our nourishment. Again, such storms might fall from heaven as would wash away all from us, and one war would be enough to bereave us of all that we have. Thus is all in thy hand O Lord, and we must depend upon thy mercy, and be all our life long in thy custody; or else we must perish, and all the provisions that we have shall profit us nothing. Thus then must we call upon God with diligence, and walk in his fear, seeing he is so gracious as to be our foster-father, and vouchsafes to stoop so low unto us. Therefore has Moses very well declared in this text, that we must not be beguiled by the goodly likelihoods & fair provisions which we are able to have. As for example, when we see the corn to be fair upon the ground, we must not be too lusty as though all were won, no not even when the corn is gathered in. For God will be then called upon, according as we are bound to make our daily suit unto him, saying, Give us our daily bread O Lord, that day by day he may feed us. For albeit we have never so much to day, yet tomorrow we may starve. For when it pleases God, he is able not only to destroy the corn and wine in the

fields; but also he can make them to be worth nothing, even when we have them in our garners and Cellars. Nay, we hear the threatenings that he makes, saying, You shall carry corn to the mill by measure, and the bread to the oven by weight, and yet for all that, you shall be still empty and hungry, when you have eaten never so much, there shall be no virtue at all in the meat, neither shall you be sufficed therewith. Seeing our Lord tells us that he has so many ways to famish us, let us not be hard-hearted: but let it rather waken us, that we may altogether depend upon him, and walk in his fear, and be his children, if we intend that he shall still continue to do the office of a father toward us. That is the effect of the things which we have to remember. Here again Moses repeats these threatenings, whereof he had spoken afore, saying: That the Jews and their lineage shall be carried away into captivity. Now certainly there can nothing more bitter happen unto men, than to see their children taken away by force, eaten, and devoured by the enemies, and cruelly dealt withal: they had rather to have buried them a hundred times. Now then let us mark in few words that God meant to declare in this text, that although he have been never so bountiful towards us, and filled us with his blessings, so as we be fenced in on all sides: yet he can very well bereave us of them all again, and that plague shall be much more grievous unto us, than if we had never known, what his goodness means. Wherefore the larger that God bestows his blessings upon us, yea even those blessings that concern this transitory life, let us look that we be always so much the more provoked to honor him and to serve him. For he for his part, will not cease to do us good, so we turn not tail, & give him over. But seeing

he allures us so gently, if we be willing to come unto him; let us assure ourselves that his hand shall evermore be stretched forth to augment the gifts and blessings that we have received of him.

In the end, he returneth to the matter which we saw heretofore. All these curses shall come upon thee, they shall seize upon thee, & thou shalt be caught and besieged by them on all sides, until that God hath quite consumed thee: even because thou hast not hearkened to his voice, to obey his statutes and commandments, which he hath given thee. I have told you heretofore how that Moses hath oftentimes showed to the Jews, that no evil or adversity came upon them but by the hand of God. But it behooves us also to know the cause. True it is that sometime God doth visit us, and we cannot perceive the cause thereof: for he doeth it not for our sins, not for that he might not do it, but for that he spareth us. Yet is this always to be looked unto, that when we sustain any afflictions, we must think on our sins, & enter into examination of them to condemn ourselves before God: yea & we must not tarry so long: but we must benefit ourselves by all manner of calamities which we see throughout the world, knowing that God punishes men's sins by such means: and thereupon bridling ourselves from the like. The matter then whereunto Moses doth now return, is, that having showed us how it is the Lord that withdraws all manner of blessings from us, it is he that curses our possessions, and the fruits of the earth, it is he that sends vermin, storms and tempests, to destroy all: it is he that gives power to our enemies: he shows wherefore all this is done: to wit, because we have rebelled against him, because we have despised

his law. That is the very cause why these plagues of vengeance do so pursue us. Now then, let us bear in mind the doctrine which has been sufficiently set forth above: which is, that when God doth afflict us, we must shut our mouths from replying or entering into plea: for we shall win nothing by standing in contention with him. Nay rather we must condemn ourselves, confessing that he deals justly. Although it be his will to prove our patience, and to try us to the uttermost; yet notwithstanding we must yield ourselves as guilty before him, & understand that our sins deserve to be thus roughly handled at his hands. Here is wherewith to cause all the blasphemies, murmurings and complaints to cease which are daily heard in the world. When there happens any adversity or any other affliction, it is to the end we should think on the sins that we have committed. Mark that for one point. And whereas mention is made of the commandments and statutes which God has ordained, the same expressly and purposely concerns us. For albeit that the Papists have the law, yet is it buried in them: the Jews (as says Saint Paul) have a veil before their eyes, so as they understand nothing. The Turks walk in their own ignorance, so do all the rest of the heathen. Now our Lord does enlighten us, and show us the way. There is therefore a more villainous rebellion in us, when we do not according as we be taught, and also we deserve that God should use greater rigor toward us, and pour upon us the plagues of vengeance which are here contained. Therefore let us benefit ourselves by the things that are said here, concerning the commandments & statutes that God has ordained. And seeing it is so that he speaks daily unto us, declaring unto us his will so familiarly: let every of us submit himself obediently thereto. And whereas Moses

says further, That these curses shall catch hold upon us, and that we shall be hemmed in round about by them, until they have consumed us: it is a warning to us that we should not be self-willed against God: for well may we seek starting holes: but it shall nothing boot us, (as has been said heretofore) for the end shall be ever unhappy for us. And therefore let us remember the complaint that God makes by his Prophet Isaiah.* He says in that text (as we heard yesterday) that from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, God must needs smite hard upon all them that have rebelled. And having spoken so by his Prophet Isaiah, he says: What may I do more? I have not ceased to chastise my children: insomuch that from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, I have so beaten them, that there is no whole nor sound place, and yet they continue hard-hearted still. Alas, what shall I do? I must crush them and break them all to pieces. Then let us be afraid to stand so wilful froward against our God, and let us prevent the condemnation here pronounced. And so soon as God begins to correct us, let us bestir us to return unto him, yea and let us not tarry so long neither, but being admonished by his word, let us fall to bewail our sins, and to be sorry for them, and moreover let us ask forgiveness of them in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our sins: beseeching him not to suffer us to be so blinded in this mortal life, as not to know that all the miseries & wretchedness which we suffer, be warnings given unto us, to make us to think upon ourselves & upon our lives: & also to move us to repentance. And therefore that if we be afflicted at his hand, it may

not make us to blaspheme his holy name, nor move us to impatience: but rather tame us, so as we may fare the better by all his corrections, and turn again unto him. And that forasmuch as we see the wretched world at this day to be so full of wretchedness and miseries, as is horrible, and also do behold the wrath of God for the sins that reign therein: it may be a mean to hold us in awe, praying God not to use any such rigor toward us: but rather that we fleeing for refuge to his mercy in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, may be touched with true repentance: & increase and prosper more and more therein, until that, being delivered from all our imperfections and sins, our God do clothe us with his righteousness unto the which we be daily called. That it may please him to grant this grace, not only to us but also to all people and nations of the earth, &c.

On Wednesday the 25th of March, 1556.

The 160th Sermon

which is the eighth upon the twenty-eighth Chapter.

46 And these things shall be for tokens and wonders to thee and to thy seed for ever,

47 Because thou hast not served the Lord thy God with joy, and with a good heart, for the abundance of all manner of things.

48 And thou shalt serve thine Enemy, whom the Lord thy God will send against thee: I say thou shalt serve him in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and in all manner of want. And he will lay a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have rooted thee out.

49 The Lord will bring a people upon thee from afar, and from the end of the earth, which shall fly as the Eagle: a people whose language thou shalt not understand.

50 A people of a shameless countenance, which will not reverence the person of the aged, nor take pity upon the young.

Because things are so greatly confused in this world, that it is hard to discern who they are whom God means to punish for their sins or to whom he means to show his love: Moses says expressly, that God will send such apparent tokens upon them that are stubborn against him,

as shall be wonderful to them: Insomuch as they shall be compelled to understand, that the same comes to pass neither by fortune, nor by common means; but that they are extraordinary things, and that God shows forth his power therein. It is true (as we have said heretofore) that at the first sight it cannot be well discerned, who they be whom God loves, and who they be whom he mislikes: because that (as Solomon says) both the good and the evil is common unto all. He that serves God does sometimes prosper;* and oftentimes he is afflicted: And so is a despiser of God also. This is the cause says he that men become hardhearted, for it seems unto them that they win nothing by serving of God: or rather that it is but lost labor. Moreover it is often seen that the children of God are sometimes more hardly handled than the most wicked in the world, and therefore it is to be gathered after carnal capacity, that it is much better to despise God.* David confessed, that he staggered as upon the Ice, when he beheld the course of things to be such as that the good, and they that endeavored to walk in all manner of integrity, must be constrained to drink the water of troubles, to eat the bread of heaviness, and to moisten themselves with tears: and in the meanwhile the wicked, which cease not to do evil, to live at their ease and in pleasure: whereby it should seem that God loves them. And what a dealing were that? But our Lord declares in this place, that in the end he will make it apparent to them that are corrected at his hand, that their sins are the cause why they suffer smart, howbeit that it be not so quickly perceived. We have seen heretofore among other curses which Moses denounced,* that they who cast off the word of God are constrained to borrow, and to be ever in need: and

that the others who should borrow of them, have wherewith to help themselves. But we see how all the children of God fall into necessity, and find not any that will comfort them: they make many turns before they meet with a man that will use gentleness toward them: and this seems clean contrary to the other. But yet does God exercise his people after that manner: and in that respect it is that I said, that when we are afflicted, whether it be with poverty, or with sickness, or any other way, we must not fail to enter into account with God, that is, to examine our life, and to see whether we have not committed many faults or no: and then shall every one of us find himself faulty.

Again on the other side, if we perceive not the cause why that God is moved to use rigor towards us: let us content ourselves, that he knows the same to be profitable for us: and that if we had not already offended him, yet were we in way to do it: and he has prevented it: and that all these corrections are to bring us low, to the end that we should walk under him in fear, and that our flesh should not be over lusty, as it is thereunto inclined: for God does sometimes foresee the pride of a man, and then he takes away the occasions and the objects. Besides this, he knows that a man will be too jolly in his pomps and delights; and therefore he cuts off the occasion beforehand, whereby the party is let, so as he cannot do as he would. Seeing that our Lord provides beforehand for our welfare after such manner, let us think on the faults which we have first committed. Moreover if there were no further meaning in it, than to exhort us to repentance; even that were much: but we have always to consider, how God cannot too much provoke us to come unto him: for every straw is enough to stay

us in this world, and in the meanwhile we have no mind of the heavenly life; or if we think thereon, it is so coldly, that our travelling towards it is not with so earnest affection as it ought to be; and therefore God is fain to deal with us by many afflictions. After this manner ought every of us to behave himself toward him. As touching others, we may not at the first dash condemn them whom God does punish: but we must remember that which is said in the Psalm; Blessed is the man that deems wisely of the afflicted in the day of his trouble.* But we be wonderfully hasty in that point. As soon as we see a poor man in misery and wretchedness, O say we, God plagues him, and he has deserved it: we be in that case very rash Judges. If God smite us; after that he has bestowed many stripes upon us, we will hardly remember that we have sinned: but as concerning others, our tongues be very quick to condemn them. But we should much rather incline to gentleness: as for example, when we see the faithful to suffer, we should think thus: Behold how God deals with his children, instructing us thereby, that there is no rest in this world, and that our happiness is in heaven, and it is thither that we ought to lift up our hearts.* And again, if this happen to the green trees, what shall become of the dry wood? If God spares not them which have endeavored to follow his word,* as appears unto us, what shall become of the scorers thereof, as says the Prophet? If judgment begin at the house of God: miserable then shall they be which have hardened themselves against him. Saint Peter also does admonish us to put the same in use.* And so you see how we ought to deal in this matter. Moreover, if we have patience, and meekness and be apt to be taught, it is certain that we shall evermore feel a taste of the

goodness of God in the midst of the afflictions which he sends us. True it is that oftentimes we shall be put in fear by them. There will be a kind of unquietness in us which will so vex us that we shall think ourselves utterly forlorn unless GOD withdraw his hand very quickly. If he prolong our afflictions; then we be altogether blank, our courage fails us: so that if we be not held in with the fear of God, and with patience, to be altogether quiet under his hand: we be evermore wandering. But if we hold us still there, then shall we understand that he chastises us in his mercy and goodness: according as it is said in the Prophet Habakkuk,* That the faithful after they have been in heaviness, do indeed understand, that God does nevertheless uphold them, and forgets them not but does always temper & mitigate their afflictions, so as they feel his fatherly goodness towards them, and therewithal do comfort themselves, and can well say with David, Lord if thou wilt be angry, it is but for a little while:* but thy goodness endures all our life long. Behold (I say) here we may always have matter wherewith to cheer ourselves, and to rejoice in the midst of our afflictions: so as we may perceive indeed that our Lord will not fail to be merciful unto us, notwithstanding that he uses some rigor toward us, to try our patience, and to quicken us up to come unto him, and to labor to the celestial life. But we must evermore have an eye to the end, according as David says. And therefore in the psalm 37.* he exhorts us not to be grieved at the prosperity of the wicked: for he knows that our eyes be as it were dazzled. When we see a wicked body to be at ease and to have all wishes, we straightway conclude that God has regard to deal with men according as they be worthy: by means whereof we stagger and are in such perplexity as

we wot not what shall become of us. Now David says, that in thinking so, he played the beast, and was out of his wits, and he confesses that he was in that point, bereft of reason and judgment, affirming that he did wrong to all the generation of God's children,* until he had looked into the Sanctuary. It is true, that in the thirty and seventh Psalm which I alleged here before, he says, I passed by and saw the wicked flourish and grow high like a Cedar tree of Lebanon: and after that I had turned me about, he was cut down as a tree that had no more left but the dry stock upon the earth: so as there remained no sign of him at all. Such changes do we see in this world; but put the case we saw none: yet must we enter into the Sanctuary of God,* as it is said in the threescore and thirteenth Psalm. And there we must wait patiently till God make it apparent unto us that all afflictions be profitable for his children: and that he sends them as medicines for their health: and contrariwise, that the prosperity which he permits to the contemners of his law and justice, shall be converted to their great confusion. We must therefore learn to hold our wits and senses in awe, that we wander not in the afflictions which God does send us.

But to return to the purpose of Moses: let us note well how he says that the punishments which God sends upon them that have rebelled against him to the utmost, and would not be corrected: shall be as tokens and wonders to them and to their posterity: that is to say, he will punish them after a strange fashion, and as has not been wonted amongst men: so as they shall be compelled in spite of their teeth to say: This is the very hand of God. And indeed can there be a more beastly contempt of God found, than that which was in Pharaoh? He

was a man not only drunken with pride, but altogether senseless: he was a man that despised the majesty of God, and a man so rebellious, as was not in any wise to be dealt withal. When he heard Moses and Aaron speak, he laughed them to scorn: his feeling of the first strokes could not make him to yield. And in the end he needed not a Prophet to admonish him: for he himself could say,* Surely this is the finger of God. We see therefore how God does oftentimes express his power in such wise, that even the most fierce are constrained to perceive and to think that there is some majesty in heaven, which afore that time they had not accounted of, and thereupon to enter into consideration of their sins and to confess them, and to be the more lively touched therewith. That is it which Moses means here concerning signs and wonders.

This matter is worthy to be marked. For (as I have said) if God begin to punish men, it is evermore said to be fortune, this is agreeable to our state, (say they:) we know that man's life is subject to much wretchedness, and in the meanwhile the hand of God is not regarded. And though he double it, yet do men continue dull, & seem as though they could evermore hide them, & escape away, because they enter not into their consciences to search out the sins that be there, but are loath to know them, as if a man should go hide himself in a dark corner of set purpose to shun the brightness of the sun at noon days. Even so do we in all the chastisements which God doth send us to warn us of our sins and to draw us to repentance. But in the end God doth augment his punishments in such sort, as they become miracles: that is to say, they exceed the common measure, order and

course of nature, so as we might be ravished with astonishment, and thereby perceive that God doth then show himself, as though his hand appeared unto us from heaven. And that is the thing which he declares more fully in the xxvi. Chapter of Levi. For after he hath pronounced the sentence upon them that reject the doctrine of salvation, he saith, I will send upon you seven times as much,* if I perceive that nothing do prevail with you: If my punishing of you amend you not, I will add there to seven times as much. And he repeats this sentence again in the end; & saith, If you will walk at all adventure against men, I will walk also at all adventure against you. Now this word, Adventure, hath relation to the blockishness that is in us, which we have touched here before. For we see very well the adversities that do befall us in this world, & wading yet further we confess that it is God that punishes us: but to think thereon in good earnest; and to judge every man himself by calling our sins to remembrance so often as God gives any inckling of them; it is the furthest part of our thought. Let every man look to himself: How many afflictions have we in the year which should be testimonies unto us of the wrath of God, & as it were summons of appearance before him, warning us to sue to him for pardon, and to have pity upon us? Scarcely does any one day pass, but that a man is warned five or six times as if God should say unto him; Wretched creature, why hast thou no mind of thy soul? Why hast thou no care to beseech me to receive thee to mercy? But scarcely once in a month will a man enter into examination of his life to condemn himself; and if we do it, it is but coldly. But we ought to be so ashamed and so vexed at the feeling of God's wrath as though we saw hell lie open before eyes. But

we see that very few do think thereon: for every of us forgets himself. That is the thing which God means by this word of walking at all adventures against us. Yet do we follow on our course still, as though no harm had touched us, we swallow up our afflictions. They do indeed trouble us, when they pinch us, and yet do we nothing but shake our ears (as they say) and follow still our own way. Then go we at all adventures, yea even with excessive overweening, when we acknowledge not the hand of God, nor perceive that he is a judge, to the end that we might mislike of our sins, and every man labor and endeavor to withdraw himself therefrom. Our Lord therefore says, I will come against you at all adventures, as if he should say, I will cross you and thwart you, & think not to gain anything either by your hardening of your hearts, and by your kicking against me, or by your dulness in that you perceive not how it is my hand that must bring you again: No no, (says he) I will be as stout and headstrong as you, yea and more stout and headstrong too. For I will come at all adventures, I will let my plagues run out at random, so as I will break your necks, and beat you both back and belly, and that without pity. Now we see how much this word ought to weigh with us, where Moses says: That the plagues shall be for tokens and wonders, to all scorers: insomuch that when they have bleared out their tongues at the threatenings of God, and have nodded their head against the first corrections which he sends them, & have bitten on the bridle: he proceeds on still & ceases not to wring them, but drives them in the end to come to a reckoning do the worst they can, & to say openly, It is the hand of God that presses us; these are the miracles, they be no ordinary things nor according to the course of nature.

Now therefore, let us learn not to provoke God's wrath so far against us; but let us suffer ourselves to be tamed by him; and let us yield ourselves conformable & gentle so soon as he has summoned us, let us yield ourselves guilty without using any starting holes: for we shall win nothing thereby. There is nothing better than to enter into pure and free confession, saying, "Lord what wilt thou do to these frail & wretched creatures? It is true that we have a hundredfold deserved to be sunken: but yet for all that, we flee unto thy mercy: wherefore have pity upon us." When we have thus condemned ourselves, it is a means to pacify the anger of God, which thing will not be done by hardening of our hearts. For then he will ever more proceed farther, until he have brought us to these signs and wonders, that be here mentioned. Again God must needs do the like also in respect of men's slothfulness & negligence, or rather utter senselessness. If we could be subdued at the first blow: God would take no pleasure in laying plague upon plague. But when he sees that there is such a kind of stoutness, and such a presumption in us, that we will not stoop nor bow our necks: he must needs hold on until he makes us to feel in very deed & after a strange manner, that it is he before whom we must yield our account. Let us therefore mark well how the obstinate malice of the world is the cause why God sends such strange corrections to put us in fear. And if we considered well the state of the world at this day, it would make the hairs of our head to stand upright. Certainly they do all sigh at the feeling of the stripes, and they complain, howbeit not to any amendment, but rather they bite on the bridle: Insomuch that when those who be not altogether blockish do make comparison of the present state, with that which

we have seen before the wrath of God was on this wise provoked; they see it as it were a sea gulf: & that ought to make us afraid. And so let us come back again to that which Moses declares, to wit, that God must needs have found the world very rebellious & hard-hearted when he augments his punishments in such sort: for it should never come to that pass, were it not that men were otherwise un-reformable. Let us not accuse God of cruelty, when we see his rigor to exceed in punishing us: but let us acknowledge that our stubbornness is so great, that our Lord must needs handle us after that fashion: for otherwise he should never overmaster us.

That is the thing which we have to bear in mind. However, that is not all: for we must always fear that which is to come. And since we saw that God has thus increased his punishments not upon one man only, but upon the whole world: let us bethink us to call ourselves home again before he fall to striking of us with main blows to our confusion and utter undoing, without giving us any more respite to come to the acknowledgment of our sins. For it is the sorest point of God's wrath, when sinners be taken after such a sort out of this world, that they cannot have remembrance of their sins, nor take breath to resort unto God, or to ask him forgiveness. Let us beware lest God's vengeance proceed so far. And forasmuch as we see that the adversities of these days be very great, let us acknowledge that we have provoked God very much, and that it is not for us to abuse his patience any longer. Thus ye see in effect what we have to bear away: specially when we see that sin doth overflow, so as all the world is infected with corruption. Although a man do good, yet nevertheless

forasmuch as it is evermore mixed with sin, he shall be chastised, however, not at the first dash: for as I have said before, God does spare the wicked and tarry for them, and in the meanwhile punishes the good that seek to walk aright: but yet in the end he always plagues the despisers of his law & majesty. And as touching the good, he will make them to feel his grace to their joy, so that although he exercise them with many chastisements & adversities: yet notwithstanding, they shall not fail to know him to be their God & father still, & to rest upon him. As for the wicked they be not disposed to taste or to feel the love & goodness of God: but are rather wroth against him. But when iniquity is become as a main sea, & all men are corrupted: then the vengeance of God must also overflow, so as none may be free from it. We have seen already the threatening that was made here before, namely that the people should be led into captivity with their king. When this came to pass, were none carried away into captivity but the wicked, and such as strove against the Prophets, and such as despised the good doctrine, and such also as were headstrong against God like wild beasts?

Yes, there was Jeremiah himself who had called upon the people fifty years together and never ceased to cry: "What do ye, ye wretched people?" Yet notwithstanding we see that while others sported, he wept and wailed: and not contented with that, said; "Who can turn my head into tears,* so as my brain may be as a fountain gushing out continually, that I may bewail the sins and calamities of my people?" See how the holy Prophet, (after that he had labored in the service of God, and fought against all the wicked, and made war against all

manner of iniquity and stubbornness:) is fain to be led away captive as well as the rest, and to be put to reproach, not of being carried to Babylon, for that had been the best that could have been wished at that time: but God gave him not the favor to be brought thither, but he was fain to be harried into Egypt:* yet had he said, "Cursed be they that go into Egypt: go ye into Babylon [20] and serve the king of Babylon; be quiet and obedient there," and bear patiently this punishment of God, and in the end he will take pity on you. The holy Prophet had not the same liberty. So then we see, that when calamities come for the general corruption of all men, the good are wrapped up amongst the evil. And why is that? Because it is almost not possible to walk amongst such infections, and not to be somewhat spotted therewith. Albeit that Jeremiah resisted the evil as much as he could: yet savored he of the public corruptions of the people, and therefore behooved him to be punished with the rest; however, God did not execute such vengeance upon him, as he did upon the despisers of his law, no not by a great deal. For Jeremiah had always a good testimony, that God did guide him; and when he was in Egypt, he was by a special privilege free from the curse that he had pronounced upon all them that would go into Egypt: for they drew him thither by force. Ye see therefore how God wraps up his people amongst the rebels, but yet he saves them after a marvelous manner, which gives them continual cause of comfort in him. As much is to be said of Daniel. Daniel is set forth unto us as a mirror of integrity. Ezekiel speaking of him, puts him for the third of the most holy that could be chosen;* yet was he carried to Babylon; and was it for the sins of others? He was no hypocrite and had lied unto God, if

it had not been for his own sins. For he says expressly in the ninth chapter,* "I have made confession as well of mine own sins as of the sins of my people." He says even at the first, "Lord we have offended thee, & been disobedient, we have rebelled against thee, both we and our fathers, our Kings and Rulers," which words of his are spoken generally: It may be said, that he put himself in the number with the others. But, to the end that nothing should be replied thereunto, he goes further and says,* "I have confessed my sins and the sins of my people." Whereby we see that Daniel, whatever integrity and perfection was in him, was nevertheless stained with the common vices, and therefore deserved to feel his part and portion of the punishments that God sent upon all the people. Hereby we are also the better warned, to stand in fear and to walk in the more wariness when we see the world so corrupted; assuring ourselves, that in the end we must feel by experience, that God has spoken in good earnest, where he says, that he will come stubbornly against us, if we continue in going stubbornly against him. This is in effect all that we have to remember in this Text, where Moses speaks of Signs and miracles. Wherefore let us open our eyes in this case, and let us not linger until GOD compels us to come to him by force, and stretch out his mighty arm against us: but let us receive his word, and let it serve us for Spectacles to behold his judgments afar off, and let us not tarry the executing of his extreme rigor.

Now he addeth therewith, Because thou hast not served thy God with a good will, and cheerfully when thou haddest abundance of all manner of things. Here does he reprove the Jews, for that they could

not abide that God should entreat them gently. And it is not all only to them that he speaks, but also unto us. We have therefore a general doctrine to be gathered of this speech; namely, that God of his own nature, is inclined to allure us unto him by gentle and loving means, like as a father goes about to win his children, by being merry with them, and by giving them all that they desire. If a father could always laugh with his children, and fulfill their desires, all his delight should surely be in them: such a one does God show himself to be toward us. Indeed he is not passionate as men are: we may not think that God is like unto us; but inasmuch as we comprehend not his majesty, because it is too high, he is fain to humble himself, and to use a kind of speech fit for our rudeness and for the weakness of our wits. Nevertheless it is certain that the property of God is to win us gently, as a father endeavors to win his children. What is it that God requires? That we should serve him with a frank and free heart, yea and even with gladness. In what manner? Verily that because he deals gently with us, and gives us all things that we need, we therefore ought to be quiet and well contented, if we be not unthankful. And so let us conclude, that all the calamities, troubles, wretchedness and miseries, which happen in this world, be the fruits of our sins, and that we drive God to handle us with such rigor. He is fain (as you would say) to transform himself, and to forsake his nature to overmaster us, because he sees that sin is exceeding great in us, and that we can no skill to turn the good to our benefit, which he is ready to do us. However (as I have said before) God does not always tarry till we have offended him: we must needs grant that he prevents our sins: he sees that we are in danger to fall, and he does

remedy it in due time. Yet notwithstanding, all the corrections which we endure in this world, proceed of our sins: and the filthiness that is in us, is the cause why God sends us not abundance of good things according to our desire. And if there were nothing else, but this, that men fall asleep, and sap themselves in these earthly pleasures, so as they be not able to look to the place which David does call them to;* namely, to satisfy ourselves with the sight of God, and to rejoice in his presence. Seeing that men cannot attain thereunto, but are ever wedded to these base things: do not we deserve that God should withdraw the plenty that he was ready to give us, for that he perceives that it would burst us: and instead of sustaining us it would so overload us that it would bear us down to the ground. This is the cause why our Lord uses not such liberality toward us as we desire. For he for his part is not drained dry, neither does he fear to be impoverished, by sending us plenty of all manner of good things. We know he is a fountain that can never be drawn dry: but when he sees that we waste and devour his benefits, and be worse than drunken, and that besides the riotousness which we use, we be also unthankful as not only to fall into forgetfulness, but also to spurn against his majesty, and to turn our backs upon him: insomuch that if we have wherewith to maintain ourselves well, we fall to Gluttony, pompousness, whoredom, and other looseness, and to be short, the abuses which we commit in the using of God's blessings, are as an immeasurable sea-gulf: therefore when he sees such things, he withdraws his hand and shows not himself so liberal toward us. This is the Sum of that we have to bear in mind. And therefore, seeing that God for his part is always ready to multiply us, and to give us plenty

of all good things, were it not that we are not able to brook it: we must understand that we are as sick folk, which must have a small pittance allowed unto them, and be constrained to a diet. And why? Because they are not able to brook their food. Whereupon we ought well to understand that which Moses speaks to our reproach. For what a shame is it, that we cannot abide that God should use us gently and after a fatherly sort? Behold, God offers himself, not only in words, but also in deeds: and he offers to give us all that we desire. But what? He sees us not disposed to receive him, we despise him, and thrust away his grace; must there not be then a horrible frowardness in men? Let every one of us excuse himself as much as he will: yet must this saying needs be verified, and when we have kicked and spurned never so much, yet shall we at the last be convicted of this maliciousness, that we could not find in our hearts to suffer GOD to deal gently with us, nor have served him joyfully and with a merry heart. Therefore let us not wonder though he does handle us as we deserve, when we are so rebellious against him. For when he sees that we kick against him, he must needs break us, and deal with us after such a fashion as we may understand that he is our master: not that they which are punished, do serve GOD: but for that they understand that he has the mastery over them, when the punishments come so far that they are become signs and wonders. When GOD appears unto them as it were in a visible manner from heaven; then do they perceive, Alas I cannot flee nor escape the hand of GOD. Then do they understand that he has the Lordship over them, not that they willingly yield themselves thereunto, but that they lie languishing and astonished therein, as men locked up in

prison. The thing then which we have to remember, is that since we could not be contented, that God should handle us gently by bowing under his hand, that he might guide us, turn us and return us which way he listed: we must be forced by trouble and sorrow, to understand that he has full sovereignty over us, and that his utter breaking and overthrowing of us, is because we could not abide to be governed by his hand, when he was ready to guide us. This is the matter that we have to note in the second place.

We see the very same in all mankind, not only touching the afflictions of this present life; but also we have this reproach laid upon us, that we are still as it were, famished for want of spiritual blessings. For our father Adam was created in such state, that the world was an earthly Paradise: The whole earth yielded him all good things to his wish: he endured neither heat nor cold, nor any grievous want. Thus was our father Adam appointed Lord and Master over all the world,* all the Elements and all the beasts of the earth served him quietly, and all fruits served his taste and savor. What was he in his person? He bore the Image of God, and was of so great nobleness and worthiness that he was as the Angels of heaven: and he had dwelled in this world, with all his lineage, as in a place where he should have had no trouble: but he could not abide to be so gently entreated. When God had thus enriched him with his benefits, he must needs mistake himself, he could not serve God with a good heart nor with joy. What could have grieved him? For God showed him a sweet and a gracious countenance, and poured out the treasures of his fatherly love towards him; but Adam could not abide

that, but through his unthankfulness he alienated himself from God. And in what case are we now? We must serve God in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and reproach, for the earth is cursed unto us. When we have tilled it,* it must bring us forth thistles and thorns. We see the seasons contrary; when we wait for a good year, we see hail or frost, drought or rain, which serve to pluck the bread out of our mouths, and to disappoint us of our food. We see the air troubled, and infections which oftentimes engender diseases. Great is the toil of men. For when they have gotten food with great distress; yet want they wherewith to clothe themselves. See there (I say) in what taking we be. And wherefore? Because we would not serve our God cheerfully and with a good heart, when he gave us abundance of all manner of blessings. But this is not the chief matter, (as I have said heretofore:) for we are destitute of the righteousness of God. Our very true ornament, was that we could have fashioned ourselves to all manner of right; and now we be spoiled thereof. As then we had reason and understanding: but now we be become beastly, for the brightness that should shine in us, is but darkness. Again, we be covered with reproach: and whereas the Image of God should shine in us, now we have the marks of sin; so that even our very bare bodies must give us to understand of the same: insomuch that if a man be naked, he is ashamed of himself. And why? God does by this mean show unto us what infection there is in our souls, in that we be fain to hide ourselves, as not being worthy to be numbered amongst his creatures. Finally we be like dry earth. Truth it is that we be over fruitful in evil,* but of goodness, what is found in us? Seeing we be thus unfurnished of all graces, it is good reason that we should

languish in this frail life, because we could not serve our God with joy and a good heart, at such time as he had poured out all his riches most perfectly upon us.

Now since we behold the evil that is in all mankind, let us also apply the same particularly to ourselves. Therefore when our Lord visits us, and makes us to feel afflictions that are strange unto us; let us cast down our heads, and enter into such examination of ourselves as this: Go to, whereas God has given us wherewith to serve him, how do we discharge ourselves thereof? If there come an ill year that brings dearth of Corn or wine, so that famine does threaten us; let us look how we honored God in the time that he gave us plenty. If we see there is abundance of wine, then drunkenness has its full scope, so that men cannot be restrained from breaking out into all manner of disorder, and (which worse is,) they stick not to blaspheme the name of God, and to rush out into all disorder, and to take leave to surfeiting and glutting of themselves out of all measure. In abundance of Corn we see the like; men are so proud thereof that they cannot abide either warning or discipline, but they kick against God, and their pride is moreover matched with cruelty, so as every man rakes to himself; he that has the most, will if he can play the Tyrant over his neighbors, in taking no pity upon them that are in want. At this point are we in the time of plenty. Therefore is our Lord fain to change his Copie, and to manifest his Majesty unto us, and to compel us to understand what sovereignty and dominion he has over us, seeing we cannot find in our hearts to serve him with a cheerful heart and with a good will, nor to give over ourselves unto him. Are

we in rest? All our endeavor is how to pluck out one another's eyes, and to torment ourselves like Cats and Dogs. And if we war not with men, we fight against God, which is far worse. And if we hold on, let us not be grieved that we be confounded altogether, seeing we set up ourselves against the Majesty of him, under whom we ought to bow. Nay, we see that most commonly men make war against God, when he gives them rest: we shall see both generally and particularly that they who are at leisure to do evil, do persecute the Church, and torment the poor faithful ones. As soon as God gives them any respite, they seek nothing but occasion to do hurt and to exercise their cruelty. And this is to be seen, not only in the enemies of the Church, but also in all others: insomuch that both great and small, when God has left us in rest, and we have made an end of warring one against another, we fall to despising of God one way or other. Let us not wonder therefore, if when a war is finished; it begin again immediately. For it is needful that God should deal with us in such manner: otherwise he cannot rule us.

And let us mark well how it is said here moreover, That God will raise up a barbarous people against such as would not be obedient unto him. Such is God's reigning over us, that he desires to be as a father unto us, rather than to be a dreadful King or Prince over us. It is true that we must do him homage as to our sovereign Lord, and that we must behave ourselves as his people in all subjection and humility, submitting ourselves under his obedience: but yet therewithal he does the office of a father towards us, and will be known to be a father. For he speaks after an amiable manner,

insomuch that although his commandments be hard unto us, because of our malice and rebellion as concerning the flesh: yet notwithstanding after he has declared his will unto us, he exhorts us, he warns us, he rebukes us: and all these things he does with such mildness, as we must needs show ourselves to want both wit and reason, if we be not benefited by the goodness he uses. But will we not hearken to our God when he speaks unto us in so gentle and gracious a manner? Then will he talk with us with main strokes of halberds, pikes, and harquebuses. We shall there understand nothing, the language of them will be very strange unto us. And wherefore? Because we had no ears to hear when God spoke graciously unto us, yea and when he stooped so low, as to teach us like little children, that are taught their A, B, C. Go too then, let us understand that when we be so deaf against God: he must talk with us in another language, and he must stir up some barbarous and brazen-faced people, that have neither reverence, reason, nor equity, to whom when you shall pray for pity and compassion: it shall be but in vain, they will give no ear unto you, you shall go that way in spite of your beards. And what is the remedy of all these evils? Let us enter, let us enter into our consciences, let us not grind our teeth at men, as we are wont to do, let us not strive with them. For our combat is not there. But let us understand that God means to chastise us by men, because we have been stubborn toward him, and would not be edified by his word, according as his meaning was. And therefore let us benefit ourselves by all these warnings, and corrections which God does send us. And let us not abide till we feel the knocks; but whenever God does us the favor to teach us at other

men's cost, let us receive profit thereby: and when he spares us, let us not abuse his patience. And for as much as the means to reconcile us unto him, is to accept the promise that he offers us in the Gospel; let us embrace our Lord Jesus Christ, which is our peace,* to the end that we may be treated after a fatherly sort, at the hands of our God.

Now let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our misdeeds, beseeching him to make us to perceive them yet better; and therewithal to bear with us in such sort, and that his chastisements and corrections may be so fatherly and measurable toward us, as we may be reduced to the obedience of his righteousness, and that he will evermore so comfort us, as we may have whereof to rejoice in him, and to glorify him, for his procuring of our salvation by all means. And so let us all say, Almighty God heavenly father, &c.

On Thursday the 26th of March, 1556.

The 161st Sermon

which is the ninth upon the twenty-eighth Chapter.

50 The Lord will stir up, &c.

51 The same shall eat the fruit of thy Cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be rooted out, and he shall leave thee neither Corn, wine, nor Oil, nor any fruit of thy Cattle, nor of the flocks of thy sheep, until he have brought thee to nought.

52 And he shall besiege thee in all thy Towns, until he have cast down thy high and strong walls, wherein thou didst put thy trust throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy Towns throughout all the land that the Lord thy God hath given thee.

53 Thou shalt eat the fruit of thy womb even the flesh of thy sons and daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege and distress wherewith thine enemy shall straiten thee.

54 In so much that the man which is tender and exceeding dainty among you shall be grieved to look upon his brother, and upon the wife in his bosom, and upon the rest of his children that be left,

55 And shall not give unto them of the flesh of his children, whereof he himself eateth, for fear lest he should leave nothing at all for himself, by reason of the siege and straitness wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in all thy Cities.

56 Yea and the woman that is so tender and nice among you, that she will not venture to set the sole of her foot upon the ground, because of her tenderness and niceness, shall be grieved to look upon the husband that lies in her bosom, and upon her son and upon her daughter,

57 And upon the afterbirth which is come out from between her legs, and upon the babes which she hath brought forth: for she shall eat them privily for want of all manner of things, in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy Cities.

58 If thou do not keep and perform all the words of this Law, which be written in this book, and fear this glorious and dreadful name of the Lord thy God.

We must remember what was touched yesterday, and also what Moses continues to speak of: that is, that if men be rough and cruel unto us, God stirs them up thereto because he has found us rebellious towards him. And therefore, whenever men do not deal so mildly with us as we would, let us look whether we have answered God, and whether we have meekly embraced all that he has commanded us: for if any of us find himself to have made war and to have set himself against God, it is not to be wondered at if God repay him with the like again on behalf of men. But we shall never be persuaded of this doctrine unless we understand that God holds the hearts of men in his hand to soften them, be they never so hard-hearted; and on the contrary part to harden them, though they bore

us never so much good will before. Let us not therefore trust to the love of men unless we walk in the fear of God. For it lies in him to change their hearts so that they bear rancor toward us and are quite and clean withdrawn from us for less than nothing, in such a way that the world shall see that those who were most forward to help us shall become most against us. And on the other side let us understand that our Lord can well qualify all malice, yes, though they be as fierce as a lion, he will make them mild and friendly towards us. There was never a nation so proud and cruel as the Egyptians: and especially, how spiteful were they against the children of Israel? It seemed that this poor people should never have found any mercy. And yet God wrought in such wise that the Egyptians gave them all their treasures, and all that ever was excellent in their houses, there was neither silver nor gold spared. And whereof came that? Before that time, they had held the Jews in bondage, they had vexed them out of all measure: they would have plucked the bread out of their mouths, yes, and have cut the throats of them all. A little before, they had killed their children as soon as they came out of their mothers' wombs, of purpose to have destroyed the whole stock of them: and whereof then came this sudden mildness that every man brought them the things that were most precious in his house? It was God that converted their hearts. And likewise, on the contrary side, it is said that he hardened the hearts of kings when the people were to enter into the land of Canaan: whereas they should have been suffered to pass, there were many gainers that resisted them. Whence came that? Even of this, that they had resisted their God. Let us therefore learn (as I have said heretofore) so to behave ourselves

in obedience towards God that men also for their parts may be friendly unto us. For there is none so great nor so mighty but he shall find some misery to rise up against him when he will needs play the stout fellow in striving against God. And we have seen that they who are drunken with their own greatness must in the end be punished, not by such as are in any authority or by such as are of estimation in this world, but by rascals and naughtypacks: such folk must even spit in their faces. And such examples are to be seen even in princes and men of greatest state. For when they yield not themselves to be governed of God, he is fain to stir up governors to the contrary, to shame such as will not be obedient unto him. Yet notwithstanding when men yield not themselves tractable, then must we understand that God manages the matter by a secret means; and that he does it to make us to stoop. Therefore let us not deceive ourselves in the creatures, saying; What fortune is this? Indeed, we may say so, but we must go yet one step further: and we must understand that it comes not to pass without the direction of God. And thereupon we must repair to the remedy, that is to wit, we must stoop under the word and hand of God, and consider that if it pleases him, he can turn the minds of men that were so spiteful against us, and make them to become friendly to us. And that is a thing more than necessary. For when we have to do with them that be rough and intractable, we are by and by out of heart, and would (if we could possibly) rid ourselves of all troubles, and be set free from them at the first dash. But we should rather return unto God, acknowledging that those things proceed from his hand. And so, when men show themselves so unfaithful and cruel toward us, handling us scornfully

and opprobriously, so as we cannot get one whit of right or reason at their hands, but we see how their whole seeking is to set their feet on our throats, and they have such a beastly shamelessness (as it is said here) that they are not ashamed of anything that is said unto them, but they take the bridle in their teeth, and play the wild beasts, so as there is neither grace nor honesty in them; when we see such barbarous beastliness, let us learn to resort unto our God, and to acknowledge that we deserve to be so tamed by him. Moreover, the only means to appease such fury, and to assuage those who are so hot and hasty, is to call upon our God, and to pray him to touch those inwardly with his Holy Spirit, which are so cruel and cannot yield to do us good, because we have set up ourselves against our God. That is the thing whereof we are admonished in this Text.

Now Moses repeateth that which hath been touched heretofore: namely, That God will bring us enemies from a far country, and that they shall fly as Eagles, to the intent we should not think that GOD needeth to make any preparation long beforehand. As if a man should threaten us: we would look whether he had a sword in his hand, and whether he be in readiness to execute what he hath said. But if God do but whistle (as he often speaketh by his Prophets), by and by he hath his men of war in readiness; he needeth not to make musters, or to enroll them, or to sound the drum: he needeth none of all this: only at his whistle (for he useth that similitude) all the whole earth must needs be moved. Therefore let us not look whether things be in readiness, nor whether any hurt or harm be done us. Let us not look whether any worldly means be prepared thereunto: but let us

understand that ere we can conceive what evil may happen unto us, we shall be presently overthrown. And wherefore? Because it is God that speaketh, which maketh men to fly as birds, even from the one end of the earth to the other. There is neither sea nor mountains able to save us from the experience of that which we never believed. Howbeit God hath so disposed things, yea and even amongst the heathen is oftentimes seen incredible speediness, when God is disposed to chastise the greatest part of the world: insomuch that some one man hath risen with a small number of people, to chastise an infinite multitude that did set themselves against him: and that not for one time only, but twice or thrice one after another, with taking of Towns & Fortresses, which seemed to be so well appointed, yea and strong by natural situation, that they could not be approached unto, & yet have they been sacked as if God had meant to renew a great part of the world. It hath been likewise seen, that a people without renounce or estimation, have risen and made the most mighty to tremble. In this doing God giveth examples of that which is written here: to wit, that he can surely bring our enemies upon the sudden, and that they shall make such dispatch, as if they came swifter against us than by post: and that when we suppose to have some respite, by truce for one month, for one year or for all our lifetime, we shall be suddenly surprised in a morning before we think thereon. Let us therefore understand, that as soon as God speaketh, we must have an eye unto the infinite power (that is in him, yea and which is incredible to man's understanding), and to tremble at his very word, and to yield unto him: knowing well that if we delay from day to day, we may be prevented, and then will it be too late. Let us

therefore be advised to humble ourselves in due time, and to crave pardon when we have offended him.

Moses sayeth expressly, That they which are disobedient unto God, shall be besieged and shut up within their walls, until all their fortresses in which they trusted, be beaten down. Here we see how God reprove the false and cursed presumption whereby men deceive themselves, in thinking themselves to be well fenced against him. It is a sacrilege whereby God is robbed of his honor, when we attribute unto the creatures, the means to uphold us. It is certain that God serves himself by means, and we must also apply them unto our use: but in the meantime to settle our trust upon them, were a robbing of God of his majesty. For he will have us to hold all things of him, and to do him homage for them. So then it is an intolerable presumption for us to put our trust in creatures and to ground ourselves on them: and yet there is no fault more common in the world. We can say well enough, that it is not lawful, and that we ought not to do it: but in the meantime everyone does it. Now let us remember ourselves, for there is nothing that God holds more dear, or whereof he makes greater account than his honor. Neither is it sufficient for us to leave him the title and name of God: but he must also be known as he is, that is to say, that all power lies in him, that he is the fountain of all manner of grace and goodness: that it is his proper office to maintain and preserve us: that our life is in his hand, and all things that belong thereto. When we have well thought upon this, let us take order to gather our wits so about us, as we be not grounded upon creatures. Surely the mischief is double when we

shield ourselves with the creatures against God, and thereby to become stubborn when he threatens us, and to hold on still when he utters forth tokens of his displeasure: let us consider that the offense is then much more grievous. But yet is this over common. For while we perceive not any danger towards, as in respect of the world; do not we continue in our sins? And do we not abide in stubbornness? God speaketh: but we regard him not. So that men do favor us, and so we have wherewith to fortify ourselves, we think that the hand of God cannot come at us. And therefore it is not without cause that our Lord reproves the frowardness of all such as are disobedient towards him: that is to say, that they put their trust in their fortresses, in their high walls, in their munitions, and in such like things. Now forasmuch as we be subject to these things, it were better for us that we had neither hedge nor aught else, than to be well fenced with walls and bulwarks. For they serve but to blind our eyes, that have no more respect to our God: but be bewitched by Satan to put our trust in things which shall be our confusion. Howsoever the case standeth, let us advisedly hold this rule in general; that is, that God be evermore our fortress: as we see he promises by his Prophet Isaiah, as well in the 12th Chapter, as also from the 55th unto the end: for it tends all to this point. And it is so common a doctrine in the holy scripture, that we can scarce turn a leaf, but we shall see some text, wherein God tells us that he will be our ramparts, our walls, our ditches, yea and double ditches, our towers, and whatever else is needful for our defense. And why? For (as I have heretofore said,) our minds do forthwith slide into vanity so as God is not able to hold us back to himself; and to make account that we will put our whole

trust in him. What must we then do? First of all, if we be destitute of man's aid, let us understand that God alone is sufficient, if we return unto him, [and say:] Ah Lord, it is certain that we are set for a prey, we have not wherewith to save ourselves, for all the world doth fail us: but yet it is enough that thou art our succor. After that manner should we learn to resort unto him.

And so should we take occasion to yield ourselves wholly unto him when the things of this world do fail us. And by the way, although we have walls, and artillery, money and munition, and all that we can wish for, yea and people also, and all things else: yet let us understand that we must in the meantime so use them, as our Lord may be always our trust, and we give him evermore this honor, that it is his office to defend us, and that thereupon we wade no farther. It is certain that we may serve our turn with the things which he putteth into our hands: but yet in the meantime, our hearts and minds must be raised up above all the world, and he alone must be our shooteanker. Thirdly, we must not vaunt ourselves of the force of the helps that he gives us: for a spear of a bramble (as they say) is enough to make us believe that we are invincible. What say we? Is it possible that they should prevail against us? All this is nothing: no not worth the pill of an Onion, as they say: yet will we needs strain our wits to give it price and the glory. Nay contrariwise, let us acknowledge our debility and weakness, that we may repair unto God, and let nothing hinder us from yielding ourselves wholly unto him and unto his protection: let us not deceive ourselves with such vain confidence, as the Jews had in their high walls. Now herewithal

he shows also that all that ever we can devise for our strength and safeguard, can do nothing against his power: but that we shall continue besieged, until we be altogether wasted. Yea and we may gather by this Text, that it were much better for us to be delivered at the first into the hands of our enemies, than to have means to resist, whereby we may be made to languish in such wise as we may not die a simple death [out of hand]: for the poor people that be abroad in the fields, are spoiled at the first, and so are dispatched of it. Surely it is a pitious case, to behold their throats cut and all set on fire: but yet for all that, by that means they are delivered from their miseries, so as they pine not away in them. But as for them that are in strong Towns, they must be fain to abide a long siege, they must languish and pine away by piecemeal, not for a month or two, but even until they can hold out no more: and that is as much as if they should pass a hundred deaths. Thus does our Lord revenge himself of them that think themselves to be dispatched, when God does not root them out at the first. No, says he, bethink yourselves whether of these fruits do speed best; they that are brought to the market in their prime, and eaten out of hand; or they that are kept for a time, and in the end do rot? It were better then for you to be overcome and vanquished by your enemies at the first. Let us therefore consider well, that when we have wherewith to defend us to the worldward, where it should profit us, it shall turn to our double confusion if we trust therein: for we must groan a great while under the burden, and be wasted by little and little. For when we be disobedient and will not be reformed, our Lord will never leave us till he have utterly brought us to nought, as he shows here so oftentimes. And yet it is better expressed by this

that Moses adds. The man (says he) that is tender and delicate among you, shall be grieved at his brother, and at the wife which lies in his arms, because he cannot be suffered to eat his own children alone. The woman which is so nice that she dare not touch the ground with her foot (for so are the very words of Moses) shall seek to destroy and to spoil her own children; yea, they shall no sooner be born out of her womb, but she shall be desirous to devour them; and if she have brought them up to some bigness, she will spare them never the more. These be dreadful things: for it is not said alone, You shall be besieged, and tarry a long while in famine, so as you shall be driven to eat, Horses, Rats, mice, shoelaces; yea and the very dung of birds (as it has been seen) and all these things shall be your meat.* Neither is it said that men and women should be eaten: but that every man shall eat his own children. Seeing that God speaks in this manner, were it not enough to make our hair stand upright? Yes verily; and yet here is nothing declared by Moses, which has not been seen in execution. It is not for a man to say, it is not credible, it is repugnant to nature, a man would pluck the bread out of his own mouth, when he is in extremity, to give it unto his children, he would die to help them, insomuch that we see that Hagar could not abide to see the death of her child,* but she left him alone, and wished her own death. But we need not to allege examples of these things: for the common affection does sufficiently declare, that every man would rather die, than eat his own children: but yet was such cruelty seen among the Jews. They which were instructed in the law of God, and should have had much more humanity and compassion, than the Pagans and infidels, even they forgot all manner of honesty, and

were overcome with this madness. It was meet that this blindness,* whereof the Prophets had spoken, and which we see here before touched also by Moses, should be then accomplished in them, and that they should be ravished of their wits: For when GOD takes away all reason and uprightness from men: then he leaves them to a kind of madness. Such fury then must needs be in them, when they did eat their own children.

Hereby we are specially warned that those who are reserved for the last cast are in no better case than those whom God has chastised long before. And this is a profitable warning. For as soon as God strikes some and forbears others: And why not these also, say we? Have not these deserved as much? We have not the patience to suffer God to execute his judgments in such order as seems good unto himself: but we surmise that those whom he does respect, and whom he for a little while forbears, are privileged more than we. But it is contrary: for it had been better for them to have been punished sooner than to be so reserved. And therefore let us not envy them because God forbears them for a time, as though they were exempted from all plagues, but let us tarry till God fetch them about at their turn: for it had been far better for them to have been dispatched out of hand. And therewithal let every one of us look to himself. Let us not trust to the patience that God uses toward us, to deceive ourselves therewith. Indeed when God has been patient and forborne us, it should give us the better disposition to resort unto him, and to hope to find him pitiful, to forgive us our faults and trespasses. But we must not fall asleep thereupon, to dally with him, and to say: O,

he has tarried for us, he will yet do the like hereafter; as we see the wicked do, which do but shake their head at it: when they see that God has spared them, they think they are discharged. Let us beware that. For we see how he says, that when we are well appointed, and have fortresses as it were invincible, all must fall on our heads, and we shall be so much the more grievously punished. Thus much have we to remember touching this text.

Now let us mark further, that when we forget our God, we must also forget all the course of nature, and he must needs bereave us of our wits: for it is he on whom all fatherhood depends, he is the wellspring thereof. We should not know what the duty of the parents is toward their children, nor what reverence children do owe to their parents and superiors, unless God did bear the sovereignty. If we refer not all unto him, he will make us become blockish, so as we shall not understand what this fatherly affection toward our children should mean. Thus much for one point.

But by the way, we have to note that the men who did so devour their own children were not so blockish but that they were pinched with terrible heartbitings, and vexed with such furious fearfulness as made them even to abhor that which they did. True it is that they were carried away by force and had no reason in them; but yet for all that, they had certain secret stings and prickings inwardly, and God held them as it were upon the rack or torture, as if he should have said unto them, "What will you do, you wretched creature? It had been better for you to have been born before your time, and that the

earth had swallowed you up a hundred times, than you should have committed so terrible a fact: but yet necessity needs must get the upper hand of you." Let us mark therefore, that when we are not meekened by the hand of God, we must then fall into such a woodness as shall overmaster us, and make us torment ourselves without the help of any other executioner, so as every one of us shall execute God's vengeance upon himself, which he had scorned afore and scoffed at. I have said, that here is nothing spoken of, which has not been seen in effect: to wit, that the fathers have eaten their own children, and in like case the mothers. But like as the Jews had most exceedingly provoked God; even so came they to the fullness of iniquity, and consequently it behooved God so to utter his wrath toward them with extremity, as it was seen when they were besieged with their enemies; for then did they eat pigeon's dung, and bought it by gold weight; yea, you shall see that they committed acts against nature in eating one another. But when they had once rejected the Son of God, and had utterly cut themselves off from the hope of salvation by forsaking the Redeemer upon whom were grounded all the promises which had been made unto them concerning the goodness of God; then was it of necessity that those things should be the more accomplished. For if you read the histories, even of them that were of the same nation, and which were present witnesses of the matter; you would think that you heard dreams or fables; and yet for all that, those things were then notoriously known, and noted to be true, and God intended as it were to set up scaffoldings, that it might be seen how his threatening of his people after that manner was not in vain, as we see, and that all men should take example

thereat. For they are horrible things, and such as may make our hairs to stand upright, when it is said that the husband shall deceive the wife and steal away the children issued of the bodies of them both, and that the wife likewise shall seek some secret place to cut the throat of her child in, as if she should say, "I will lock up this for myself"; and that both the husbands and the wives should be so mad as to say, "I will eat mine own child." Seeing that all these things were accomplished; and that our Lord has executed such vengeance: let us understand that we ought not to read these things at this day without trembling, even as if God should lay forth his foredenounced vengeance before us in a painted table. Moreover, let us understand that when God had pronounced such sentence against the Jews, it was not executed at the first day. For he waited for them with so long patience, that it seemed that no mischief should light upon them. But when the sore was burst, then was the rottenness perceived which lay hidden afore and the disease was the more deadly. Also let us mark, that if God do bear with us, and afterward do divers ways correct us, and yet not strike so roughly as to come to extremity: we must not think that we are thereby escaped his hand, but we must return unto him, and not tarry till he see our disobedience unreformable, and so be fain to proceed to the extremity of his threatenings. Thus much have we to remember touching this text.

Now finally Moses says: "If thou keepe not all the wordes of this lawe for to doe them, and feare not this dreadfull and glorious name: that is to say the eternal thy God." Verily it seems at the first sight that Moses requires of men above measure, that which is not in their

power: for who is he that can fulfill all the law of God? And again, though a man miss in some certain points, should God use such rigor? I have told you heretofore, that he directs this talk towards them that are altogether given over to evil, and to such as are despisers of God to break his law by all means they can. To what end then does he require such perfection? Let us first of all mark that God will not have his law chopped into pieces and gobbets: for therein he sets forth his righteousness unto us. Men therefore must not make a parting of stakes in this case at their own pleasure, as who would say, "I will, for God's honor, abstain from whoredom, but yet I will steal: I will abstain from murder, but yet I will be a blasphemer." No, but seeing that he who has forbidden to rob, has also forbidden to kill; and he who has forbidden fornication, has likewise forbidden to blaspheme: let us learn to obey him in all points and all respects, let us restrain our senses, and bridle our affections, and to be short, let us come to the point to give over ourselves wholly to the service of our God. So ought we to do: and that is the thing also whereunto Moses has respect. For if we miss in any one point, we are accursed of God, and deserve the rigor which is mentioned here. Nevertheless, he of his mercy ceases not to bear with us: yea, and he will never use the great severity that is spoken of here, but towards such as set themselves altogether stubbornly against him. Yet notwithstanding, it is not without cause, that Moses does here exhort the Jews to the perfect observation of the law. A Physician prescribing an order, gives not the bridle to the appetite of his patient, to do anything amiss however little it be: but he says, "I will have you to do thus, and thus." Now if the sick man does step

any whit aside, very well, he is not yet incurable, the Physician will have a care of him still. But if he will needs set all at six and at seven (as they say,) and cast off all order, and play the madman; well, he shall have his payment as he deserves. And in like wise will our Lord have us at his commandment in all cases: and good reason. However, there is so great infirmity (I mean even in them who are governed by the Holy Ghost, and who strain themselves to be obedient unto him) that they fail in many respects: but yet however the world goes, sin overmasters them not, they strive not of set purpose to transgress the Law; but they proceed and go forward still: and albeit that they do it limpingly, yet do they hold on still toward God. As touching these they are borne withal. True is that God will chastise them: and in what manner? Even in forgiving them: according to this saying of his, "If thy children transgress my commandments, I will visit their iniquities; but it shall be with the rod of men, and not with extremity: I will not deal with them as with enemies, I will not take away my mercy from them, albeit that I do correct them." Thus does God deal in that behalf. But if our hearts be utterly hardened: then will he war upon us, and destroy us without sparing: and although he bear with us, yet shall all turn to our confusion. That is one thing that we have to remember concerning this Text.

Also, it is a notable point to be observed, where Moses speaks of the yoke of iron. For he says, "That the Lord will lay a yoke of iron upon the neck of all misbelievers until they be altogether consumed." And that is to the end we should learn to receive the corrections which we hear of, and not kick against them. For we see what befell to Ananias,

when he mocked at the threatenings of Jeremiah, and came to break the yoke which he had upon his neck, which was a yoke of wood and of cords. The Prophet did wear that yoke, to move the people to consider that they should all become captives, and so to behold their own state in the person of the Prophet. Now this wicked one that was possessed of the devil, (to make the word of God to be naught set by) came to break the bands of Jeremiah, and said, even thus will God break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar: and albeit that he besiege you, and do what he can to carry you away captives into a strange land: yet shall you be preserved by the grace of your God. God threatened, and this fellow mocked all his threatenings: and thereto took the shadow of the name of God to abuse the people. Well then, what won he by such rebellion? It was said to the Prophet: "Take a yoke of iron: for whereas the bondage should have been gentle and tolerable, it must now be so cruel, as they shall not be able to endure any more." See here how he deals with all such as harden their hearts against God, and will not abide to be meekened by his hand. Then let us be afraid of this yoke of iron. First of all, we know that God's yoke is amiable unto all such as willingly yield themselves unto it, and suffer themselves to be governed by the hand of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have the testimony of the Son of God, "My yoke (says he) is easy, and my burden is light. Come to me, and learn that I am lowly and meek." Seeing that our Lord Jesus declares, that they who are teachable and obedient shall perceive that there is neither burden, nor weight, nor grief in his yoke, to oppress them withal: it ought to move us to yield our necks unto it, and to pray God, to put us under it, and also to suffer him to chastise us when we have offended him.

Indeed, the strokes will be grievous unto us, as the Apostle says, and we shall never find the corrections pleasant during the time that God strikes us. We are like little children when they are corrected; we feel it grievous, because our nature does repugn against it. But however we like it, yet God will use that fatherly means, and by little and little teach us to return unto him. But if we will needs tempt his patience to the utmost, he must then use the iron rod to break our heads withal, as it is said in the Psalm: "We shall be driven to feel the iron, which shall serve, not to reclaim us withal, but to break us in pieces and to consume us utterly." And justly. For we do hear what is said here: "If thou wilt not fear the glorious and dreadful name of the eternal thy God." Whence come the despising and contempt of good doctrine, and the boldness that we take to sin, but of this, that we are deaf to all admonitions? Indeed if we could yield ourselves obedient to our God, with a good heart, and with a good affection, and abide at that point continually: we should no sooner hear these threatenings but we should consider thus: "Alas, have we not deserved a grievous curse at God's hand, seeing we have thus striven against him?" We see then that all the evil deeds and disobedience which is committed, do spring of ignorance and of the contempt of God, for that we have not regarded his majesty. Certainly this kind of stubbornness is not always directly of set purpose and foredetermined malice: but yet is there such rudeness in us, that we yield not such a reverence to God, as is requisite, nor the obedience whereby we should endeavor to submit ourselves to his word. And because we are so dull-headed that nothing can quicken us up, when we are called upon to submit ourselves unto God: Moses says expressly, "This dreadful name, this

glorious name, to wit, The eternal, thy God." Whereas he says, The eternal or Everlasting: that word imports all glory and Majesty; and therefore ought to ravish us with astonishment: yea, truly; for we should not have this name of God only to use it coldly, to say, "God, God," as they do who have it continually on their lips, and afterward do let it vanish, as though it were a thing of nothing: but we must join both twain together thus, "God, even the same that created us; the same that holds all things in his hand, the same that is honored of the Angels, the same that is of glory infinite, the very same whom all the principalities of heaven cannot abide, at the sight of whom all manner of creatures must be fain to cast down their eyes, even the same which with one only word can make all the earth to tremble, the same that can remove mountains with his only blast, that same that gives being to all manner of creatures, finally the same that maintains and governs all things, and orders all things well, righteously, and with wisdom: the same is he that speaks unto us." And so you see after what manner we use the words of Moses, where he says, "The eternal thy God, this is he that speaks now unto thee." Let us therefore hear him speak, in such sort, as his majesty may possess all our wits, and that thereby we may be so humbled under the same, that when we have worshipped him, we may so remain under his hand, as we suffer ourselves to be governed by him, to follow the rule that he has delivered unto us.

Now let us fall down before the Judgment seat of our God, acknowledging the infinite faults whereof we be guilty, if he listed to execute the office of a Judge against us: and therewithal let us pray

him, not to omit to be our father for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake: And that forasmuch as we be guilty of many offences: we may suffer ourselves to be daily cut off from our sins, so as nothing may hinder our coming to him to yield ourselves in such sort unto him, as we may renounce all our wicked affections more and more, until we be thoroughly rid of them, and be clothed with his heavenly righteousness. And so let us all say, Almighty God, heavenly father, &c.

On Friday the 27th of March, 1556.

The 162nd Sermon,

which is the tenth upon the twenty-eighth Chapter.

59 Then will the Lord make thy plagues marvellous, and the plagues of thy seed, great plagues and sure: evil and sure diseases.

60 And he shall turn upon thee all the plagues of Egypt, the presence whereof thou didst fear, and they shall cleave unto thee.

61 Also all the diseases and all the plagues which be not written in the book of this Law, the Lord will cause to come upon thee, until thou be destroyed.

62 And whereas thou wast in multitude as the stars of heaven, thou shalt be few in number, because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the Lord thy God.

63 And it shall come to pass, that like as the Lord thy God rejoiced over thee to do thee good, and to multiply thee: even so will the Lord rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought: and thou shalt be rooted out of the land to which thou goest to possess it.

64 And the Lord will scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth to the other end of the earth. And there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known: even gods of wood and of stone.

I have showed here before, how slow men are to be taught by the chastisements which God doth send them. For until they perceive the hand of God, and be driven to understand, that it is he with whom they have to do: of themselves they wax hardhearted: and which worse is, they labor to cloak that which they ought to feel and see as it were before the eye: namely, that they be smitten for their sins. Forasmuch therefore as men do never willingly come to the knowledge of themselves: GOD is fain to enforce them to it. This is the cause why Moses, over and besides that which he repeateth afore,

doth add, That God will make the plagues of the despisers of his Law, wonderful. That is to say, they shall be so notable, that even in spite of their teeth, they shall be afraid of them as of things that were never known, nor in use. For we see that accustomed things are despised: and even so is it also with God's benefits. Forasmuch as the Sun doth daily rise to lighten us: who is he that thinketh of the change and intercourse which GOD maketh between the night and the day? according to the saying of the nineteenth psalm, that it is as if God should waken us up every morning,* and tell us with a loud voice how it is good reason, that his infinite goodness, wisdom, and power should be known. But we have no ears to hear. What is the reason? It is because the sun appears every day in like order, by means whereof we be hardened with it: and because it is ordinary, we make none account of it: even so is it concerning punishments. For the more our Lord provoketh us to come unto him, the more do we take heart to become unreformable. And therefore it is needful for us that his plagues should be wonderful unto us, that we may be made afraid of them spite of our teeth. And again he addeth, That they shall be great and certain. The last word that Moses useth, doth signify true or faithful. Whereby GOD doth us to understand, that his plagues shall hold on still, like as he said also that they should cleave unto them that were rebellious and could not be won by gentleness: these plagues must be rooted in them: and for that cause doth he term them Certain. Here have we to consider our own hardness, that every of us may be the more vigilant in looking to the hand of GOD and conceive the better thereof. Forasmuch as we be so dull of nature, we must learn to stir up ourselves. And let us fear lest GOD

should accomplish that which is pronounced in this text: Namely that when his accustomed punishments profit us not, then he must needs proceed against us after such a strange and horrible manner, as shall make us afraid, and cause the hair of all them to stand up which do but hear speak of it: yea, and (as the Prophet Jeremiah saith) to make men's ears tingle, when the report thereof comes into foreign Countries.

Let us be afraid therefore, lest God do work after that manner, when he perceives such stubbornness in us, as he cannot win us by measurable and tolerable corrections. And therewithal let us also take warning by this word "Of sure plagues," that when God has followed us to reduce us to the way of salvation, and we have still fled from him, the plagues must also continue to the uttermost both upon us and upon all our lineage, insomuch that when we think to see an end thereof, we shall not have yet begun. Let us not therefore make account to escape when the plague has lasted a while: for accordingly as we proceed on in our naughtiness; so must God proceed with his rigor and augment it more and more; according as he sees us to wax worse and worse. Then let us not do as we see most men do, which cry out and storm at it, saying: And when shall this have an end? How happens it that God takes no pity on me to ease me of my pains? But in the meanwhile have they any mind to reconcile themselves to God? Do they confess their faults and bewail them? Nay, rather they are at the very point to defy him. Yet do they talk of their afflictions and make complaints: but in the meanwhile no man looks to the ground of the mischief to amend it. Therefore when we

have been stubborn against our God, let us not think it strange that he should pursue us with such rigor: but let us acknowledge that it is expedient for us. In the meantime, let us not forget this that is written here: namely, that God threatens sinners, to the end to bring them back again, notwithstanding that they have been as folks forlorn and past hope of recovery. For God speaks not to such as had committed but one only fault, or some two or three faults, or to such as having done amiss, did not wholly give themselves over to wickedness: but he speaks unto such offenders, as had made war long time against him, and despised his word, and been deaf to all his warnings, and had made but a mock of them. Yet notwithstanding he does not cease to threaten them still. And to what end and purpose? Even to win them by his amiable goodness. So then although we have been misguided for a time, yet is it better for us to turn late than never: and so shall we fare the better by that which is showed us here by Moses. Now consequently he says, That God will cause the plagues of Egypt to turn upon the Jews. We understand that God did so afflict the Egyptians, as that they were a terror to his own people, insomuch that the Jews themselves were astonished thereat, notwithstanding that they were exempted from the evil. When the Egyptians were oppressed to the uttermost, thereby the Jews understood that God spared them, and that he held them in his protection, because he smote their enemies, and in the meantime did keep them in peace and rest. And this we see chiefly in his killing of all the first-born of Egypt: For GOD had commanded, that the doorposts of the houses should be marked with the blood of the Paschal Lamb. There God gave a singular testimony unto the

Jews that he would spare them; and during that while he turned his wrath and vengeance against their enemies. But now he says here clean contrary, That God will cause those very plagues to return back. For the word that Moses uses does import as much as if he should say, Thy fathers saw how God turned his wrath against the Egyptians, but now they must return back again upon thee, because thou makest none account to honor and serve him, which has loved thee so much, and to whom thou art so greatly bound. By this saying we are admonished, that when God has forborne us for a time, and moreover for the love that he bears toward us, has punished our enemies, and showed himself a contrary party against them for to maintain us: we must not therefore flatter ourselves, but rather be more diligent to walk in his fear. For when we will not acknowledge such grace, but rather abuse it quite contrarily: it is good reason that our Lord should cause the things to return back upon us, which he had sent upon our enemies, thereby to show us that he held us in his defense and safeguard. It is said that the people of God shall be as a fire kindled to consume all the wicked and unbelievers. And God will show the same in very deed. But if we will need kindle his wrath through our sins and transgressions: then the fire that should have been upon the unfaithful, must fall back upon ourselves, and we must perish therewith. Let us therefore consider well of this word, and let this which is recited concerning the land of Egypt be unto us a mirror and a learning, that we at this day may apply it to our own use; according as all these things are written for us. Let us mark (I say) what our Lord did in old time for the Jews, and let us understand that thereby he gave record what love he bears to his

Church. But yet therewithal, let us take warning to yield ourselves in such wise obedient unto him, as he may continue to do us good, and that this covenant may be confirmed between him and us,* Namely, I will be a friend unto thy friends, and an enemy unto thine enemies. It is certain that this promise was given to Abraham: howbeit, to the end that we also should enjoy the same. Now if we cannot suffer God to be our friend, but rather will make war against him, and break the faith and alliance that is established between us: then whereas before, he did set himself against our enemies, now he must be fain to fall upon us, and to make us to feel his infinite power, until we be quite confounded and brought to nought. Therefore while our Lord spares us, let us acknowledge his goodness, and not provoke his wrath to make us to feel his power in smiting us. And moreover, when as we see, that whereas the unfaithful should be stricken at his hand, we feel the first blows: let us acknowledge that it is meet it should be so, because we have broken the peace which he had made with us. Let us not thereupon be discouraged, however the world goes, but let us stick to him still. Furthermore let us not tarry till he proceed to extremity. And if we be not so wise as to have that discretion at the first, yet at least wise let us benefit ourselves by the advertisements which are set down in this place. After that manner should we put this text in use.

Now Moses says expressly, that the Jews feared the plagues of the Egyptians, and that they had good cause to stand the more in dread of them, for that in beholding them upon their enemies, they were then astonished at them, & therefore it was good reason that they

should magnify the goodness of God: but howsoever the case stood, the plagues which God sent upon the Egyptians, were so great and so horrible, that the Jews must needs be amazed at them, albeit that they themselves were free from them, because they beheld such an alteration of nature. Now if they feared the wrath of God whilst it was upon their enemies, and had therein a testimony of his love & goodness: what ought they then to do when God rushes upon their heads, and that they must be fain to feel the self-same plagues which came upon the Egyptians? Must they not needs be doubly dismayed? Yes: and therefore we see that this threatening is not superfluous; but serves to waken them, according as we have said herebefore, and as experience shows that we be too much deaf, yea and as it were senseless, when God does warn us; and that he must smite upon us as it were with a hammer, or else will we never understand what he says. And so you see the reason why this word is expressly set down. Now when we see that God punishes the wicked, let us learn to have such fear of his vengeance, as we do not tarry till he wrap us up amongst those whom we have seen punished before us. This is the thing that S. Paul meant in saying, "Deceive not yourselves, neither let any man abuse you with vain words: for the wrath of God has been wont to fall upon the unbelievers & disobedient for such offences." Hereby S. Paul shows to the faithful, that they should not fear the hand of God only when they see it armed against them, and when it touches their persons: but they ought to use the opportunity in reforming themselves, even when God is so good unto them as to punish the reprobates & rebels before their eyes. Let us therefore be afraid when God punishes the wicked, and let us be advised to

acknowledge him for our Judge beforehand; and that we have well deserved to be handled as severely as they, were it not that he of his goodness forbears us. Let this touch us to the quick, that we may be brought to repentance. Thus should we yet further put this saying of Moses in practice.

Now he adds, that God (over & beside all this which he has declared,) will send yet other adversities and afflictions upon the Jews. Indeed Moses did reckon up many sorts of plagues heretofore, and he thought it not enough to have said at once, God will chastise thee after such and such manner: but he redoubled it, because he saw men so gross and heavy that they are not so moved at the first, as were to be wished. But our Lord's intent here, is to declare that he has means of vengeance incomprehensible, and more than can be uttered by words; insomuch that if a man should make a Roll of them, and rehearse a whole million of several sorts of them, yet should he not comprise them all: for God has other hidden means unknown to men, wherewith to punish them that do still rankle in malice against him. And that is according as we shall see in the two and thirtieth chapter, in the solemn song that Moses makes there. "These things are laid up in my Treasury (says the Lord) so as I have my whole Chests full of horrible plagues," such as never were imagined nor understood by men. As much is said in this text.

And so let us remember two things, to wit, when we have had experience of the power of God by his doings, or read the threatenings that he has made against the transgressors of his law,

and do behold the practice and execution thereof: let us be amazed thereat and say, "How now? What a thing is it to provoke the Lord? For if he spare us on the one side, he can well assail us on the other; and when we be delivered from one hundred of afflictions, he has three hundred others ready for us: and when we have escaped all those, yet have we gained nothing." Let us therefore think upon these things. Now let us look what a sort of threatenings there are in the holy Scripture, how many sorts of deaths there be that God has denounced against the despisers of his majesty, and against all them that despise and set light by his word: it would weary us to recite them. And in reading the histories, we see the examples that God has given us of his wrath: and that not in one sort; we should needs be at our wits' end if we should think but upon the tenth part of them. And if we should set our minds to mark and to note them all: what a thing were it? The first thing therefore which we have to do, is to be diligent to call to remembrance all the threatenings whereby God would tame our wicked affections, and hold us inbridled: and therewithal to compare the things that are set down unto us, how that God has not threatened in vain, but has accomplished whatsoever he has said. Let us think on that. And moreover let us understand, that besides the means which are contained in the holy scripture, God has yet a great many of other means to punish men; and we see how he does daily bring up new. If we had eyes, or rather would open them, we might well see that God does daily send new kinds of his wrath: and that is to the end which I have touched heretofore, namely to make his plagues wonderful, that men may be enforced to think upon them because they see that God works not

after the ordinary course of nature: but after a sort that has not been erst known. When every of us has well studied all the lessons that be declared unto us in the holy Scripture; and made our commodity of the examples & punishments that be there mentioned; let us conclude that God has yet a great many more means than be expressed, which men never thought upon. And that thing he has made manifest ever since the law was written: and he does not yet cease to do the same still, that all manner of excuse may be taken from us. If a man looks upon the diseases that be at this day in the world, he shall see that there be many which were not expressed in the law of Moses, or in the days of our fathers. How has whoredom been punished by diseases that have come up of late? Who knew the pox a hundred years ago? That is one horrible plague which God has sent upon the world. And it is as much as if he had stretched his arm out of heaven, and said, "No, they know me no more to be their Judge, they harden their hearts against all the plagues that men did know and receive afore time, they make but a fig at it; but now I will make them to understand; that in my coffers, and in my storehouses there are yet other rods that be incomprehensible to them." God shows this: and we perceive that we cannot take a better course to profit by this doctrine, than to fear the rods and punishments, which are not written in the book of the law: otherwise, it is meet that we understand that GOD is still our Judge, howsoever the world goes.

Now he adds: That albeit they were as many in number as the stars of heaven, God would waste them in such wise as there should but a handful of them remain. Here must we remember that which was

spoken of before. For whereas God uses this similitude of the stars of heaven, he has respect to the promise which he had made to his servant Abraham: namely that his seed should be in number like the stars of heaven. So God spoke. But now, to the end that the Jews should not presume to think that God was always bound to multiply them, he says, "No, I will consume you whatever comes of it, and you shall be but a handful of people." It seems at the first sight that here is contrariety. For whereas God promised so great a seed unto his servant Abraham, it was not grounded upon the merits of men. And why? For seeing that the promise depends upon the free goodness of God, must it not be kept, albeit that men be wicked? Yes indeed. But we have to consider, that God does not always accomplish his promises after our fashion, nor according to our carnal capacity: he has means incredible to us, and which we understand not, until they appear by effect. Whereas he promises to multiply his Church, that is to say, to make it to prosper, if he sees that under color thereof the hypocrites take liberty to do evil, he withdraws his hand. Let us therefore consider well, that forasmuch as the Jews were puffed up with a foolish presumption, and thought it impossible for God to diminish them, seeing he had spoken the word that he would increase them: forasmuch I say as they abused the goodness of GOD and falsified his promise through their hypocrisy, he consumed them and brought them to a small number. Nevertheless, of that small number, there came a great offspring again, yea and so great a one, that men might so much the better perceive his truth and mercy, albeit after another manner. Therefore he says by his Prophet Isaiah in the tenth Chapter: "Although you were as the sand of the sea; (for

he did always send them back to the promise made to Abraham,) although your seed (as I said) be as the sand of the sea; yet shall but a small remnant be saved. But when you are altogether consumed, yet shall that little remnant be dispersed over all the earth, as if out of a little fountain should issue forth a great river, or a great lake, wherewith very many lands should be watered. So shall it be." Now then we perceive, that although GOD punish the hypocrites who abuse his promises, yet fails he not to perform his sayings still, albeit by an extraordinary mean; as we have seen it in the Papedom, and as is to be seen yet still. For the Papists have overflowed the whole world with superstition and idolatry, and all manner of evil: yea and moreover they harden their hearts in pride, and scoff at God with open mouth. "How now," say they? "Are not we the church? Is it not said that Jesus Christ shall be with us unto the end of the world?" Can he forsake his Church? Yet do they continually crucify him as much as in them lies, they spit in his face, and do him all the reproach in the world; they make him as if he were a prisoner or a bonds slave amongst them: and they consider not that such a horrible destruction happens throughout the whole world, through God's just vengeance for the shameless hypocrisy which has been in them that have rebelled against the Gospel: yet notwithstanding, GOD has not omitted to save his people, as it were under the earth. And in our days he has raised his Church, as if the bones of rotten bodies should recover flesh and strength again. For what were we through our unbelief? You see how it is a marvelous resurrection that God has wrought in that behalf. Mark well therefore that when our Lord promises to maintain his Church and to preserve it, the same belongs

nothing to them that abuse his name falsely, nor to them that come to despise him under color that he is gentle and merciful. For they shall evermore be disappointed of that favor which God has so reserved unto his people: for they bereave themselves thereof through their own malice and unthankfulness. Yet notwithstanding howsoever the case stands, God is ever faithful, and will find incomprehensible means to give place to his truth, by fighting against the malice of men. That is the thing which we have to remember concerning this text, where he says: That he will waste the Jews though they were as the stars in the sky.

And indeed the same appeared even in Jesus Christ, the head of the church. And therefore we ought not to think it strange that the members of the body should be fashioned like unto him. Whence came Jesus Christ when God his father sent him to be the Redeemer? The Prophet Isaiah says that he should spring from a stock, as if a tree were hewn down and there remained but the stub within the ground, in such sort as men might tread upon it. It is not said that he should come out of the house of David, but out of the house of Jesse, who was a Neat-herd and a man despised. The same was I say the father of David, a man of no estimation. Albeit that David was so excellent a king, that he was chosen of God to be magnified to the skies; yet the Prophet shows, that when Jesus Christ should come into the world, it should not be with any show of that royal majesty that was in David, but he should come out of the house of Jesse, as if he should come out of a herd. And that even then also he should not come of a tree, but of a stock, that were cut off. And in what manner?

And after what fashion? As a little branch, says he. Now seeing that God did thus to the head of the church, we must understand that all the body must be such like: but this makes not that the hypocrites shall be partakers of that which God reserves to his elect, and whom he has chosen, and indeed do show themselves to be his children, and be obedient unto him, as to their father: which also come not only with all confidence, but also are drawn with a right affection to honor him. And whereas we perceive that God does at this day send horrible destructions into the world; let us understand that he practices that which is here declared: yet let us not doubt, but that he does evermore preserve his Church: let us not doubt but he does uphold us as often as we have our recourse to him, according to this saying, that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, yea even amidst the greatest troubles they may be. Though heaven and earth should run together, yet are we sure that by calling upon the name of God, we shall be preserved. But let us take heed, that we abuse not his name, to make thereof a feigned cloak: for he can waste us well enough. And if we boast that we are of his Church; when he has cut us off, he can quickly raise him a new people: and augment them in such wise as his truth shall not be defaced, and yet we shall perish.

After that Moses has thus spoken, he adds: That like as God had taken pleasure in doing good to the Jews, even so he would take pleasure in persecuting them, until he had consumed them and utterly rooted them out. Here Moses does first of all show what affection GOD bears toward these whom he has chosen out for

himself, and means to take for his flock. It is certain that God is not subject to any human passions: yet cannot he sufficiently manifest either the goodness or the love that he has towards us, but by transfiguring himself, as if he were a mortal man, saying that he would take pleasure in doing us good. Let us understand therefore that God holds us so dear as if a father should delight and rejoice to do good to his children. When he sees them according to his mind, and to do him honor, and to be obedient unto him: then his feeding of them, and his clothing of them, is a comfort to him, and it does him good to see them in their bravery; for that is the very felicity of a father. GOD likens himself to mortal men, and says that he will delight to do us good. And therefore we cannot magnify the inestimable goodness of our God too much, seeing he stoops so low as to tell us, that his whole delight is in making us to enjoy his benefits, and in demeaning himself in such wise towards us, as we may have cause to praise him, and finally, in yielding to all our desires. But what? We cannot away with it: we are not able to apprehend that, for we are not able to consider it.

We see that God is (as you would say) wayward towards us, we see that he does not only bereave us of his blessings, but is also angry with us: and to be short, we perceive in him nothing, but all manner of rigour. And what is the cause hereof? Verily that we shut the gate against his goodness, and will not suffer him to use (as you would say) his natural disposition. Lo here a thing that should make us the better to acknowledge our faults, and not to accuse GOD of any excessive cruelty, when he deals not with us after our liking. For it is

certain that he will take pleasure in doing us good: but on the other side let us consider also, that he must in likewise delight to do us evil. And why so? Verily because that he is just. Indeed, if we did suffer GOD to use his own inclination towards us; he would bestow infinite benefits upon us, and we living in this world should be as in Paradise: but because of our sins, we must live here like wretched wanderers, we must languish in many miseries, we must dwell in continual fear and in doubt, and we must groan in great unrest: it must be even so. And wherefore? Because God is just.

This is the very pleasure that is spoken of in this text. According whereunto it is said, that GOD will rejoice and be glad, when he has punished the wicked, and maintained his majesty against them, for that they have despised him and set him at nought. Nevertheless, it is likewise true that he says by his Prophet Isaiah, that he does it unwillingly. Alas (says he) must I needs revenge me of mine enemies? GOD cries there alas, as if he were in sorrow and anguish for it. I must (says he) take comfort in avenging me of mine enemies. Those whom he terms his enemies, are the children whom he had adopted, and which boasted themselves to be his people. And how does he comfort himself in them? Even by giving them over, and by driving them away. But in the meantime, he shows that it is against his will, when he must so beat men down with main strokes, howbeit that he can none otherwise do. Yet notwithstanding, in very deed God is able to tame the hearts of men without any great violence: for (as we have said) he is not subject to our passions. But hereby we are to consider how his intent is to declare, that our unreformable

naughtiness is the cause why he is fain to pursue us after such manner as is spoken of here, and that he is fain to take pleasure in doing us harm: wherein the order of nature is after a sort quite altered and changed: but all is through our own fault, and we ourselves are to blame for it, and it is not for us to seek any other reason thereof than our own sin, which has kindled his vengeance to the uttermost. Thus much concerning that sentence.

Now for a conclusion it is said. That God will root out this people from the land wherein he had planted them, and that he would disperse them amongst all the nations of the world. And that there this wretched people, (which were erst in a country of freedom, wherein God had set them to the end that his service and pure Religion should dwell there) shall serve strange Gods, even idols of Wood and Stone. First we see that albeit the Land of Canaan was given in Inheritance to the people of Israel, yet they failed not to be put out and banished, when they abused the favor that had been showed unto them. GOD had planted them there, even as though he had set them at his own hand. Lo (said he) here is my resting-place and yours: he intended to dwell amongst them himself, and thereupon he promised to give them rest there, insomuch that although all other people should be displaced and removed too and fro, yet should the children of Abraham enjoy the heritage of that land still. Notwithstanding, this letted not God to drive them out again, and to scatter them abroad with the wind, because they had defiled that land, which should have been kept holy to his name.

Now since it is so, let us not think it strange though God at this day does send many changes into the world: for he has given no such privilege to any Nation as to say unto them, You shall inhabit this land, as the Land of Canaan was given to the lineage of Abraham. But we see how GOD is offended, we see men's misdoings as heinous as can be. Now then if GOD remove men, let us understand that it is for their sins. Moreover, let us return to the eternal rest, whereunto the Apostle leads us in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Having spoken of the rest of the land of Canaan, he says that we must look unto a rest that is higher. For the children of GOD are commonly as wayfarers in this world, as Saint Paul terms them, putting himself in the number: but let us evermore direct our course and endeavor to this heritage, which is promised us in heaven: for we shall not be disappointed of that heritage, so we continue in our vocation whereunto God has called us. Nevertheless, it is said, that they which give themselves over unto wickedness shall be wiped out of the book of life. Not that God's chosen shall ever perish: but it is spoken in respect of such folk as think it enough for them to bear the name of God's children, and to have been baptized, and to receive the Lord's supper, and such like things: and make no further regard. But our Lord tells us that although it seems for a time that they be written and enrolled in his Register, because they are taken to be of the company of the faithful: yet shall they not fail to be wiped out. So then let us advise ourselves, and so long as it shall please God to keep us in this world, let us walk so under his obedience, as his hand may ever be stretched out to preserve and maintain us: Let us so stick unto him as we may have liberty to honor and serve him. For it is a dreadful desolation which

Moses speaks of here, namely to be no more of the body of the church nor to have anymore the show or shape of Religion: and yet is this seen throughout the world at this day. Therefore let us mark, that one of the greatest benefits which GOD can bestow upon us in this transitory life, is to let us have some little corner wherein to assemble ourselves in his name, to call upon him and to profess ourselves to be his people. This ought to be more esteemed among us than either meat or drink or anything else. However, very few do think thereon. Yet notwithstanding we must needs confess, that although we have sufficient food, and in the meantime forget God, our state is miserable. And if we think not thereon, we betray our own beastliness: for God tells us that this benefit which is spoken of here, is far greater than all the rest, that is to wit that we may worship him in pureness, and be gathered together under that head which he has appointed unto us, namely our Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore while we have such privilege to hear the word of God, to call upon his name, and to walk according to his Gospel: let us hearken unto it, for fear lest God disperse & scatter us abroad in like sort as he has dispersed the Jews. And especially let us stand in fear of this threatening, namely, to be made such beasts, as to honor idols again, as we see it is become of others, who are a good president to us of the vengeance of God, whereof we ourselves also have felt our part. For we have been as bondslaves under idolatry, and underlings unto the abominations of the Papadom; and that was for our sins, and for the sins of our fathers. Seeing we have erst felt the blows, yea, and been as looking glasses unto others: should we now be so brutish, to provoke our God in such wise, as he should be forced as it

were, to deprive us of the grace that he has given us? Let us then use this benefit and treasure of the Gospel, whilst our Lord gives us place where to hide us as it were under his hand while he does govern and guide us, and while we be knit together in one body: that he may be magnified amongst us with one accord not only with the mouth, but also specially with our life: to the end that upon our endeavoring of ourselves to honor him, he on his side may continue his good doing towards us: and that this threatening be not executed upon our heads, that is; to be dispersed here and there, and to be constrained again to worship idols, and other dead and senseless things.

Now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our sins; beseeching him to touch us with such repentance, as being ashamed of our sins, we may seek altogether to put ourselves wholly into his hands, and that by obtaining forgiveness of him, we may also feel that he has reformed us, and that we be in his favor, to give ourselves altogether to his holy will. And that albeit there is always much to be amended in us, and that our lusts and affections do draw us quite away from that which he commands us; yet nevertheless we may not cease to strive against them, and to yield ourselves wholly unto him, and to enforce ourselves thereunto more and more, knowing that the same is our sovereign welfare: and that although he show us now and then some tokens of rigor in correcting us, yet we may learn to profit thereby, to the amending of our sins, so as we may be brought to the perfection

whereto he daily calls us. That it may please him to grant this grace not only to us, but also to all people and Nations of the earth, etc.

On Saturday the 28th of March, 1556.

The 163rd Sermon,

which is the eleventh upon the twenty-eighth Chapter.

65 Among these people also shalt thou have no rest, neither shall there be any rest to the sole of thy foot. Moreover, the Lord will give thee a trembling heart, and dimness of eyes, and heaviness of mind.

66 And thy life shall be hanging before thee: thou shalt be afraid day and night, and be uncertain of thy life.

67 Thou shalt say in the morning, "O that it were night!" And at night thou shalt say, "O that it were morning!" Because of the fearfulness of thy heart, wherewith thou shalt be afraid, and because of the sight of thine eyes, which thou shalt see.

68 And the Lord will make thee to return into Egypt by ships, by the way whereof I have said unto thee, that thou shouldst not go

about to see it any more: and there shalt thou be sold to thine enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and none shall buy thee.

Among the benefits that we desire in this present life, one is to have some resting place and some harbor to lodge in. Though a man be poor, yea, and troubled on all sides: yet if he have some little hole to hide his head in, that he may resort thither, he cares not for all the rest. But if we know not where to become, nor have any friend to receive us, nor any nook nor corner wherein to rest us; our state is then extremely miserable. That is the cause why Moses now (after he has declared that God would drive away and banish the Jews out of the land which he had given them to inherit and to rest in forever) adds, that they shall be as vagabonds and have no certain dwelling place, but be tossed from post to pillar.

Now it is certain, as we have already said, that this shall oftentimes happen to the faithful, but it is for another purpose: and God does in the meantime comfort them, and it is behoeful that their patience should be tried after that manner. For the thing wherein we show our obedience toward God is when as he mingles us among the wicked, so as we seem not to differ a whit from them, but all goes to havoc (as they say), and yet notwithstanding we continue sound in heart, and commit ourselves into the hands of our God, knowing that he has not forgotten us, though he suffer us to be so tossed. Contrariwise, all despisers of the Law do bear their mark, as if they were burned with a searing iron in their hearts, and do know that God is against them, and that their sins do reprove them. Albeit that men do not accuse

them, yet do they feel a sufficient testimony in themselves to confound them withal. And that is it that Moses does further add, saying: That unto such as are hard-hearted against God's word, God will give a trembling heart, a sorrowful mind, and dazzling eyes, so as in the morning they shall say: May I see night? And when night is come: Alas, how shall I pass it over? Can I continue until the morning? Insomuch that their life shall as it were hang before them, and they shall be in miserable unquietness. That is the thing wherein the faithful do chiefly differ from the despisers of God, and wherein their state does vary. For albeit that the faithful do suffer much trouble in this world, yet have they evermore wherewith to comfort themselves: according as our Lord Jesus says in Saint John: "You shall be vexed in this world," says he, "but yet shall you not fail to have comfort in me." We must consider what is the ground of our comfort; namely, that they who stand assured in the protection of God do evermore commit their life into his hands, as we see David did when he was beset on all sides. When he was threatened with a hundred deaths, he said, "Lord, I commend my soul unto thee, thou art faithful and thou hast redeemed me." He knew that God had maintained him even unto that hour; and that indeed without the marvelous power of him, he could not have lived so long. And thereupon he concludes thus: because that God is faithful, he will surely have pity on me: and therefore I commit my soul to his keeping. Lo at what point the faithful are. They very well perceive the dangers wherewith they be beset: they perceive that their life is but a smoke that might vanish away out of hand; they see there be many ambushes laid for them, insomuch that all the world is against them,

and that they cannot safely step forward one step without encountering some misery. The faithful understand all this: over and beside, that they be subject to all the changes of this human life, and that they be frail as all the children of Adam be, they see well there is no resting place for them here. But yet herewithal they know that God has care over them, and that he is their protector. That is the thing which they rest upon. Having such a stay, they hold on their way forward: but yet are they not careless; for we must not be so blockish as to cast no perils: for we could not call upon God if we saw not the perils wherein we be. And it provokes us to seek unto our God when we see that without him we should perish every minute of an hour. The faithful then must not be without fear; but resting upon the tuition of God, they must stick unto him, and assure themselves that he will never forsake them. That is it wherein they rejoice. Yea, and they go yet farther. For although they be to go among thorns; although they be driven to make many leaps, although they catch now and then some knocks; yea, and although they be altogether shut up and have no way out: yet notwithstanding through the power of faith they evermore rejoice even in the midst of all their sorrows and perplexities. On the contrary side, the despisers of God are as blind as is possible, and do close their eyes, lest they might see their infirmities, and so do harden themselves. Yet for all this, God compels them to look unto themselves, and then are they undone: they are overtaken with fear and amazedness. It is not their manner to make their recourse unto God. For they understand nothing of his protection, nay, contrariwise, they shun him, and flee as far from him as they can, because they conceive nothing in him but dreadful

majesty, which puts them quite out of heart. As for the wicked, therefore, and all such as have rebelled against God; they, after long hardening of themselves, when God awakens them, know not where to become. For they pass not of coming unto him, but do rather utter their rage by spiting him and by gnashing their teeth at him. And because they find no end of their miseries, nor have any rest, this terror which God casts upon them is an incurable disease. As for to call upon him, or to betake their lives into his hands, they have no power: but rather forasmuch as they know that they have warred against him, they be likewise driven to understand that in stead of helping them, he will surely vex them. That is the thing which we see here in this text, where Moses says, God will give thee a trembling heart, a sorrowful mind, and dazzling eyes.

Now here may a question be demanded. For we perceive that God's children, even they that are most dear unto him, and which have served him in the rightest and soundest manner; even very they are oftentimes in such distress, as does amaze them and make them besides themselves. What complaints makes David? That his eyes are forworn; that he is as good as consumed with mourning, that the marrow of his bones is dried up; that all his strength is faded, that he is in so great fear, that to his own seeming he was swallowed up into a bottomless gulf. This happens sometimes to God's children. How so? This threatening is made to them that despise him, to them that cannot by any good means be reclaimed, and which have always withstood God. I have told you already heretofore, that God to try his people to the quick, suffers them to be altogether in like case as the

wicked, insomuch that even they themselves do think so too. But yet does God therewith reach them his hand, and although he does not qualify their griefs at the first, yet he holds them at such stay that they shall not quail. There lies still some seed of God's spirit hidden in them, which at length utters itself more fully, so they see well that God sustained them in the midst of those extremities, and in the end it appears unto them, as it were in a visible manner. Let us mark it well then, that when the children of God are tossed and troubled with afflictions and have so grievous and hard temptations as were able to make them think that God is their enemy, so as they dare not open their mouths to call upon him, but are utterly astonished: insomuch that although he alleges unto them the promises of his grace, yet they cannot taste of them, but sometimes even refuse them like the unbelievers, as though they were fully determined to shut themselves out of all hope of salvation: when they are at this point, then does our Lord work in them, in such wise as he suffers them not to be quite overthrown with temptation. And that is Saint Paul's meaning where he says, "We be afflicted, but we perish not, we be oppressed, but yet however the world goes, we be not overcome: for we bear the mortifying of Jesus Christ in our flesh." Whereas he says, that the faithful may indeed be pent up in afflictions, he says also that yet notwithstanding they quail not forever: albeit that they are made to stoop under the burden, and to groan as though they were crushed and broken; yet notwithstanding, all those heartbreakings breed not any deadly fall. He adds the reason. Namely that it is the mortifying of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they bear. As if he should say, that God does evermore separate them from the misbelieving and reprobates,

and from the despisers of his majesty, and that he prints in us the mark of his only son. It is true, that in this case they seem as dead, but the same death is holy, for God sanctifies it, for that they are members of our Lord Jesus Christ: and thereby they attain to the resurrection. True it is, that Saint Paul speaks not only of the last resurrection, but he begins at the comfort which GOD gives presently to his children to train them on still to the port of salvation. Now then, they enter into the middles of death, even while they are alive. And therefore let us mark, that although God does now and then so afflict such as have walked in his fear and have put their trust in him, that they are stricken with terror and tossed with unquietness: yet notwithstanding he holds them up by the secret operation of his spirit: and moreover comforts and gladdens them in the end, accomplishing that which he says in another text: "That the more they were distressed, the more does he set their hearts at liberty, that they may freely come unto him: and so consequently makes them to understand that he never forsook them. Lo how our Lord tempers the troubles, and afflictions of the faithful: so as although they endure never so great pains, and do even pant in coming unto him, as folk scarce able to open their mouths to call upon him: yet when they have ended their conflict against their temptations, albeit that at the first they cannot get the upper hand, yet shall they get the victory in the end. But as for them that have played the restive jades, they remain pent up in their miseries, without any remedy, because God does still set himself against them more and more until they become frantic, and gnash their teeth at him, and finally fall into utter despair. To be short, we see that which is spoken by the Prophet

Isaiah, daily accomplished: namely, that there is no peace for the wicked; but that their minds are tossed like the waves of the sea: when there is any storm, the waves are troubled and the water is full of mud: and even so is it with them that despise God. Because they make war against him, therefore must he also trouble them: Insomuch that even without enemy, yea, and without anybody to fray them, they of themselves be frightened, and beat and bounce themselves, as if they were at war within themselves, so as there is no calmness at all in them, but all is full of trouble and disorder. For whereas the faithful be enlightened in the midst of their darkness, and GOD does still resort unto them to give them some little spark of light, in such wise as they may behold him, and albeit they attain not thereunto at the first, yet notwithstanding they still strain themselves and hold on their way thereward: in stead of this, the misbelievers are troubled at the very heart root, and can none otherwise conceive, but that they must needs perish in despair: and when they are at the last cast, then fall they to spitting of God, and blaspheme him with open mouth. To be short, here we see that the grievousest curse that God can send upon men in this transitory life, is that they cannot rest upon him, to acknowledge him to be the keeper of their life: but contrariwise: are cast up at adventure, by reason whereof they are ever in doubt of their lives, and are so carried away with mistrust, that they wot not where to become. When men are in this case, it is the greatest curse that can light upon them. Not without cause therefore does Moses declare here for a conclusion as it were in way of summing up the rest of all the curses which we have heard of heretofore, that there is nothing so dreadful, as when men are

become blockish, that there is in them no understanding, as who would say: God makes not any more reckoning of them as of his creatures, but they may well perceive that he does not guide nor govern them any more. When men are come to this point, and that their life, (notwithstanding that it be allowed of men,) is nevertheless heinous and detestable before God, and moreover they have no taste of his fatherly love, nor of the care that he has of other men, but they are as in the dungeon of despair: when men (I say) are come to such an extremity, it were better for them that they had been born before their time, and that they had never enjoyed this present life. And even that is the very cause why we hear it threatened that they shall say, O ye mountains fall upon us; and that they shall wish that the bottomless pits had swallowed them up. And why? For they find that all creatures be against them, when they have no more access to God. When men perceive once that he will not maintain them, but shows himself to be armed against them: then do they understand that all creatures be their enemies, and it grieves them to behold the sun: then are they so possessed with fear, that they wish there were no world at all: or rather that they were rooted out of it.

Now since we hear such horrible threatenings, let us learn to walk in the fear of our God: for there is no other way to live in rest and to be comforted in the midst of our sorrows and adversities, but to come with a free will to yield ourselves obedient to our God, and to give him such reverence as is due unto him. For when we acknowledge him to be our judge, we will not play the Rebels; but be willing to be reclaimed, that we be not in the end comprehended and wrapped up

in the number of them that have resisted him. You see then how the way that we should keep is that we must willingly hearken unto God when he threatens us, and that we must be moved thereat, and be touched therewith to the quick: and that thereupon we endeavor to serve him, and to obey his word. For it may well be that we shall sometimes be vexed with fear and unquietness: but yet will GOD deliver us from them. It is certain that we shall be weakened by that means, and it is good for us so to be: but yet however we fare, God will so keep us that we shall not fall into utter despair. Moreover, when we sometimes feel any unquietness in ourselves, and we have no power to call upon God, but are tormented with distrust: let us understand that it is the fruit of our sins, and let us desire God to make us to perceive that we have not kept touch with him as we ought to have done, and that therefore he casts us into that vexation and distress. But let us not so tempt our God, as he should proceed to this rigor that is here mentioned: namely, we should have no power to commit our life into his hands. So then, whereas here is mention made of a trembling heart, let us consider wherein our true rest does remain, namely even in this that God is our father, and that we are his children. Likewise whereas mention is made of dazzling or sunken eyes; let us understand that we must look upwards, as often as we are in any fear: and that there is no other remedy to qualify our griefs, but to lift up our eyes to heaven. For as long as men look downward, what shall they find there but an infinite mass and maze of miseries able to scare them out of their wits, so as they shall not know where to become? Let us therefore seek unto this means: that is to lift up our eyes to heaven, knowing that God has his hand

stretched forth, to uphold them that return unto him. Where mention is made of a sorrowful mind; let us understand that it is the proper office of GOD to set our hearts at liberty, to the end that no temptation may utterly vanquish and overwhelm us. And this shall be treated of yet more fully.

Let us come to that which Moses adds; Namely, that in the morning they shall say: "What is he that will make me see the night?" and at evening, "How shall we attain to the morning?" For your life (says he) shall be hanging before you, as at a thread. Here we see yet better that which has been said afore. For what is the cause that men are thus in continual fear, but that they cannot commend their life into the hand of GOD? In very deed and to speak properly, the lives of us all are evermore, as it were hanging at a Thread, but yet the despisers of God do most peculiarly find it so; and well worthy, for that they have warred against him that should have set them in rest and safety. Their life is as it were hanging by a thread, because that instead of life there is evermore this fear of death in their hearts, and reason good. For what is the life of man? A smoke that passes and vanishes away. And moreover let us see how many deaths beset us on all sides. So then as long as we remain in our natural state, without having respect to GOD, our life is always, as it were hanging at a Thread. Yes, surely. Though we be never touched outwardly, how many diseases bear we in us? A man needs not to go out of himself, nor to seek far, to learn to how many miseries and wretchedness he is subject: for even in his own self he shall forthwith find an infinite number of deaths. Seeing then that it is so, let us know, that until we

have learned to rest us in the providence of God, our life must of necessity be as it were flittering before our eyes, and altogether uncertain: and to be short we bear it continually as it were in our hands: according as it is said in Job and in the hundred and nineteenth Psalm.

Now when it is said that we carry our life in our hands, it is to show that whereas life should bear the man, the man bears the life: that is to say, the life is left up to the hazard of all misfortune. Even so it is with all men naturally, and as we have already said, the very faithful are not free from it, and that do we see by example in Job, and David. Notwithstanding, the despisers of God are they that feel most how their life hangs by a Thread. And wherefore? For God even spite of their teeth enforces them to perceive the perils that beset them: they see it is good reason, that all manner of creatures should become their enemies, by reason whereof they start when they hear but the falling of a leaf, and they are afraid when nobody pursues them, as it is said in another place of the Proverbs. Thus does God open the eyes of them that are puffed up with pride, and are drunken with the delights of this world, and especially which have hardened themselves in stubbornness against him. He opens their eyes, that they may know how their life is less than nothing, and that all these shadows, lies, and vain hopes whereupon men are wont to rest, are but baits to beguile them. See here I pray you whereunto they come which do scorn God and his word, and are wholly given to this world, reposing their trust on earthly means and on the creatures. Needs

they must at the last be caught with such fear as will teach them double and treble to understand their own state.

Now when Moses has spoken thus, he adds what they then say. "Who shall assure us to see the morning? How shall we end the day?" When men understand once how frail they are, and with how many perils and miseries they are environed, then have they no more happiness. Indeed, we can well say, that there is nothing more certain than death, nor anything more uncertain than the hour thereof: but in the meantime we regard it not, until God does wring us, and drive us thereunto by force. For then they which did bear themselves in hand that their life should last without end (as we see how men deceive themselves by fancying an immortality in this world, imagining that they shall live a hundred years after they be dead), find the contrary. And therefore because men are so blockish, God does still constrain them to behold present death continually pinching them and holding them at a bay. Thereupon they are in continual fear; and albeit that they utter nothing with their mouths, yet do they say thus in their hearts, "Who can assure me to see the morning?" To be short, to their thinking, the very earth sinks under them. And albeit that this does not always appear, yet notwithstanding the despisers of God do feel that this threatening is not in vain nor without effect. Wherefore let us not linger the time until God does execute such judgment upon us, but let us rather prevent it, by having that same willing fear which is spoken of in this wise: "Blessed is the man" (says Solomon) "which fears in his heart," that is to say, which calls upon himself, and tarries not until God

enforces him whether he will or no. Whenever each of us stirs up himself, it is the greatest benefit that we can have. Therefore whereas the worldlings make themselves dull heads, and wander away after their own vain imaginations, and fling beyond the moon as they say, to the intent to live in peace and rest without feeling of any grief or trouble, whereas they (I say) would thus fall asleep; let us look to ourselves, and gather our wits into some fear, and let every of us quicken up himself. And if we do not stir up ourselves in this manner, then must God needs torment and vex us, and make us a lively portraiture of that which is mentioned here. For in very deed, after that the despisers of God have played the mad beasts, and bleared out their tongues at all manner of doctrine, and set light by all threatenings, and like chafed bulls have rushed against God and all his judgments: they must at the last feel themselves vexed and troubled with unquietness: as we see how the great Tyrants that make all the world to shake under them, have their part hereof without measure: insomuch that whereas they make others to drink a little glass of fear and terror, they themselves must drink up a whole pot full, and sup up the dregs, according to the phrase of the Prophets, when they speak of the greatest punishment that God sends: Namely that when those whom God chastises, have drunk more than their fill, in swallowing up great store of sorrows; then they which have lived at their ease and in pleasure, must drink the lees, which is the bitterest, and will make them to burst. And indeed, we have an example of a heathenish Tyrant, who has very well proved and declared that all his whole life was a continual torment, yea even by his own witness. For being flattered of one that said unto

him, "O sir, how happy is your state?" "Yea" (quoth he) "and I will make thee to understand it thyself." And thereupon he made him a feast, and when he had set him at the table, he put a sword over his head, hanging by one only hair, to show unto him, what manner of state that was, which he had counted so happy. The man seeing himself in that perplexity, said: "Let this kingly state be taken away from me: for I had lever die a hundred times than to be in such unquietness and perplexity." This I say, was the confession of a heathen Tyrant: as if GOD should have held him upon the Torture, that it might be a general lesson against all such as make war with God, and trouble the world with terror: they must spite of their teeth be made afraid themselves, and find no rest. After many tossings and turmoiling, hell must evermore wait for them, they must see their graves open which they are to fall into, and they must behold the great gulfs ready to swallow them up, and in the meantime can have no recourse nor refuge to God, but do still flee from him, where as he is the only person to whom they should have sought for succor.

Now over and besides that which we have said already, namely, that we ought to prevent this threat by fearing God of our own accord: let us understand, that for as much as we be all wretched sinners, and there is not one, be he never so well and rightly minded, who ought not to understand that he is greatly endangered unto God: yet when we have our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our peace, and when we can by his means rest upon the fatherly goodness of God: then may we be sure that he holds us for his children, and that he watches over us, and procures our welfare. And that is the cause why Saint Paul says

expressly, that when we be once justified by faith, then we are at peace with God. He says that we must be justified by faith, that is to say, that we must have embraced the grace which is offered unto us by the Gospel: knowing that God forgives us our sins, and is merciful unto us; in that he bears with us for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Until we come to this, we must needs be always in doubt and in perplexity: but having knowledge once that God has buried all our sins, so as we put our trust in the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ; then we are at peace, yea in peace and not in dullness like as the unfaithful and the despisers of God may have some peace for a certain time, as we have said before: but for as much as they forget themselves, and do still follow on their wicked train, they utterly besot, and bewitch themselves. But Saint Paul says that we have peace with God, that is to say, that we acknowledging ourselves undone without him, may boldly press unto him and say: "Seeing GOD is my father and he has showed himself so gracious to me in this present life, as to give me some rest here: surely there is a more blissful rest prepared for me, when our Lord Jesus Christ shall come to meet us, for to guide us, and to bring us up, that we may seek our God; as in deed that is the place which we must come unto, if we intend to have a place to rest us in." And in that respect is it that the Prophets in likewise speaking of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, do always say, that every man shall then sleep under his own fig tree and under his own vine: and nothing shall make him afraid. Now then concerning the threatenings which Moses has set down here; the Prophets as true expounders of Moses, and as renewers and bringers of the Law to remembrance again, having showed unto the

people the unbelief and rebellion which they saw in them, and having showed the vengeance of God which was ready to light upon them for it, did bring those back again unto Jesus Christ, which erst were altogether unformable. And albeit that it behooved them to suffer smart for a time because of their sins; yet do they give them hope that God will make a covenant with them, and that then they shall sleep every man in his vineyard and under his fig tree: doing them to understand that although they slept not in a locked chamber, but lay in the midst of the fields, yet they should be safe enough because they were under the protection of their God, by reason whereof they might sleep at ease and in safety.

Forasmuch then as we have such assurance, we ought to be well settled in our minds: and since we have understanding of the reconciliation that is made in our Lord Jesus Christ, we have now good cause to rest us in our God, and to be still and quiet; howbeit, so as we forget not so great a benefit. And we see that our Lord Jesus Christ is minded to reign among us. Let us therefore suffer ourselves to be governed by his hand, and as ewes and lambs let us follow our shepherd, and then shall we do that which our Lord has appointed for us, so as nothing may hinder us, but that we may attain unto him. Although we see things turmoiled in this world, so as all goes to havoc, yet shall we be able to take breath again, and to say; "Yet has my God still showed me the way: insomuch that whereas other men have been posted to and fro, I have evermore stood fast: and although I have been diverse ways troubled and vexed, yet do I know Lord that thou dost evermore govern thy people." Thus you see that

being stayed in our Lord Jesus Christ, we may be assured that GOD will never fail us. Seeing it is so, let us return unto him, and pray him to defend and deliver us from all evil. The way then for us to be sure of our life is, that although we see nothing but continual war, yet we must enforce ourselves to fight, and persevere until we have obtained the victory, and if he take us away to himself, he will then be the keeper of our souls. He will guide us in this present life, so as both day and night we shall feel his grace. When the evening comes, albeit that the night do bring never so much fear with it, yet shall we be in safety. Why so? For God is that while our fortress, and we shall not be forsaken of him. Therefore let us tarry until the morning. Thus do we ever more refer our life unto him. And although we be not senseless, yet shall we have continually whereupon to stay us when we see our own infirmity. As for example, when a man perceives that he is not able to stand, but his legs quake and falter under him; he either leans to something, or sits down in a chair, or else stays himself upon some staff; even so is it with us. For we have not the strength of giants, we are not of such power as to be able to defy our enemies, for we see well that we are too weak. But in the meantime we cease not to stay upon God, and that is our refuge. Neither have we this affiance for this present life only; but we have it also for the life to come: insomuch that although our Lord does put us into the hands of our enemies, yet will he not miss to be our savior even in the midst of death. Let us not doubt, but that he will safely convey us not only from the morning to the evening, and from the evening to the morning; but also that even in the midst of the darkness of death, we shall always be lightened with his goodness, and he will show us

that the life which he has promised to his people shall never fail. Therefore does David use this manner of speech. "Lord," says he, "thy staff or else thy shepherd's hook." He takes the similitude of a shepherd, that has his staff or his hook. "Lord," says he, "so long as I see thy staff before me, I am safe, insomuch that if we were to go into the darkness of death, yet being in that dark and irksome dale, yea even in such sort as I might seem to be cast into hell: I would not cease to rejoice." After this manner must we practice this doctrine.

Now lastly it is said, that God will carry his people by the way; concerning which it was said: "Thou shalt never see it again," and that they should be carried in ships, and that being come into Egypt, they should be set to sale as slaves, and yet nobody should buy them. They should not be esteemed, but as a people utterly cast away, and everybody should disdain them. Now this was all one as if God should have meant to cut them off, saying, "Remember how I marvelously delivered you out of the land of Egypt, when I made you to pass through the wilderness, and in like wise to go through the Red Sea, or the sea of Bulrushes, (which they call the Red Sea: but properly it is the sea of bulrushes, because of the bulrushes that grow in it) for I caused that arm of the sea to shrink back, that you might pass on dry foot. But now shall you return thither in ships; you must pass again that way, yea, albeit that I forbade you, and enjoined you expressly, that you should not go that way anymore: yet shall you return thither spite of your teeth. Indeed, at the other time that you were in Egypt, you sorrowed for the oppression which you suffered, and I took pity of you, and took you out of it. But as for this time,

when you shall require anybody to buy you to be their slaves, and to yield your life to the most miseries that may be: you shall have no buyer at all." As if he had said, "Seeing you have despised the deliverance that was wrought for you, and have forgotten such a benefit, it shall be well known that you are an unhappy and a cursed people, and that I have forsaken and refused you utterly." This threat could not be but exceedingly terrible to the Jews. And when the Prophets expounded Moses, we see likewise how the people gnashed their teeth against them. However, not a whit were they meekened thereby, but rather they doubled their confusion: insomuch that it was always cast in their teeth that their iniquities proceeded to such extremity as was intolerable. It is said, that, notwithstanding all the menaces of the Law were pronounced unto them, yet they regarded them not, but held on still, and became so much the more hard-hearted, as though they had meant of set purpose to make war against God. Truly it is a horrible thing and against nature, that they who were the household of God, the holy generation, the children of Abraham, and who from the beginning had been trained up in the doctrine of the law, and had had the sayings always laid before them which were written by Moses, so as their ears were continually beaten therewith: should yet notwithstanding fare never the better for it, but still go on from evil to worse. Was not that a horrible thing? Yes, verily: and yet we see the like example. Let us make our benefit thereof, and beware that we wax not so hard-hearted, lest we be possessed of Satan, and forsaken of God, so that whatever is told us and showed unto us, we be touched with no manner of fear, but become like wild boars which of their own willfulness do cast

themselves into death. Let us take heed that we provoke not our God in that manner.

Moreover, whereas it is said here, that God would bring this people whom he had redeemed, into a double captivity and more reproachful than was the first: let us repair unto that redemption which was once wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ: and that we may be partakers thereof, let us freely serve him who purchased us so dearly. And seeing that our God has redeemed us in the person of his Son, to such a state that now we be frank and free from the bonds of sin and Satan, let us henceforth fear him and serve him all the days of our life, according as Zachariah speaks in his song, recited by Saint Luke. Seeing then that the case standeth so, let us learn to walk in such obedience to our God, as he may make the redemption available which is wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ; and let us serve him in all holiness and righteousness, that we be not bereft of the favor which he has purchased for us as we see this people were, who after they had been settled in the land of Canaan, were put out again for their unthankfulness. Therefore let us be well aware that God dispossess us not of the grace which he has bestowed on us: but let us learn to take such profit thereby, as all the whole may yield fruit to his glory, to the intent he may make us to understand, that as well in life as in death, he is evermore our Savior and our redeemer, and that we may make our boast that he has not redeemed us in vain, but with condition, that we should henceforth live in liberty in despite of the devil and of death, according as we have example thereof in Saint Paul.

Now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our sins, beseeching him to touch us more and more to the quick, that being stricken with such a fear, as may make us to see that of ourselves we be dead and forlorn; we may yet for all that not fail to flee for refuge to his mercy. Let us therefore seek the way thither, which is, that we acknowledge ourselves to be reconciled by Jesus Christ, and that he is our peace unto the end, according as he does continually declare and testify unto us by the doctrine of his Gospel. And that in the meanwhile it may please our good God, to give us the spirit of mildness and meekness, to the end we rebel not against him anymore, nor have our affections anymore, striving and rebelling against his Law, but rather that we may commit ourselves to his guiding, and be confirmed in the assurance which he has given us, that he holds us for his people; so as he may show by effect, that he watches over us, and that he will continue with us to the end to preserve us both in life and in death. That it may please him to grant this grace not only to us, but also to all people and Nations of the earth. &c.

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ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions February 2024. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491,

West Linn, OR 97068