AN

EXPOSITION

OF

THE EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL

TO THE

PHILIPPIANS.

BY

THE REV. JEAN DAILLÉ

(1594–1670)

AN

EXPOSITION

OF

THE EPISTLE OF SAINT PAUL

TO THE

PHILIPPIANS.

BY THE REV. JEAN DAILLÉ

MINISTER OF THE FRENCH REFORMED CHURCH AT CHARENTON, A.D. 1639

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BYTHE REV. JAMES SHERMAN,

MINISTER OF SURREY CHAPEL.

REPRINTED

QUINTA PRESS

WESTON RHYN

2025

Exposition of the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Philippians by Jean Daillé
Published by Quinta Press,
Sycamore, Vicarage Lane, Weston Rhyn, Oswestry, England, SY10 7RE

Visit our web-site: quintapress.com

Layout © 2025 Quinta Press

Exposition of the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Philippians
first published in French in 1643

Translated from the French and published by James Nichol
(Edinburgh) and James Nisbet & Co. (London) in 1863

ISBN xxx–x–xxxxxx–x–x

The numbers in the inner margins show the page breaks in the 1863 edition.

Contents

Memoir of the Rev. Jean Daillé. v

Dedication to Madam Anne de Mornay, Duchess and Mareschale de la Force. xi

CHAPTER 1.

SERMON I.	Verse 1–6.	3
SERMON II.	Verse 7–11.	18
SERMON III.	Verse 12–18.	32
SERMON IV.	Verse 19–21.	46
SERMON V.	Verse 22–26.	61
SERMON VI.	Verse 27–28.	75
SERMON VII.	Verse 28–30.	88

CHAPTER 2.

SERMON VIII.	Verse 1–4.	101
SERMON IX.	Verse 5–8.	115
SERMON X.	Verse 9–11.	129
SERMON XI.	Verse 12.	143
SERMON XII.	Verse 13.	156
SERMON XIII.	Verse 14–15.	170
SERMON XIV.	Verse 16–18.	185
SERMON XV.	Verse 19–24.	199
SERMON XVI.	Verse 25–30.	212

Dedication to Madame de Dangeau. 227

CHAPTER 3.

SERMON XVII	Verse 1–3.	228

SERMON XVIII.	Verse 4–7.	242
SERMON XIX.	Verse 8.	255
SERMON XX.	Verse 9–11.	267
SERMON XXI.	Verse 12–14.	281
SERMON XXII.	Verse 15–17.	295
SERMON XXIII.	Verse 18–19.	308
SERMON XXIV.	Verse 20–21.	320
	CHAPTER 4.	
SERMON XXV.	Verse 1–3.	334
SERMON XXVI.	Verse 4–7.	346
SERMON XXVII.	Verse 8–9.	358
SERMON XXVIII.	Verse 10–14.	370
SERMON XXIX.	Verse 15–19.	382

General Index 395

(v)

MEMOIR
OF THE
REV. JEAN DAILLÉ.

Jean Daillé, a celebrated French protestant minister, was born at Chattellerault, in the year 1594. His father, who was the receiver of the consignations at Poitiers, designed him for business, and to become his successor in his office. But observing his son's strong inclination to books, he judiciously yielded to it, and sent him, when he had attained his eleventh year, to St Maixent, in Poitou, to acquire the rudiments of learning. He continued his studies successively at Poitiers, Chattellerault, and Saumur. At the last place he finished his course of philosophy under the celebrated Mark Duncan; and began his theological studies at Saumur, in the year 1612. In the same year he was received into the family of the illustrious M. du Plessis-Mornay, in the honourable capacity of tutor to his two grandsons. This was one of the most felicitous providences in M. Daillé's life; for though he was, doubtless, well qualified for his trust, and faithfully discharged it, yet it is said that he received as much instruction from the venerable grandfather as he communicated to the grandsons. Mornay was extremely pleased with him, and frequently read with him, and imparted to him those rich stores of learning and knowledge with which his own mind was furnished; so that some have attributed the great celebrity which Daillé afterwards attained to the assistance he received from his noble patron; and it may be justly supposed that the counsels and instructions of that excellent man were not wasted on him. After enjoying the advantages of this situation for seven years, he set out on his travels with his pupils, and went to Geneva, and thence through Piedmont and Lombardy to Venice, and other parts of Italy. While at Mantua one of his pupils was taken ill, and he removed him, with all speed, to Padua, where greater liberty was allowed to protestants than in other parts of Italy; but there the young man died, and it was not without great address that Daillé, aided by the memorable Father Paul, avoided the observation of the inquisitors, in removing his corpse to France, that it might be interred in the burial-place of his ancestors.

While at Venice M. Daillé entered into a most intimate friendship with the erudite and candid historian of the Council of Trent, and afterwards spoke of the results of this intimacy as the principal benefits which he received from his travels; and, on the other hand, such was the affection that Paul conceived for him, that he

used his utmost endeavour with a French physician, of the protestant religion, and one of his intimate friends, to prevail with him to stay at Venice.[1]

M. Daillé, and his surviving pupil, proceeded from Italy to Switzerland, Germany, Flanders, Holland, and England, and returned to their native country in the year 1621. (vi)

In 1623 he entered the ministry at the castle of La Forest, in Lower Poitou, belonging to M. du Plessis-Mornay. But in a short time after that nobleman was taken ill, and died in the arms of the new pastor. He now engaged in preparing for the press memoirs of his patron, which had been compiled by one of his domestics, of the name of De Lignes, and were afterwards published in two volumes.

In 1625 he was elected minister of the church at Saumur, and in the following year was called by the consistory of Paris to take the charge of the church at Charenton. Here he continued to fulfil his ministry for the remainder of his life, widely diffusing the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. He died at Paris in the year 1670.

He frequently assisted in the protestant national synods that were holden in France, where his influence was very great; and presided at the last synod prior to the revocation of the edict of Nantz, which assembled in London in the year 1659. However repugnant were the doctrines maintained by our author to those of the Romish Church, he was highly esteemed by many of that communion for his learning, abilities, integrity, moderation, and obliging and affable manners. Balzac once exclaimed to him, "Oh that such a man as you are were on our side!" That he was highly valued by the protestants of France will be readily supposed. They were accustomed to say that "since the days of Calvin they had possessed no better writer than M. Daillé."

He was a very voluminous author. This will not be thought wonderful, when it is considered that he lived long, was remarkably exempted from sickness, and was very laborious. He was eminently endued with the qualifications of an author, and had this singular advantage, that his understanding was not impaired with age; for it is observable that there is no less strength and ardour in his two volumes, entitled "De Objecto Cultus Religiosi," the first of which was published when he was seventy years old, than in any of his earlier works.

In the year 1631 he published his most celebrated work, entitled "Of the Use of the Fathers,"[2] which Bayle characterized as "a very strong chain of arguments, that form a moral demonstration against those who would have differences in religion to be decided by the authority of the fathers."[3] This able performance was censured,

1 This circumstance, among many others, has been thought no inconsiderable proof that Father Paul concealed, under the habit of a monk, a temper devoted to protestantism and its professors. His detestation of the corruptions of the Romish Church appears in all his writings, but particularly in the following remarkable passage in one of his letters: "There is nothing more essential than to ruin the reputation of the Jesuits. By the ruin of the Jesuits, Rome will be ruined; and if Rome be ruined, religion will reform of itself."

2 "De l' Usage des Pères."

3 Dr. Fleetwood, Bishop of Ely, said of this book, that it "pretty sufficiently proved the fathers were of no use at all."

not only in Roman Catholic countries, but by some English Episcopalians, who thought that it tended to obscure the merits of the ancient church. But by the more liberal part of the English communion it was received with very great applause, as is evident from testimonies in its favour from Lord Falkland, (who used to say that "to obtain the acquaintance of M. Daillé was worth going to Paris,") Lord George Digby, and Dr. Taylor, prefixed to an English translation of it, by the learned Thomas Smith, B. D. Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge; and also from Lord Clarendon's excellent apology for it, in his answer to Serenus Cressay.

In 1663 Daillé published another work of general interest, entitled "An Apology for the Reformed Churches,"[1] in which he vindicates, with much learning and argument, their separation from the Church of Rome from the imputation of schism, which was often alleged against them. This work, as well as the former, was translated into English, and also into Latin. As soon as his "Apology" appeared, it was much censured by the clergy of France, and some of them were employed to write against it. Daillé wrote two or three little pieces in defence of it, which

were afterwards printed with it in the Latin edition. Besides the two works above mentioned, he published about twenty volumes of sermons, several critical and controversial pieces, and others of a temporary nature.

His Expositions of the Philippians and Colossians will afford the lovers of sound practical theology much edification. They are marked by clear interpretation of Scripture—great candour towards other expositors—boldness for the faith—and vigorous attacks on the errors of the papacy, which he exposes with singular skill, and refutes with masculine energy. His sanctified eloquence appears in every page, but especially in his perorations, which for close appeals to the conscience, ardent love to a precious Saviour, earnest exhortations to holy walking with God, and active service for Christ, exceed any which have fallen into the editor's hands, and, in his opinion, justify the sentence written on the title page by a devoted servant of Christ, from whose library the copy of this Exposition of the Epistle to the Colossians was obtained, "This is the most eloquent book in my library."

The Exposition of the Epistle to the Philippians is now for the first time translated into English. The editor begs to express his obligations to the Misses Clifton for the great assistance rendered him in this department of labour, and to F. Rivaz, Esq., to whose critical knowledge both of the French and English languages it is indebted for much of its point and power. A faithful, but verbal, translation of the Exposition of the Epistle to the Colossians appeared in English in the year 1672, the copies of which have now become very scarce. That translation has undergone revision in the present edition, and it is hoped will be found considerably improved.

While the labour of revising and preparing these valuable treasures of theological lore is not small, the editor acknowledges, with thankfulness to God, that he has derived great encouragement to proceed in his work from the testimonies of approbation which he has received from ministers of Christ, and pious and

1 "L' Apologie des nos Eglises."

intelligent laymen, in various sections of the church. He trusts that these precious pieces of Daillé, sent forth in a more inviting dress, and at a cheaper rate, will yet further contribute to their consolation and instruction, and the name of the Lord Jesus be abundantly glorified.

J. SHERMAN.

Surrey Parsonage, January 11, 1841.

TO THE HIGH AND MIGHTY LADY

MADAM ANNE DE MORNAY,

DUCHESS AND MARESCHALE DE LA FORCE.

Madam,

It is not without cause that an ancient doctor of the church, not less celebrated for the sanctity of his manners than for the graces of his eloquence, formerly complained that the apostle St Paul was not known by Christians as he ought to be.[1] For the writings of this holy man are so replete with heavenly wisdom, that they would suffice to produce in us perfect piety, if we read them with suitable assiduity and attention. He explains the mysteries of faith; he treats of the duties of life; he expatiates on the consolations of the Spirit; he represents the whole nature of the Christian conflict in so admirable a manner, that there is no soul so ignorant that he cannot instruct; so vile, that he cannot subdue; so profane, that he cannot sanctify; so afflicted, that he cannot console; nor so cowardly, that he cannot awaken and fill with courage. I well know that the worldly-minded complain of the difficulty of his doctrine, and the refined, of the harshness of his language. But both these excuses are but the false pretexts of the idleness and malice of mankind. The depth of those mines where nature has hidden gold and silver does not prevent our digging into them with infinite labour, nor the distance of the Eastern coast our going thither through a thousand dangers in search of pearls. Here, where the question is of heavenly treasures, incomparably more precious than all those of earth, the same persons are discouraged, on account of a little difficulty in opening the casket wherein this treasure is enclosed. Besides, it is certain that the obscurity of which they accuse this great man arises almost entirely from the real aversion they feel towards the holiness of his doctrine, which the corruption of their passions prevents them from relishing. "If his gospel be hid, it is hidden from those who perish, whose understanding the god of this world hath blinded," 2 Corinthians 4:3–4. And as to the bluntness of which they accuse his language, I acknowledge that the ornaments of worldly eloquence are not to be found in it. He has despised all that artifice, as unworthy of the greatness of his office, and of the dignity of his

1 Chrysostom, on the Epistle to the Romans

design, contenting himself with a popular form of speech, very different from the air of the schools and the rhetoric of the age. But it is a lamentable refinement which would lead us to disdain the most delicious food, under the pretext that it is offered to us in earthen dishes; or precious stones, because they are presented to us in a wooden casket. The simplicity of the apostle's language in no degree lessens the price of the holy truth which is there offered to us, and the gold of his divine thoughts is not the less precious nor the less salutary because it is contained in an earthen vessel. Besides which, I am sure that those to whom this apostle is familiar will not allow that his writings are so coarse as the profane pretend. If they have not the graces of earth, they have those of heaven; and although the labour of human art no where appears, an original simplicity and vigorous beauty shines throughout, arising from the majesty of the things themselves, and from the elevation of the thoughts of this divine writer. You know it, Madam, having from the beginning been instructed in this holy reading, and having happily drawn from it, throughout the whole course of your life, the fruits of that edification and consolation which are therein presented to us by the Holy Spirit. This has led me to believe that you will not find this book disagreeable, since St Paul is its author. For I have therein endeavoured, Madam, to explain the two first chapters of the Epistle which he formerly wrote to the Philippians, and which Divine Providence has preserved entire in the treasury of the church for the good of Christians. I acknowledge that so rich a work deserved the labour of a better hand, and that if there has been rashness in undertaking it, there is still more in publishing it. But whatever feeling I may have of my own insufficiency, the approbation and the desire of the faithful, who have already heard these meditations from my mouth in the church where I officiate, have given me courage to bring them to light. I assume then the boldness of addressing them to you, Madam, and of placing your illustrious name at the head of them, and I shall esteem myself happy, if, after having made the trial, you shall judge them capable of affording some edification to good and pious minds. However that may be, I promise myself, Madam, both from your singular piety, and from the kindness with which you have graciously honoured me, that if the present work be unworthy of you, its little value will not prevent your receiving it with a favourable eye, and accepting the respectful affection with which I offer it to you. This favour will oblige me more and more to implore the Creator that he would bless you and preserve you to his glory, and to our consolation, with my lord your husband, in perfect prosperity, and to remain inviolably,

Madam,

Your very humble and very obedient servant,

DAILLÉ.

Paris, 19*th November* 1643.

EXPOSITION
OF THE
EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE
PHILIPPIANS.

CHAPTER 1.
SERMON I.

VERSE 1–6.

Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

AMONG the advantages which God has given to man above animals, there is scarcely one more wonderful, or which more clearly shows the excellence of our nature, than the invention and use of letters. Thus we read that the people of that new world which was discovered in the time of our fathers found nothing more astonishing than this art; not being able to comprehend how a small sheet of paper, marked with a few lines and figures, was capable of revealing to a man the secrets of another, absent many leagues from him; and previously to having learned the meaning, they imagined that there must be some spirit or divine virtue enclosed in the character of the letters, to produce so admirable an effect. What would they have said, had they known that this invention, not only communicates to us the conversations and the thoughts of the absent, but even of the very dead; and, in spite of the distance of times and places, renders those present to us, whom not only many climes, but also many ages, have removed from us by an almost infinite space? that it makes them speak some thousands of years after their death, and even in countries where they had never been during their life? By the blessing of letters they still live, although in the tomb, and converse with many more persons since death has destroyed their tongues than they did during the whole period in which they had the entire use of them. As the holy apostles of the Lord Jesus have carefully made the most of every kind of endowment for spreading the gospel of their Master throughout the world, they have not failed to avail themselves of this also, multiplying by the pen both their preaching and their presence, and sending in their letters, as it were, types

of themselves into those places where some causes had prevented their going in person. It is from hence that we possess the fourteen divine Epistles of the apostle St Paul, written on sundry occasions to the churches, and to the faithful, with whom his absence did not permit him to converse by the living voice. Thus you see that, while he was a prisoner in Rome, he wrote to some of those beloved churches which he had established in Asia and in Greece, watering with his pen that which he had planted with his tongue. Although absent, and in the chains of Nero, still by means of his letters he did not cease to preach, and to exercise his apostleship, in those places where he could not be present. By them he lives and preaches still in the midst of us: they have extended the presence and the intercourse of this holy man throughout all climates and in every age. Among the churches on whom he conferred this favour, that of the Philippians was not the least considerable. Having chosen the Epistle which he wrote to it to be henceforth, if it please the Lord, the subject of these discourses, I feel myself obliged, in the first place, to make you acquainted with the circumstances that occasioned it. Philippi was a city of Macedonia, on the frontiers of Thrace, built by Philip, the father of Alexander the Great. This name rendered it celebrated from the beginning. But since that time it has become much more famous, on account of the two bloody battles which the Romans fought on its plains, in one of which Julius Cæsar, the first emperor of the Romans, conquered Pompey, and in the other, Augustus, the son and successor of Julius, defeated Brutus and Cassius. St Luke tells us, in the 16th chapter of Acts, that St Paul having passed from Asia into Macedonia, by order of a heavenly vision, Philippi was the first town where he sowed the seed of the gospel, with such success 2
that he there gained Lydia with her family, and many others, whom he afterwards confirmed in the faith by his miracles and by his sufferings. For he there publicly closed the mouth of devils; and having been brought before the magistrates and scourged with Silas for the name of Jesus, he enlightened with celestial brightness the darkness of the prison itself in which they were placed. And although the magistrates drove him from the town, still his word, his blood, and his works were so efficacious, that he left there a good company of Christians. Whilst this happy church thus grew at Philippi, St Paul pursued his conquests by founding others elsewhere, at Thessalonica, at Berea, at Athens, at Corinth, and at Ephesus, planting the cross of his Master in all the provinces of Greece. But the devil, envying his success, excited against him the rage of the Jews, who, not being able to put him to death in Jerusalem, accused him before the Roman governors of the country; and after a long captivity in the city of Cesarea, he was finally sent to Rome to be judged by the emperor; there he remained for some years a prisoner. The church of the Philippians, remembering what they owed to their master, visited him in his bonds, despatched Epaphroditus (who appears to have been their pastor) express to Rome, to inquire after him, and to dispense to him some fruits of their charity, rightly judging that, in so sad a situation, he would require assistance both for the necessities and comforts of life. Epaphroditus acquitted himself of his commission, and informed the apostle of the state of the Philippians, and of the assaults directed against their faith by the false teachers among the Jews, who tried to corrupt the

gospel, and to mix Moses with Jesus Christ. He assured him of the constancy of his converts, and of their perseverance in his doctrine, and was detained some time with the apostle by a serious illness with which the Lord visited him. When he recovered, St Paul sent him back to Philippi, and charged him with this Epistle, where, after having commended their piety and their zeal, to strengthen them in this good way, and to fortify them against the temptations of the enemy, he addressed various exhortations and necessary remonstrances to them. In the first place, he declares his cordial affection towards them; he speaks to them of himself, and of his bonds; he conjures them not to lose courage from the extreme dangers in which they saw him; shows them that his imprisonment only promoted the glory of the gospel; and incited them by his example to prepare themselves for similar combats. And because ambition is the mother of discord, which opens the door to false doctrine, and to scandals, he powerfully exhorts them to humility in the 2nd chapter, proposing to them the admirable example of Jesus Christ; and, to console them, he promises very soon to send Timothy to them, hoping shortly himself to follow, and excusing the delay of Epaphroditus, on account of his illness. In the 3rd chapter he attacks the false teachers among the Jews, opposing to the pretended utility of their circumcision the fulness of Jesus Christ, and to their pride and ostentation the advantages of his own birth according to the flesh, of his former conversation in the profession of the law, and the holiness of his present life; warning them that the only object at which we all ought to strive is, that we may have part in the death and in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Finally, in the last chapter, after having briefly, but ardently, exhorted them to a persevering and earnest pursuit after sanctification, he thanks them for their charity, and finishes, as usual, by prayers for their welfare, and by the remembrances of the believers who were at Rome. This, dear brethren, is the occasion and subject of this Epistle. May God, who inspired his apostle to write it, give us grace, to me to explain it, and to you to hear it, honestly, and in a Christian-like spirit, to the glory of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and to our common joy and edification. Amen.

Upon the present occasion, in order that I may give you a distinct understanding of the verses which you have heard, I shall, with the blessing of God, consider three points in them: First, The inscription, or address, of the Epistle, contained in the two first verses. Secondly, The thanksgivings and prayers of St Paul to God for the Philippians, in the three following verses. And finally, The assurance that he felt of their future perseverance; this he sets forth in the last verse of our text.

I. The inscription of the Epistle, the first of these three points, is contained in these words; "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:" to which I shall join the following salutation, usual in the Epistles of this apostle; "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul, the author of this Epistle, is so well known to you, that it is not necessary that I should stop to describe him; besides which, we shall hereafter have occasion on the 3rd chapter to speak of the principal circumstances of his condition, both before and after his conversion. He does not here mention his quality of apostle, which shines

in the titles of the greater number of his other Epistles, and in my opinion for two reasons: first, because his dignity was well known to the Philippians to whom he wrote; secondly, because he associates himself with Timothy in this place, and wrote not only in his own name, but in that of this disciple also, to whom the quality of apostle did not belong. He therefore assumes a title which was common to them both, viz. that of "servants of Jesus Christ." It is true, that in a certain sense this title belongs to all Christians, inasmuch as it signifies generally the subjects of the Lord, who owe him, and yield to him, an absolute subjection. For as he has not only created us, but has moreover redeemed us with his blood, it is clear that we are his subjects by a double right. But I am of opinion that St Paul here uses the word "servants" in another sense, meaning the ministers and officers of Jesus Christ, whom he has established in a certain charge over his flocks, to govern and to feed them, in the same way as Moses, Aaron, Samuel, and many others, are usually called servants of God, in the ancient Scriptures, by reason of the offices which they exercised in Israel. In this sense, the word "servant of Christ" is rather a name of dignity than of subjection, and is employed to recommend and extol the quality of those to whom it is given, rather than for the purpose of abasing them, and reducing them to an equality with others, and only belongs to those who exercise some authority in the church: such were Paul and Timothy; the first, the apostle of the Lord, which is the highest dignity in the church; the latter, evangelist and prophet, which was the second after the apostleship. He addresses his Epistle generally to the whole body of the church at Philippi, and then particularly to those who guided it, who have since been called "the clergy," to distinguish them from the people.

He calls the former "all the saints which are at Philippi;" that is to say, all the faithful. For you know that, in the style of the apostles, the name of saint is given generally to all true Christians, in the first place, because God has separated them from other men by his calling, thus drawing them into communion with his Son; (3) and secondly, because he has purified them by the power of his Spirit from the filth of their sins, giving them love and other Christian virtues, in which true holiness consists: thus you see how entirely contrary to sense, and to the doctrine of the apostles, is the opinion of those who reckon among the true members of the church the wicked and the worldly-minded, who are disguised under a false profession of Christianity. But as St Paul addresses this Epistle to all the faithful at Philippi, expressly distinguishing them from the bishops and deacons, it thus appears clear that his intention is, that all true Christians, whatever may be their condition in the church, should read his divine letters in opposition to the presumption of those who deny them to the people. Believers, enjoy boldly the right which St Paul has given you in his writings. Search and study them carefully. You are not less the people of the Lord than were the Philippians. But learn also in this place how very high is the rank of Christians which is here given you. It belongs alone to the saints. If your conscience convicts you of having no part in so excellent a name, on account of the sinfulness of your life, with which holiness is incompatible, be sure that neither are you Christians; and having day and night at heart this true saying

of the apostle, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Romans 8:9, cleanse yourselves from all the spots of vice, and yield yourselves unto holiness, allowing yourselves to be guided in all your ways by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who is its only author.

As to those who ruled over the church of the Philippians, the apostle calls them "bishops and deacons;" comprising under the word "bishops" all the pastors and teachers who laboured in the word, whether in teaching, exhortation, catechising, or consolation; and under the name of "deacons" those who had the charge of the tables, and of the poor, and administered the consecrated alms, according to the distinction of officers in the church which the apostles had established in the beginning, as we read in the Acts. It is true that at present, and for many ages past, the word "bishop" is taken in a different sense throughout Christendom, for him who presides over one church, and over all its clergy, exercising therein a special authority. But here St Paul evidently takes the word "bishop" otherwise. For he puts many bishops in one church, whereas, according to the usual meaning of the word, it can have but one. And truly it is clear from this and from many other passages, that in the time of the apostles the words bishop and presbyter, that is to say, elder, signified one and the same office, that which we now call the holy ministry; and it does not appear, from any part of the New Testament, that in the first century there was any other dignity in the usual ministry of the church above that. St Jerome long ago made this judicious remark in many parts of his works, concluding that the presbyter and bishop are by right equal, according to the first apostolic institution; and that the difference which there is at present has been since established to preserve order and unity, being consequently but of arbitrary and human, and not of Divine appointment. I acknowledge that in the assembly of the ministers of each church it is needful, to avoid confusion, that there should be one to preside. But this prerogative does not prevent his colleagues or brethren from being equal to him in reality, as it respects the authority of government.

And, in the first place, let us learn here in general how dangerous it is to depart, however little, from the discipline and language of the apostles. For this word "bishop" having been taken differently from what they intended, and having been individually given to the presidents of each college of ministers, has made them imagine that they "were greater than their brethren; and this first error has produced an infinity of others: the metropolitans having by degrees encroached upon the dignity of the bishops, as the bishops had done on that of ministers or presbyters; and the patriarchs having afterwards elevated themselves above the metropolitans; until at last, by many artifices, and much adroitness, the Roman prelate has drawn to himself all that authority which the others had usurped in the church, and even more. May so sad and fatal an event render us wise to keep ourselves constantly and faithfully to the institutions of God, without attending to the discourses of those who so earnestly strive to make us acknowledge a pope in the church of Jesus Christ.

Let us also learn, by this example of the church of the Philippians, what and how marvellous was the efficacy of the apostolic preaching. For when St Paul

wrote this Epistle to the Philippians, it was only about nine or ten years since he had first preached the gospel there. In this little time faith and piety had made such progress, notwithstanding the opposition and contradiction of the pagans and Jews, that there was already a church sufficient to occupy many bishops and deacons.

After this address, the apostle salutes them with his usual benediction, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." He has good reason, in the first place, to desire that they may have "grace," that is to say, the mercy and favour of God, as it is the only source from whence all kinds of blessings flow to us; and then "peace," the precious fruit of grace, signifying by this word, according to the style of the Hebrews, great prosperity and happy success in all things; in a word, felicity, and the abundance of every good thing. And it is from God the Father that he desires both the one and the other: as he is the first author of them, without whose favour happiness itself would become misery; so, on the contrary, his love converts misfortunes themselves into blessings. Thus his grace is the foundation of our happiness; for if he be propitious to us, it is not possible for us to be unhappy; and his peace is the very substance of our happiness. He calls himself "our Father," to show that what he desires for us are truly the favours and grace of God, in which our adoption consists, and which alone render us the children of the Lord. And it is for this reason he adds, "and from the Lord Jesus Christ;" not only that the Lord Jesus is God blessed for ever with the Father, having all things in common with him by his eternal generation, but also because he has been constituted Mediator between the Father and us, in such a way, that we receive no grace from him but through the medium of his Son. For by his death he has opened that supreme source of blessing which was sealed and closed up by his justice, and of which the cross of Christ has removed the seals. He has received from thence all the fulness of the Father's blessings, to the end, that from thence, as from a common reservoir, they should be derived, and distributed to each believer in a suitable measure.

II. After this title and blessing, the apostle thus commences his Epistle: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now." Masters of the art of elocution teach us that the business of the exordium (that is to say, the beginning of our discourse) is to gain the good-will of those to whom we speak. In fact, as hatred, dislike, and indifference close the entrance into men's hearts, it is necessary, when we desire to persuade them, that first of all we should prepare their minds, and fill them with a favourable prepossession in our favour, so that our arguments may be received into their understandings. To this end the apostle labours in this and the following verses to the 12th.

To revive and rekindle the good-will of his Philippian converts towards him, and by this means to render them more attentive and teachable, he tells them of his ardent affection for them; he praises them, and declares the high opinion he entertains of them and of their piety, so much so that, beyond the past and the present, to which he bears the most honourable testimony, he even assures himself

of their constancy for the future, which is the most excellent degree of virtue, and, as it were, its last and supreme perfection. He then testifies to them at once both the satisfaction that he received from their piety, and the love that he felt for them, by the continual thanksgivings and prayers which he offered to God in their behalf, in that they had so quickly and firmly embraced the gospel of his Son. This is the summary of the second part of our text. As to the thanksgivings that he offered for them, he speaks of them in these words, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now." For we ought to join these verses to one another, leaving out the one which is between the two. Instead of, as we have translated the words, "every time that I make mention of you," it is word for word in the original, "in every remembrance or mention of you;" which some interpret, "with an entire and perfect remembrance of you;" as if he would say, having you continually in my memory. And in this way the apostle protests to them the remembrance that he has of them, having them deeply graven on his memory, and having them always before his eyes and in his mind; as we are accustomed to feel towards persons whom we tenderly love, nothing having power to efface their image or their name from our recollections. Though this interpretation may be just and warrantable, yet I do not think it should be adopted to the prejudice of the other, which our Bibles have followed, which is in truth the commonest and the easiest. "I give thanks to God upon every remembrance of you." As if he would say, that he never thought of them, but immediately he presented thanksgivings to the Lord. In which he shows us at once the happiness of the Philippians, his piety towards God, and his love for them. Their happiness; for what and how excellent must have been the condition of these believers, who supplied the apostle with a continual source of satisfaction! who were never recollected by him without obliging him to thank God, placing before his eyes nothing but victory and triumph, causes of rejoicing and thanksgiving! But in that even he manifests his piety, for one of his chief feelings is to praise God, and to thank him for all the gifts that he bestows upon men. A mean and malignant spirit is vexed when God communicates his favours to others, and, instead of offering him thanks, makes him complaints and reproaches. But a truly pious heart never any where sees the favours of its Lord without rejoicing, and blessing him for them. He is very happy that the favours which he has received should become common; and the Scripture particularly mentions the goodness and generosity of Moses, in that he wished that all the Lord's people should prophesy. Believers, let us have this same affection, let us drive from our hearts all envy and malice. Let us rejoice in the favours which God bestows on men. Let us never think of them without thanking him for them. Besides his glory, the love that we owe to each other would oblige us to do so; and that which the apostle bore to the Philippians appears clearly in this duty, which he yielded to God for them. For if he had not ardently loved them, he would not have been so careful thus to thank the Lord for their prosperity every time that he thought of them.

He calls him "his God," as well for the remarkable providence that he continually displayed for him in his Son Jesus Christ, as for the service that the apostle yielded

him in his spirit, and for the lively feeling that he had of both. For though he be the God of all the faithful in common, every one of them in particular who would express the sentiments of his love, and the emotions of his zeal, may rightfully call him his God. As we read that St Thomas, in the rapturous joy which he felt when he positively recognised the Lord Jesus through his rich grace, expressed his own emotion in suddenly crying out, "My Lord, and my God."

But let us look at the subject of these continual thanksgivings which Paul gave to God for the Philippians: "I thank my God (says he) upon every remembrance of you, because of your fellowship in the gospel, which ye have shown from the first day until now." Some unite these last words, "from the first day until now," with the preceding ones, "I thank my God;" meaning that, from the first day that the apostle had preached the gospel to the Philippians, he had always to that moment thanked the Lord for their faith and obedience; and what he is about to say to us leaves us in no doubt that he had done so. But these last words being so distant from the former, and uniting so well with those that are nearest to them, it does not appear to me needful to separate them; for by making them relate to the fellowship which the Philippians had had in the gospel, the sense is easy and flowing, that from the first day that they received the word of God with faith, they had constantly retained it hitherto, without ever having disgraced their first obedience through any of the temptations to which they had been subjected. He praises them then for two things: first, that they had received the gospel; and, secondly, that they had persevered in its holy fellowship until then. "Fellowship in the gospel," is to receive it and to take part in it; it is to embrace with a firm faith the doctrine of the Lord Jesus, to unite in the society of his faithful people, and to enter by this means into the enjoyment of his favour. If you consider the previous and original state of the Philippians, plunged in the darkness of paganism, and living in the fellowship of demons, and in the society of idolaters, you will acknowledge that it was a wonderful miracle for them to be drawn from such a depth of filth, that they might enter into the fellowship of the gospel, receiving with alacrity a doctrine which was new to them, and which besides so violently opposed their natural inclinations, and the sentiments and customs in which they had been educated; that they had not only yielded a favourable hearing to this Divine mystery, but that they were resolved to become its members, renouncing their former belief and devotions, to submit themselves to the laws of the gospel, and to conform to so difficult and strict a discipline. But it was a still greater miracle that they should continue in it, and in nothing relax from their original warmth, persevering constantly in the faith; neither allowing themselves to be seduced by false apostles, nor to be moved by the sensual pleasures of their previous condition, nor to be shaken by the promises of their fellow citizens, who doubtless would not forget on such an occasion to use every effort to lead them back again into error; nor, finally, to be conquered by the sufferings of St Paul, whom they saw excessively persecuted, and as it were reduced to a continual death, for the name of that Jesus which he had taught them. All this touched them not. They courageously retained the gospel which he had given them, and continued in its fellowship till then; a faith the more excellent, as

5

it was so rare. For of those pagans to whom St Paul preached the word of life, how few were there who had listened to it who did not make a mockery of its mysteries, like those profane Athenians of whom St Luke speaks in the Acts! or who did not suspect him of extravagance, like that Festus, who said that his much learning had made him mad! or that the inflexible severity of his Divine philosophy did not discourage, like that Felix, who sent him back much alarmed, saying that he would hear him another time! or that the truth and wisdom of this heavenly doctrine did not provoke, as the Jews, who were mad with spite, and gnashed their teeth at the preaching of Stephen! And of those who approved the gospel, how few were there who had the courage to enrol themselves under its banner, and openly to give their names to Jesus Christ! And finally, of those who had received the word of life, how many were there whom the love of this present world, or the fear of persecution, had driven back into the world! It is therefore with good reason, my brethren, that the apostle here celebrates the faith and perseverance of the Philippians.

But remark, I pray you, that he gives thanks for it to his God; from which we have two things to learn. The first is, that the true subject of our rejoicings and thanksgivings is the fellowship of the gospel. We read that an ancient pagan philosopher was so delighted with having found the truth of a certain proposition in geometry, that out of gratitude for this discovery he sacrificed a hundred bulls to his gods. And yet, notwithstanding, what was this truth which afforded him so much satisfaction, in comparison of that which the great and supreme God has revealed to us in the gospel of his Son, which is not only Divine and heavenly, sublime, and elevated above our understanding, not only beautiful and wonderful to behold, but is also so entirely salutary, that with the highest possible knowledge it brings us life, and immortality, and eternal glory! It is for this blessing, beloved brethren, that we must offer our thanksgivings and the "calves of our lips" to the Lord; and bless him, not for what he has given us of the earth, of gold or of silver, of honour or of credit in the world, of light and intelligence in the mind, of strength or beauty in the body, all vain and perishable things, whatever they may say who, by a deplorable error, have made them the idols of their souls; but that we have part in the gospel, and in the fellowship of Jesus Christ. That is the true happiness of man, and his only jewel; a pearl of inestimable price, which alone is worth a thousand times more than all the others put together. It is for having found it that we ought to prepare, not profane hecatombs, but our spiritual sacrifices, thanking Heaven for it, making earth a sharer in it, and, like the woman in the gospel parable, calling in our neighbours, feasting them with it, and rejoicing in it with them. The other point that the apostle here teaches us is, that God is the author of our faith and piety; that it is he, as he afterwards says, who works in us with efficacy both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure. Otherwise, why did he give him thanks for the fellowship of the Philippians in the gospel? If they owed this advantage to their own free-will, it was to himself that he must give the glory. God is too just to wish that his altar should be adorned with the spoils of another, and that he should receive gratitude for blessings which he has not given. That his apostle gives him thanks for the faith of the Philippians clearly shows that

their faith was a gift of his grace, and a fruit of his Spirit, produced by his seed, quickened and ripened by his rain and light.

But besides this thanksgiving which the apostle presented on behalf of the Philippians for their fellowship in the gospel, which they had preserved till then, he lent them also the assistance of his prayers: "I pray always (says he) for you all, in all my prayers." See, I entreat you, my brethren, how admirable was the love of this apostle! Where is the father that has such an affection for his children? He prays for them, he prays for them all, without forgetting a single one. Whatever difference there might be between them, or however many, this holy man embraces them all in common. He does not pray once or twice alone, but always. Job offered sacrifices for his dear children once a week only; this apostle so loved his own, that at all hours he sacrificed his prayers as victims. His love went still further, it obliged him to have nothing of his own, but to make them partakers in all that belonged to him, "he prayed for them in all his prayers." He offered none in which there was not a part for them. Oh admirable and incomparable love! This apostle was bound at Rome in a painful chain for a cause that was hated, and for which he was to be judged at the tribunal of Nero, the most cruel monster that ever lived; he was in the claws of this lion, and expected every instant to be devoured. Nevertheless, his Philippian converts were so close to his heart, that even in this extremity he divides his prayers with them; he makes none for himself in which he does not remember them. The iron, the fire, death, the end of this life, the nearness of another, the horrors of earth, and the delights of heaven; the fears, the hopes, the passions, the emotions, and the thoughts, which arose within him in this situation; did not make him forget his Philippian friends. He has them at all times before his eyes; and however melancholy might be the situation in which he was placed, the remembrance of these believers rejoiced him; he prayed for them with joy. This image was so agreeable to him, that it never entered into his mind but it brought with it contentment and peace. From this, believers, you see the love which pastors owe their flocks, and with what care they are bound to seek their salvation, not only by the preaching of the word, and the assiduous exercise of the other functions of their office, but also by the help of their prayers. They should never offer any in which their sheep have not a part, and no business, accident, or danger can excuse them from this remembrance. They ought rather, so to speak, to forget themselves, than the souls which the Lord has confided to their charge. But, dear brethren, if we owe you our prayers, you also owe us yours; the holy tie which unites us rendering the necessity of this duty equal on both sides. From whence it appears how earnest we should be in prayer; for if we have no other subject than this mutual help that we owe to one another, it is enough to oblige us not to pass an hour without prayer.

III. But I return to the apostle, who after having declared his love and his cares for the Philippians, founded on the fervent piety which they had hitherto shown, adds, that as he was perfectly satisfied with their conduct for the time past, so was he assured that he should be so in future, which is the highest testimony he could render to their faith, and after which one cannot be astonished at his loving them

so ardently; for besides the marks which they bore of Christ and of his gospel, he saw reflected in them, by an assured hope, the glory of the world to come, and the inseparable union of life, which he should one day have with them in the heavenly kingdom, "Being confident of this very thing, (says he,) that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." You know of what good work he speaks. It is the work or design of salvation, which begins here below by faith, repentance, and sanctification; that is to say, the love of God and of our neighbour, and all the duties dependent thereon. He calls it the "good work," as if he would have said, the good design, or good undertaking, supremely, because all the other designs of human life are nothing compared to the value of this. Either they are crimes, as the plans of avarice, of ambition, and of voluptuousness; or they are vanities, or at any rate things that are useless after this life, as those of study, philosophy, and such like. But as for piety, it is truly the "good work," the chief work of man, the happy and salutary design, useful in this world, glorious in the next, approved of God, and profitable to men. This work, as well as others which are of some importance, is not finished at once. It has many different degrees. And as you see that man is not formed in his infancy, but passes through several stages, which bring him gradually to perfection; one polishes his memory, another sharpens his mind; this strengthens his judgment, and that embellishes his manners: so is it with the work of piety. For this new man, who must be brought to perfection, can only be so by various degrees. He has his infancy before he attains his riper years. As in the schools of painters, they first draw the figures with the pencil, and then add the colouring, giving them at different sittings and with much labour the last gloss of perfection, which in the studies of those which they adorn steals the senses of the beholders; so in the school of God, the faithful are begun, and the work sketched, and then they are polished and finished. Here this work is well begun, but it can only be finished in heaven. For both our knowledge and our love are always mixed with some defect whilst we are on earth, as St Paul teaches us in many places, and particularly in 1 Corinthians 13: 9,12, "For now" (says he) "we see through a glass darkly; we know in part, and we prophesy in part." We are the pencil sketch of the work of God, to which he daily adds some touch; but the last finishing stroke we shall not receive till the great day of the Lord. This is what the apostle here very clearly shows us, in saying that "the good work begun in his Philippians shall be finished in the day of Jesus Christ." Thus he usually describes that happy day which shall finish time and commence eternity, because the Lord Jesus will then appear from the heavens in sovereign glory, to judge all men, giving to each, without respect of persons, a condition suitable to the course of his past life. For it is the style of the prophets to call "the day of the Lord" that time in which he will execute his great judgments, making to appear in a more illustrious manner than usual the justice and the power of his sovereign Majesty, to the confusion of the wicked, and the consolation of the faithful.

Since then the Lord Jesus, constituted Judge and Prince of the world by the Father, will magnificently exercise this office at the last day, all that he has displayed of judgment in this age being nothing in comparison of what he will do then, it is

with good reason that the apostle calls it "*his day*" But here arise two difficulties, which it is necessary to explain: the first, against what the apostle says, that the good work of salvation begun in us here below shall only be completed in this day of the Lord Jesus. For you will say to me, Will it not be finished sooner? will not the happiness of those who have died in the Lord be perfected before then? Some, to avoid this objection, take here "the day of the Lord" to be the time at which he calls each of his servants out of this valley of tears, drawing them from it by death, that their souls may enjoy the repose which he has promised them. But this exposition does not accord with the style of the holy apostles, who always every where understand the last day of this age, when the universal judgment of all flesh will take place, as "the day of the Lord;" and it does not appear to me that there is any passage in the New Testament where these words can be otherwise taken, except in Revelation 1:10, where it appears that St John, by "the day of the Lord," means the first day of the week, which we now call Sunday; and in the same sense in Acts 2:20, where St Peter, in the prophecy which he quotes from Joel, means by "the great and notable day of the Lord" his first advent, followed by the dreadful judgments which he executed against the Jews, and not the second, in which all the people of the universe will be judged. Except these two senses, which cannot be the meaning of this text, I do not remember that "the day of the Lord" signifies any other thing than the last day, in the books of the New Testament. See 1 Corinthians 1:18; 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1;14; Philippians 1:10; 2:26; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; Luke 17:24.

Besides, no necessity obliges us to have recourse to this forced interpretation; the proposed difficulty may be explained, without at all changing the ordinary signification of these words. What shall we say then? Shall we take part in the error of those ancient teachers, even now followed by a great number of Christians in the East, who say that the souls of the faithful, on leaving their bodies, are retained in I know not what imaginary places, without enjoying the sight of the Lord and his glory, where they cannot be received, as they hold, until the last day, and only after being reinvested with their bodies. God forbid. For we know that the condition of our souls shall be like that of our Chief, whose spirit, at its departure from the body, was received into paradise, and carried there with it the soul of the converted thief. "We know," what the apostle teaches us elsewhere, 2 Corinthians 5:1, "that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God," that is to say "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" and, as he teaches us afterwards, that if we are absent from this body, it is to be with Christ. But we will say, that although the souls of the faithful, on leaving this earth, are received into heaven, and there enjoy all the happiness of which they are capable in that state, and especially of the sight and communion of God, and of his Son Jesus, nevertheless, they have not yet attained the last point of their perfection; they are not yet in the enjoyment of all they have desired and hoped; and where desire and hope are, there must still remain something to finish. Their body, their dear half, lies in the dust, and bears the disgrace of sin, being subject to death, which is its wages; their brethren, who form a considerable part of their mystical body, are

still engaged with the enemy, and the confusion of this age yet covers and shades here below the glory of their Christ. The day of the Lord alone will fully satisfy their desires and their hopes. For it will restore to them both their own bodies clothed with immortal glory, and the rest of their brethren complete in union, and will draw aside every veil, and will dissipate every vapour, which now hides or obscures the light of the Divine majesty of their Master, and will bring to sight all the treasures of eternity. From whence it appears that the progress of grace, and the operation of God in this good work, will extend even to this last day, which is precisely what the apostle means; and this is the reason that he and his brethren refer us to this great day, putting it before our eyes, as the highest object of our hopes, and the absolute and entire accomplishment of that perfection which we desire.

The other difficulty which presents itself in this text is, how St Paul could be certain of the perseverance of the Philippians until the last day, seeing that in so changeable a nature, and in the midst of so many snares and precipices, it seems as if no one could be certain even of the morrow. To which the reply is easy, that neither is it on the excellence of his nature, nor on the merit of his virtue, that the apostle founds his own assurance, but upon the goodness and power of God, who does not save his own by halves, and well knows how to perfect his strength in their weakness. Seeing then the commencement of his work, the marks, the engraving, and the seal of his Spirit in these believers, the apostle very reasonably argues that he will finish his work.

In conclusion, we have three things to remark: the first is, That he here attributes all the work of salvation to God, saying expressly that it is he who has begun, and who will finish it in the day of his Son; so that we cannot without impiety give to another than to him the glory of any part of salvation, nor of any of the things belonging to it, from the first moment to the last. It is in vain that one would draw any distinction between the commencement and the progress; God is the sole author both of the one and of the other: and as it is by his grace alone that we have begun, so is it also by it that we continue. The hand which has given us the first features of the royal image is the same that gives us also the rest and the last; and to divide this between God and man, leaving him the glory of the first, and attributing what follows to ourselves, is as absurd as if we were to say, that truly it is the artist who first began or sketched a figure, but that finally it added the rest, and finished itself. If you acknowledge that we deserve nothing in commencing, because the beginning is a work of the grace of God, I do not see by what right you pretend that we merit any thing for what follows, seeing that the apostle declares to us, that the entire perfection, from the first moment to the last, is as truly the work of God as the commencement; "he has begun (says he) the good work in you, and he will finish it in the day of Christ." Secondly, it must be remarked, That St Paul presupposes here that God finishes his work in the day of Christ in all those in whom he has commenced it. Otherwise his reasoning would be absurd, and the assurance of perseverance which he draws from it rash and unfounded; for if God forsakes some of those in whom he has begun this good

work, without finishing them and leading them to the day of his Son, that is to say, into the harbour of immortality, who does not perceive that the argument of the apostle would be useless, who, because he saw the beginnings of the work of God in these Philippians, concludes from it that he would finish it in them, as it evidently appears, and as he himself tells us expressly in the following verse? Thus the discourse of the apostle is good and pertinent, and unhappy is he who imagines that there is any thing incoherent or unreasonable in the writings of this holy servant of God. Assuredly we must then say, that it is not possible that any of the truly faithful should perish, nor that any of those in whom God has commenced his work should not persevere, until the day of the Lord Jesus, according to the promise that he himself makes us in John 10:28–29, that "no man should pluck his sheep out of his hand;" and to that with which the apostle elsewhere consoles the Corinthians, and in them all of us, 1 Corinthians 10:13, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Finally, the third remark that I have to make on this place is, That in the application of this maxim to the Philippians St Paul presupposes, by a charitable judgment, founded on fair and legitimate appearances, not contradicted by any apparent reason, that what he saw in them was verily the work of God, that is to say, a true faith, and a true piety, and not a fiction, or a false semblance, or a vain colouring, like that with which the hypocrite paints himself outwardly. He presupposes, I say, that in them, and only speaks of those who were thus circumstanced. If there were others, it is neither of them, nor for them, that his words are intended.

Thus, my brethren, have we explained the three points which we proposed to ourselves at the commencement of this discourse. Assuredly we may say with truth, and without flattery, that we have reason to offer the same thanksgivings to God for your church, that St Paul here gives for that of the Philippians. She also has received the faith with readiness and joy; she also has had her Lydias, who not only have heard the heavenly word with a heart opened by the hand of God, who not only have lodged the saints and received Jesus Christ beneath their roof, but who have even sealed the truth with their blood. She has also held the fellowship of the gospel, from the first day until now, persevering continually in this holy profession, in spite of temptations of every kind, with so much the more glory, that there is hardly a place in the universe where they could be greater than in the one in which you live. Your fathers here have borne the iron and the fire, and you in the same place have resisted the charms and the seductions of the world, which are not less dangerous trials. False teachers have not corrupted you; their colourings and their illusions have not dazzled you; and wherever have arisen, whether from within or from without, those who would wish to persuade you to be other than evangelical, you have generously despised their sensual counsels. You have hitherto preserved the gospel pure and entire, and have not been induced to mix with it any human tradition. After so many different assaults, and such trying seasons, you are still standing by the grace of the Lord. And I dare add, with the apostle, that he who has begun this good work in you, will perfect it till the day of Jesus Christ.

It is not in vain that he has rescued you from so many troubles, saved you from so many shipwrecks, gathered you together again after so many dispersions, and preserved you miraculously amidst so much confusion. Beloved brethren, as his benefits are conspicuous on you, there being very few flocks in the world on which his protection and his favours have shone more magnificently than on you, may your acknowledgment also be as remarkable among Christians. Let your gratitude appear, not less than his grace. It is not enough, believers, to thank him in words, and to say Amen to the praises and benedictions which we here solemnly render him in our holy assemblies. The thanks that he expects from you, and which you truly owe him, are, that for the grace which he has given you, you should earnestly desire his glory; that you should walk in the light with which he illumines you; that you should follow the guide which he has given you; that you should entertain an ardent love towards your brethren, his servants, as he has had an infinite love for you; that your manners should he conformable to his doctrine; and that your life should not be less evangelical than your faith. If there are blemishes among you, efface them by a deep repentance. If you perceive in yourselves passions burning which are unworthy of this Christ that you adore, and of this gospel that you embrace, extinguish them quickly. Amend, and sanctify yourselves. Purify your hearts from all evil affections, and study all sorts of Christian virtues. By so doing, beloved brethren, you will advance the glory of the Lord, you will establish the consolation of your consciences before him, you will procure the salvation of your neighbours, and you will increase our joy, and the assurance that we take, that He who has begun this good work in you will perfect it in the day of Jesus Christ. May he himself accomplish the hope that we have of it, and hear the prayers that we continually present to him to this effect. And to him, with the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the only true God, blessed for evermore, be all honour, praise, and glory, world without end. Amen.

Preached at Charenton,
20th November 1639.

SERMON II.

Verse 7–11.

Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

It is an objection commonly made to our doctrine of the immutable security of the salvation of believers, that, in admitting the certainty of their perseverance, we render prayer useless, and as unreasonable as if some one were to pray God that the sun might go from east to west, or that rivers might flow towards the sea; requests evidently superfluous, because these things happen necessarily, it not being possible that they should take another course. But the apostle, dear brethren, shows us clearly the unsoundness of this profane reasoning in many other places of his Epistles, as well as particularly in the verses which we have just read, where you perceive that this holy man presents most ardent prayers to the Lord for these same Philippians, of whose perseverance he had a full persuasion. After having said to them in the foregoing verses, "Being assured of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," he does not cease, notwithstanding, to ask of God that their "love may abound yet more and more," and that they "maybe sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;" an evident sign that he did not believe, as our adversaries do, that the use of prayers would be superfluous, where perseverance was certain. It is also evident that our perseverance in faith and in piety does not resemble that of the stars and the elements in the movements and conditions of their being; for they depend on the blind instinct of a secret and inflexible nature, which is entirely incapable of acting otherwise than it does. Whereas the perseverance of believers is a stedfastness and perpetual continuance of faith, and piety, and other like perfections, which our souls neither receive nor preserve, but by the gift and

the light of the grace of God. From whence it follows, that so far from excluding prayers, on the contrary, it requires, and necessarily presupposes them. In fact, you see that those who have the fullest assurance are also the most ardent in prayer. Who was ever more certain of victory than the Lord Jesus, the well-beloved of the Father, the Prince of our salvation? and who was more assiduous than himself in this holy exercise of prayer? This Paul, who, certain of his salvation, defies all the powers of earth, of heaven, and of hell to rob him of his crown, yet for all that does not cease to pray continually to the Lord, from whose grace he waited for it with so much confidence. O let not, beloved brethren, this sweet assurance of your happiness, which the Spirit and the word of your good Master have given you, render you careless of acquitting yourselves of so useful and necessary a duty. And to the end that your prayers may be acceptable to the Lord, form them after the model of these which the apostle addressed to him for the Philippians. He had before told them, in general terms, that he prayed to God unceasingly for them; now he declares what were his prayers, and specifies in particular what he asked of God for them. But first he sets forth in the 7th verse the reason on which he founded the assurance which he felt of their perseverance in the faith; "It is meet for me to think this of you all," (that is to say, that God will perfect in you the good work which he has begun,) "because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace." He then protests to them in the following verse the affection that he bore them; "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." And then in the three following verses of our text he tells them of the prayers which he presented to God for them; "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." Thus, by God's grace, we shall have three points to trace in explaining this text: First, The reason of the assurance which he felt of the perseverance of the Philippians; secondly, The protestation which he makes of his affection towards them; and, finally, What he asks of God for them.

I. With regard to the first point; the part which the believers at Philippi had taken in the bonds of the apostle, persuaded him that they were truly the children of God, and that they would persevere steadily in the way of salvation to the end; and it is necessary to remark, that he entertained so excellent and honourable an opinion of their piety, not only from love or affection, which often by an innocent illusion enhances the perfections of those we love, and makes them appear to us greater than they really are; but he declares that even equity and justice obliged him to have so high an opinion of them: "It is meet that I should think thus of you." From whence it follows, that it is our duty to look on all those as children of God in whom the true marks of piety, that is to say, the works of Christian sanctification, are conspicuous. I acknowledge that it is a silly and ridiculous charity to take for believers, simply because they profess to be so, those in whose lives we see nothing but lewdness and vice, without any trace of true virtue. But, on the other hand, it is

a most uncharitable and unjustifiable error to doubt the regeneration of those who live in a Christian-like manner, and to attribute the correctness of their actions to hypocrisy rather than to piety. The believer, to be prudent, need not be unkind and suspicious. He ought to receive with joy and to reverence those who wear the livery of his Christ, and have the seal of his Spirit, wherever he meets with them; and to embrace as his own all those who bear his image in this world, as persons who will have part in the other, and with whom he will one day possess a blessed immortality. But among these proofs of the Lord, which oblige us to recognise men as his members, that which the apostle had seen in the Philippians is one of the most certain, and the least capable of deception, namely, the fellowship that they had with him in his bonds; which he expresses, as usual, with a striking emphasis and vigour, saying "that he had them in his heart, participators with him of his grace in his bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel." It is true that we ought carefully to remark all the good actions of believers, and to place the proofs that they have given us, whether of their piety or of their love, not in our memory alone, but also in our heart, in the most lively and dearest place of our soul, and there carefully preserve them, as so many most excellent jewels, to their praise, and our edification. But, nevertheless, in my opinion this is not all the apostle here means. His words go further, and signify not only that he has seen, or that he remembers, that the Philippians have partaken of his sufferings, but that he rejoices in his heart at their fellowship in his affliction; and that he considers them, not as witnesses or spectators, but as companions in his bonds, as laden with the same chain with which he was bound in the prison of Rome. These believers were at Philippi, in Macedonia, and had neither been accused, nor arrested, nor banished with the apostle; so that to speak properly and precisely, and to look only at the effects and the things themselves, it is certain that they were not his companions in his bonds. But to consider the circumstance otherwise, in its source, in its causes, and in the disposition of the minds of the Philippians, it is not less evident that they were partakers of the prison of the apostle, since they defended the same cause, placed themselves on his side, and were ready to enter into the same captivity; since they favoured him openly, assisting him, and uniting themselves more than ever with him, supporting his chain to render it lighter to him, and bearing a part of it as much by the compassion and feeling they evinced, as by the charitable offices which they rendered him while in this situation. It is exactly what the apostle means, when he says "that he has them in his heart, partakers of his grace with him in his bonds." 'What does it signify (says he) that I only see Epaphroditus with me in my prison? I have you all in my heart. If my body is removed from your sight, and from your communion, my heart rejoices notwithstanding, and feels, with great consolation, the share that you take in my sufferings, I possess you all in this place, and see you here as bound with my chain, and consecrated by my affliction.' It was not possible, my brethren more magnificently to extol the love of the Philippians. For he gives it in some degree the name, glory, and crown of martyrdom, the last and the highest work of Christian piety. And, in truth, the zeal and affection of these believers were worthy of very

great praise. For it is much not to hide oneself when a Christian is called to account for the sake of the gospel; it is much when those who are in the same place where he is detained have the courage to remain there, without withdrawing themselves from the danger by flight; it is still more when they dare see and strengthen him, paying him the attentions of love on such an occasion. But it is much more than all this, to seek after him at a distance, to traverse the sea to console him, and not only not to fly away from the place of his prison, but to run thither, and to go many hundreds of leagues to declare themselves on his side. This the Philippians had done, when, having been made acquainted with the detention of St Paul at Rome, they despatched Epaphroditus to visit and to minister to him on their behalf. O admirable and truly heroic generosity! How rare in the present day are the examples of such a zeal! It is considered wonderful not to have abjured religion; and not to have abandoned the gospel is the summit of our virtue. But remember, believers, that the precepts of Jesus Christ, and not the examples of men, ought to mould our actions. And if we cannot present ourselves as examples, let us follow these truly happy Philippians, who were so highly esteemed by the holy apostle; let us also follow those primitive Christians who ran from all parts to the tortures and to the prisons of their martyrs, and assisted them with so much activity and liberality, that the pagans themselves were delighted at it, as we learn from church history. Never let us be ashamed of so good a cause, and let us ever consider it a glory to comfort and support all who suffer in so honourable a strife. Let us be as interested, and feel as much for them, as if we were in their place. The example of the Philippians, and the command of the apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews, require this of us: "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body," Hebrews 13:3. This sort of love is the truest and most genuine mark of piety that we can show to God and men. It is from it that St Paul infers the perseverance of these believers to whom he writes. But conceive what a value it must bear in the sight of God and of his servants, since the apostle gives it the titles and praises of martyrdom. If you assist and comfort those who suffer for the gospel of Jesus Christ, you are in their hearts, companions of their bonds, partakers of their troubles, and of their glory. The Lord will look upon you as his witnesses and his confessors, and will hold the works of your love as acceptable, as if you were to shed your own blood for his name. It is a martyrdom without blood, and a confession without suffering, to render such services to the martyrs and confessors of the Lord, whenever the occasion may present itself.

And in order that you may not be ashamed of their affliction, consider what the apostle says of it, and by what names he calls it. "You have been (says he) partakers of my grace in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel." First he calls it "his grace," and then "the defence, or excuse, and confirmation of the gospel." Oh how distant is this language from the thoughts and opinions of the flesh! The world looked upon this prison of the apostle as a disgrace, as one of the greatest disfavours of Heaven, and as one of the hardest blows of its indignation.
10 St Paul, on the contrary, calls it "grace" and looks upon it as a singular favour from

God. In truth, whatever the world may say, it is a great honour for man to suffer for the truth of God, to enter into the lists for him, and to support the majesty of his name at the peril of his life. On what nobler and more glorious account could he employ his blood? And if the children of this world look upon it as an honour to fight for their princes, and bless the wounds and the bruises which they receive in their service, and show them, and boast of them, as the dearest part of their glory, in what rank should we place the afflictions and the disgraces which we endure for the name of Jesus Christ our only Saviour, and our sovereign Lord? Is it not honouring us to choose us for such an occasion? Is it not to testify that he esteems our valour and our fidelity, to mark us out for his champions in so great a cause? But besides the honour, let us not doubt that he will overwhelm those with his Divine rewards, who have lawfully acquitted themselves in so illustrious a duty; and that for the little breath or blood that they may have either hazarded or lost for the love of him, he will crown them with immortal life and glory, according to that true sentence with which in the gospel he consoles his faithful ones in their sufferings: "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven," Matthew 5:10–12.

The apostle, by calling his bonds "the defence and confirmation of the gospel," shows us clearly what an honourable thing it is to suffer for the name of God. For the Lord has never made us a present, either more excellent, or more admirable in itself, or more useful, or more efficacious, whether for his glory, or for the salvation of men, than the gospel of his Son Jesus Christ. Now it is to confirm us in the truth of this Divine doctrine that God permits the faithful to be persecuted by the men of this world. All the wounds that they receive, every drop of blood that they shed, in this warfare, are so many authentic seals which they publicly affix to the gospel of their Master. It is not that this heavenly truth needs the voice or the sufferings of believers to exhibit its Divinity, as if it had not light enough in itself; but that which is not necessary for it is very useful for the infirmity of men, that the blood, and the faith, and the sufferings of the witnesses of God, should arouse them from their natural dulness, and force them to consider with attention what this marvellous rule is for which they do not hesitate to endure all that our nature most fears. In truth, the first and the last ages of Christianity have seen, by experience, that nothing so powerfully establishes the gospel as the sufferings of the martyrs; from whence comes the ancient and true saying, which calls their blood "the seed of the church." Thus let us follow after St Paul, assuring ourselves that what he then suffered at Rome served greatly for the advancement of the truth. His chain justified his preaching, there being no reason why he should have been willing to endure so long an imprisonment, in which he saw himself daily in danger of losing his life, if he had not been Divinely assured of the truth of this holy doctrine. Christian, if you should ever be called to such a trial, be certain that the Lord is willing to take you for the advocate of his cause, and has committed to you the defence of his gospel. God forbid that you should draw back, or that you should

refuse so honourable an employment; rather embrace it with a firm resolution, taking good care neither to betray by your silence nor your prevarication so holy and glorious a cause. Give courageously to God the testimony and defence which he demands from you.

II. But the apostle, after having declared to the Philippians the foundation of the great opinion which he had of their firmness and perseverance in their religion, to gain still more their good-will and attention, protests to them, in the second place, the affection that he bore towards them: "God is my witness, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." You see with what care he assures them of his good-will; not only employing for this purpose the authority of his word, but interposing also the witness of God, who knows the secrets of Our hearts, without our being able to hide any thing from him. In truth, it is of great consequence to those whom God has called to teach, that the people to whom they minister should be persuaded of their love towards them; it being evident that the words and actions of those by whom we think ourselves loved make quite a different impression on our minds, than the language or example of others to whom we believe ourselves indifferent. The name of God, which he here uses as a witness of his affection, shows us, contrary to the vexatious and unreasonable superstition of some, both ancient and modern, that an oath is not absolutely forbidden to Christians, and that it may be lawfully employed, for the assurance of men, for their edification, in a serious, grave, and important cause: such were the occasions in which St Paul uses it, both in this place and in many others. For to call God as a witness to the truth of what we affirm, as St Paul here does, is neither more nor less than a true and lawful oath. And who, when he thoroughly considers it, does not see that to refer this testimony to the Lord is not to abase or offend his name, but to honour it, in attributing to him the glory of an infinite wisdom and power, as well to acknowledge the truth of what we have declared, as to punish our crime in case we should lie. Thus the apostle here calls God as a witness of the affection which he had for the Philippians, as one who saw to the very bottom of the feelings and all the movements of his mind.

He says that he longs for them, to signify that he loves them, according to the style of the Hebrew language, which thus changes the words, as naturally we love that which we long for. But he does not say only that he longs for them, or that he loves them; he makes use of a word which signifies to long with vehemence, with an ardent passion, and, as we have translated it, "to love or to long greatly." I acknowledge that this great apostle, according to his incomparable love, embraced all the churches of his Master with a tender affection, and in general every individual in whom he saw the faith of the gospel shine; notwithstanding which, we must not doubt but that he had feelings of very peculiar affection for these Philippians, who, besides the excellent testimony which they had given of a rare and extraordinary piety, bore abundantly the marks of his own hand, being in some respects his work and production, as it was he who had begotten them in Jesus Christ, and planted the gospel in the midst of them, as St Luke relates at length in the Acts. For it is an emotion natural to all men tenderly to love that

which they have produced, as they see appear, as it were, a part of themselves, that is to say, either their blood or their mind. Hence, as one of the first of the wise men of the world has remarked,[1] the great so much love their creatures, mothers their children, and poets their compositions. As then this church of the Philippians was a fruit of the apostles' ministry, which he had brought forth with many efforts and hard labour, and where he still saw afresh the traces of that word which he had preached, and of that blood which he had shed, to form Jesus Christ in this people, it is no wonder that he should feel this ardent love for them. But in order that they should not imagine there was any thing worldly in his affection, he adds, that he loves them with a cordial affection "in the bowels of Jesus Christ." Elsewhere he had been accustomed to say simply that he loved the faithful in Jesus Christ, to show the source from whence his love flowed, and the end to which it tended; but here he has employed the word "bowels," (for it is word for word with the original,) "I long after you greatly in the bowels of Jesus Christ," to intimate that the love which he bore them was a profound affection, imprinted on the depths of his heart, and like those tender emotions of nature which are felt in the bowels of every good mother towards her dear children. This is the meaning usually attached to the word "bowels" by the Hebrews when they use it in this sense. But the bowels with which the apostle loved the Philippians were those of Jesus Christ, and not of the world or the flesh. This love only proceeded from the Lord Jesus and his cross; it only sought his glory, and was regulated by his will. It was neither their satisfaction, nor his convenience, neither the interest of their flesh, nor of his own, that had either lighted or supported this holy passion in his breast, but the gospel of the Lord alone. Christ only was its cause and its object. And this in truth, dear brethren, should be the rule of all the affections that the faithful feel, whether for their brethren, their neighbours, or generally for all other things, which they ought to love only so much as the interest of the Lord Jesus, the sovereign law of their life, commands or permits. But among all the affections of Christians, there is not one that the name of Jesus Christ ought more absolutely to govern than that of pastors, such as St Paul was, towards flocks similar to the church of the Philippians. Pastors ought only to love or long for their people for Jesus Christ's sake, not for their own profit, or honour, or pleasure. O God! forbid that such shameful designs should soil so holy an affection. And as the laws of this friendship are reciprocal, you ought also, my brethren, to proportion in the same manner the affection that you have for the servants of God who labour amongst you. May nothing please you in them but the Lord Jesus. Love them with a sincere affection, whose whole foundation is in him; because they are his ministers; because they preach him, and form him in your hearts, and plant him in the minds of your children; and not to please your ears, or for any other worldly consideration. 11

III. After the holy protestation of so ardent and so pure a love, the apostle declares to the Philippians, in the three following verses, the prayers which he offered to God for them; and this is the last and the longest part of our text: "And

1 Aristotle in his Morals.

this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that you may try things that differ; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." Dear brethren, you see four principal articles in this prayer of the apostle, which we must briefly examine. For he asks, first, That their "love may abound yet more and more." Secondly, That they may have "knowledge and judgment to try things that differ." Thirdly, That they may be pure, "and without offence, till the day of Christ." And lastly, That they may be "filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

The first good that he desires for them is love; and with good reason, for that is the highest perfection of the Christian; his most necessary ornament in this world, and the chief part of his glory in the next; the end of the gospel, and the soul of Christianity; without which all other virtues are of no use, and cast but a vain brilliance and a useless sound, "like sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal," as the apostle elsewhere teaches, 1 Corinthians 13. But he does not only desire that the Philippians may have love, he desires that it may abound yet more and more in them. For this virtue, as well as the other parts of Christianity, has various degrees; it has its beginnings, its progress, and its perfection. Its perfection may also be understood in two ways; either that which is absolute, and which we shall not have till we reach heaven; or that which may be so considered relatively, with respect to the present state, that is to say, the highest degree to which this virtue can attain in this life. The Philippians had love already, and even in a considerable degree, as it appears by the care they took of St Paul, and the tender feeling with which they entered into his sufferings, the infallible effects of an excellent love. But the apostle, jealous and desirous of the accomplishment of their glory, supplicates the Lord that he would so bless them, that this Divine virtue should not fade from the state in which he saw it in them, as happened to the Ephesian church, which is accused in the Apocalypse (chapter 2:4) of having left her first love; but that it should go on increasing in breadth and length, and spreading further and wider, both in and out of the church, the sweet perfume of its fruits.

The second good which he asks of God for them is "knowledge and judgment." On which you ought to know that it is word for word in the original, "that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and judgment," which may be interpreted in two ways. For first, the word "in" maybe taken for "by;" a manner of speaking drawn from the Hebrew language, and familiar to the apostle, and to the other writers of the New Testament, as may be met with in a thousand places in their books; and used thus, he wishes "that the love of the believers may abound by knowledge." Excellent sense, and a very evident truth! for who does not know that love springs from knowledge, and that we have no more love for those things of whose beauty and merit we are ignorant, than if they had none at all? and that piety especially we do not love but according as we are acquainted with it? From whence it follows that our love will not be perfect in all points, but in heaven alone, where we shall see face to face, and not as in a glass darkly, or through a

veil, as now. Secondly, the word "in" may be taken as "with," for it has sometimes this signification in the sacred books; and it is thus translated in our Bibles, where we read, "that your love may abound yet more and more with knowledge and in all judgment;" and in this sense the apostle simply wishes for the Philippians that their knowledge may be increased, and abound yet more and more, as well as their love. It signifies little which of these two interpretations you follow, as they are both good, as you see, and conformable to the Scripture; while the first seems a little more flowing, and more suitable to the style of the apostle, as well as to the nature of the things of which he is speaking. However this be, both the one and the other mean and presuppose that believers have knowledge and judgment. At the same time it is to be remarked, that the first of these terms,[1] signifies, not in general some knowledge, whatever it may be, but a great and clear knowledge, when we know a thing distinctly and assuredly, not weakly and doubtfully. The other term, which we have translated "judgment," properly signifies sense or feeling. But as the names of the bodily senses and their actions, sight, hearing, taste, and the like, are often employed to express the faculties and spiritual actions of the soul, on account of the relation which subsists between these two kinds of subjects; so to "feel," in general, is often taken for "understanding," and sense and feeling for judgment. It is very true, that in this place it appears the apostle wished to express something more, and by "knowledge" meant the apprehension of spiritual things, when we know and comprehend what is said to us in the Divine word: thus by "feeling," he means the judgment that we make of them, when after having understood them, we discover what is their nature and their value. Besides, when he wishes us "all judgment," that must relate to the firmness and solidity of our knowledge, and not to its extent; that is to say, he intends that we should have, not a judgment in all things, as if none of the sciences were to be wanting in a Christian, but a very entire and decided knowledge of what God has designed to reveal to us in his Scriptures. (12)

But the more clearly to show us what this knowledge is of which he speaks, he adds the act and the subject to which it properly relates, and in which its use precisely consists, and its end; "that you may have knowledge and all judgment, that you may try things that differ."[2] It is the chief work of Christian wisdom to be able to separate the true from the false, the useful from the hurtful, and, in a word, the good from the evil, notwithstanding the false and specious colours under which objects often present themselves to our senses; to reject constantly the evil, however imposing and charming may be the face which it presents to us, and always courageously to retain the good, however sad and frightful may be the mask under which it is disguised. The Jews boasted of having this skill by the light of the law of Moses, which shone upon them. "Thou knowest" (said St Paul to them) "the will of God, and canst try things that differ, being instructed by the law," Romans 2:18. But though their rule might contain the first rudiments of the knowledge necessary for that discernment, it is certain it did not give so

1 Επιγνωσις
2 Frech translation.

clear, so easy, and so complete a rule, as is given us in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And here we have two remarks to make before we proceed further. The first is, That every Christian, whatever may be his station in the church, should have an assured and clear knowledge of the truths necessary to his salvation. For St Paul would not desire for us "knowledge and judgment," if these were not qualities needful for us as true believers. Add to which, that since it is by knowledge that love abounds in us, every one confessing that love is necessary for us, must also grant that knowledge is equally so. We also find the apostle desiring that we should be capable of discerning things that differ, which could not be done without the light of knowledge. From this it appears how false is the idea of a Christian as given in the Romish communion, where they desire that he should have a faith which may rather be defined by ignorance than by knowledge; where they forbid him, if he be of the laity, to read the Scripture; where they only arm him with a faith which they call "implicit," which, without knowing the mysteries of the apostolic doctrine, without examining the ground of things, and without having any capacity to discern what is contrary to Divine truth, defers to the judgment of others, blindly following men, and yielding into captivity his whole reason to their pretended authority. Certainly if such were the character of a true Christian, St Paul ought to have desired ignorance for him as a necessary means of being happy, whereas, on the contrary, he prays God, here for the Philippians, and elsewhere for the Ephesians, (Ephesians 1:17–18,) and almost every where for other believers to whom he writes, that their knowledge and their judgment may abound, that the heavenly word may dwell in them abundantly, that the eyes of their understanding may be enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of their calling, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. The other remark that we have to make is, That the wisdom of the Christian relates to action; for this faculty of discerning things that differ, that is to say, of choosing the good and rejecting the evil, which St Paul here assigns as the end of our knowledge, evidently belongs to the understanding, which is called practical; that is to say, the understanding which judges and fixes what to do, and which side to take in those things which relate to our actions. From whence it follows, that all doctrine which is useless to the edification of the soul, and to sanctification, has nothing in common with Christianity. For God does not feed us with empty science, which serves but to divert our mind, but with solid truth, calculated to console our consciences, and to improve our conduct. From which you see what judgment we must form of that theology of Rome which they call scholastic, which is nothing but a bundle of thorns, and vain subtleties, and frivolous speculations, which no more touch the heart, nor instruct the soul for eternal life, than the demonstrations of Euclid on Geometry, or those of Ptolemy on Astrology.

But I return to the apostle, who after having given credit to the Philippians for an abundant love, and a knowledge capable of trying things that differ, so as to choose that which is excellent, desires for them, in the third place, "that they may be pure and without offence till the day of Christ." This is a necessary consequence of his former prayers; for it is knowledge that produces and preserves this purity

in us, not permitting the admixture of any thing foreign or contrary to the truth of God. For it is that which, as a heavenly beacon, conducts and directs us in our paths, and by the aid of its light prevents us from stumbling. The purity which he requires in us doubtless signifies sincerity, simplicity, and openness in our conduct, the opposite of all fraud and obliquity; but it relates also, I imagine, to faith and doctrine, signifying the integrity and clearness of a faith which alone embraces the word of God, without being mixed or adulterated with any traditions or human inventions. For you will see hereafter that these believers to whom he wrote this Epistle were inclining that way; those false teachers among the Jews, who so sadly troubled the Christian church at its commencement, and particularly corrupted the Galatians, having also beguiled the Philippians, so as to disorder their faith by mixing with it the law and Jewish traditions. The apostle having this in his mind, entreats the Lord particularly that he would fortify them with knowledge, and a judgment capable of trying things that differ, that they might preserve to the end, pure and entire, uncorrupted by the mixture of any strange doctrine, that holy faith which they had received from him. And to the same object must also relate what he adds, "that they may be without offence;" that is to say, that they may happily finish their course, without turning from the right way, and without stumbling. (13) For he who, having received the gospel, afterwards lends an ear to error, is like a man who, having begun a journey or a race, stops, or turns aside, having met something on his road which prevents his going further. St Paul makes use of this very comparison, to explain the fault of the Galatians: "You did run well; who hath hindered you, that you should not obey the truth?" But though the apostle may have had this particularly in mind, yet he certainly comprehends under this word "offence" every stumbling# block which delays, or in any measure troubles, the course of the Christian in the paths of God, of whatsoever nature it be, whether in doctrine or conduct. The Greek word of which he makes use may be understood, either of the offence which is given to others, or that which may be received from them. From whence it arises that some interpreters take it in the first sense, as if St Paul would say that the Philippians might lead respectable lives, full of good examples, and in which none, either those within or those without, should meet with any stumbling-block, but all tending to edification. And it is clear that he thus employs this same word in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 10:32, where he commands them to be such "that they give no offence, either to the Jews, or to the Greeks, or to the church of God." Others understand it of an offence that they suffer (if we may so speak) when they backslide, or when they stumble, permitting themselves to be conquered or overcome by some temptation. "Be without offence that is to say, walk or run in these gospel lists evenly and constantly, without stopping or turning through the opposition or offences that you will meet with on your road. It signifies little which of these two senses you follow, since after all they mean the same thing, and the second is comprehended in the first, no one ever permitting himself to be overcome by some temptation of the enemy without thereby giving occasion of scandal to his neighbours. His phrase, "till the day of Christ," shows us that it is not enough to begin well, if we do not persevere to the

end. How many are there who have made shipwreck at the entrance of the port! How many who fall at the end of their career, having, for want of two or three steps only, lost the prize of all the race! Nevertheless, we must not subtilize on the apostle saying "that we may be without offence till the day of Christ," as if he gave us to understand that there was always some stumbling to fear for believers, even after they have left this life, till the day of judgment. St Paul speaks simply and honestly, and does not mean any thing but that we should persevere to the end without falling, having incessantly before our eyes the great day of the Lord, so that, at whatever hour it may come, it may find us neither lying down, nor cast down by the enemy, but standing, watching, and pressing forward towards the end and prize of our high calling; much in the same manner as our Lord promised his apostles "to be with them always, even to the end of the world," Matthew 28:20; not to signify that they were always to live upon the earth; but simply, that whilst they were upon it, he would always be with them, so constantly, that even should their lives endure as long as the world, never should his presence be wanting, not even to the last moment of their lives.

There remains the fourth and last article of the prayer of the apostle for the Philippians, "that they may be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." It is not enough, believing soul, to give no offence, you must edify; it is not enough to abstain from evil, you must do good. As the perfection of a good tree is to bring forth good fruits, and not simply that it should not bear bad; for according to that, those which bear no fruit at all might pass for good trees. Thus the praise of a Christian is to lead a life which is not only exempt from vicious passions, and the corruptions of sin, but which moreover abounds in all kinds of virtues and good examples, which is covered and enriched by high and holy acts, worthy of the great name of the Lord Jesus, by which we are called. This is why the apostle is not contented with beseeching God that he would preserve the Philippians from offence and shame, he also prays that he would fill them with the fruits of righteousness. For these fruits (as you know) are nothing else than those good and holy works which are commanded by the gospel, the beautiful and exquisite productions of that new and heavenly righteousness which the Lord Jesus has given us; whether by righteousness you understand that sweet and immortal gift of his grace, which remits our sins, and reconciles us with the Father, that is to say, our justification, whose true and legitimate fruit is the love of God, of holiness, and of all the works which proceed from it; whether you take righteousness according to the style of the Scriptures, for benignity and beneficence, some of the most lively and fruitful sources of good works; or finally, whether you understand by "righteousness" the practices of holiness, and of the new life which true faith creates in us, and which is commonly called inherent righteousness, although in truth the word used in this sense is rarely found in the Holy Scriptures. The apostle adds, that "these fruits of righteousness are by Jesus Christ," because he is their source and principle; the strength and virtue by which we produce them coming to us entirely from him. For, in the first place, he has snatched us from the soil of the world, or more properly of hell, where, like the

plants of Sodom and Gomorrah, we bore but empty and useless fruits, and (which is still worse) those which are poisonous and deadly. He has transplanted us from thence into the paradise of God, into his church; where, by the efficacy of his blood, his word, and his Spirit, he hath shed in us thoughts hopes, and affections totally different from those we had formerly, namely, contempt and hatred for the world and sin, admiration and love for heaven and holiness. All the fruits of righteousness which the apostle requires in us spring from that strength, and, as we may say, from that new mind, which we only have by the blessing and communion of Jesus Christ, drawing it from his root, as his new substance, since we have been grafted into him, and changed into his nature, becoming his branches and his boughs.

But as St Paul shows us its cause, he also discovers to us its effect and its end, in the following words: "These fruits (says he) are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God." It is very true that the believer ought to bring forth his works to this end, and to propose to himself the glory of God and his praise, as the object of his actions. And it is also true, that, for want of this, the action, however good and praiseworthy it may be in itself, becomes evil and defective, as not being directed to its true and legitimate end. But notwithstanding this, it is not what the apostle means in this place. It signifies distinctly the end and success of good works, and not the design of those who perform them; and means that if we are filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are in Jesus Christ, God will be praised and glorified thereby; that the thing shall turn to his glory and to his praise, according to what the Lord said to his disciples, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." For however corrupted the nature of man may be, nevertheless he cannot but love and admire (14) the image of virtue and holiness, wherever it appears to shine clearly and with any lustre. Let him do what he will, it dazzles and charms him. When, then, Christians show a life entirely covered with these Divine rays, full of modesty, humility, temperance, love, kindness, and gentleness, without fraud, avarice, or ambition, we are constrained to give God the glory which belongs to him, and to acknowledge him for what he truly is, and praise him as all-good, all-wise, and all-powerful. It was thus that the first Christians converted the world to their Lord, however contrary to its intention. And although sufferings have a great effect in leading men to this point, as we have already said, nevertheless, to produce this effect, they must be accompanied, and as it were crowned, with the fruits of righteousness and holiness, without which they have little or no power to change the heart to piety.

Such, beloved brethren, is the prayer which the apostle presented to God for his Philippians; in which he teaches us that the work of our sanctification and of our perseverance in piety depend upon his grace, and not upon the strength of our own free#will. For if the Lord did not put all these heavenly virtues into the hearts of the faithful, St Paul would not have asked them from him for them. Let us then address ourselves to him, and, following the example of his servant, entreat incessantly, by ardent prayers, that he would condescend to form us to his fear, and to work in us by the hand of his Spirit all those things which he commands

of us in his gospel. But if we wish that he should hear us, let us pray as we ought, watching and working, giving ourselves to the study and practice of his word. Let us there seek first knowledge and understanding of his saving truth, and carefully form and instruct our youth therein; let us give ourselves no rest till we are capable of discerning things that differ, and of guarding ourselves from the illusions of the world, and from the artifices with which Satan paints vice and error. But let not this knowledge remain idle in our minds; let it display the strength of its light in our wills and affections; let it bring them captive under the yoke of Jesus Christ. Let it root out the love of vice and of this perishable world. Let it plant all sorts of Christian virtues; and, above all, let it make us abound more and more in sincere love, both towards men in general, and particularly towards our brethren; a love which pardons those among us who have offended, which helps those who suffer; with our alms, those who are in necessity, and with our visits and consolations, those who are sick; with our instructions, those who have need of them, and all with the good example of a holy and innocent life. Let us not be weary in so glorious and profitable a work. Let us continue it courageously, preserving entire the deposit of the Lord Jesus until his great day, without the seductions of error being capable of altering the simplicity and purity of our faith; without the debaucheries and allurements of vice being able to turn us from it, or to be stumbling-blocks in our road. Instead of the vices and scandals of which the world is full, let us only charge and ornament our life with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, each of us resembling that mystical tree of the psalmist, (Psalm 1:3; 92:15,) which is always green, and always crowned with fruits, even in its old age. Let us remember the curse which dried up the fig-tree on which Jesus found no fruit, and the judgment which he pronounces against every tree which bears none: "It shall be cut down, (said he,) and cast into the fire," Matthew 7:19. May the fear of so horrible an end, and still more the love of our good Saviour, render us careful and fruitful in works of piety and holiness. It is the true method of promoting our own salvation, of softening those who are without, of edifying those who are within, of consoling the church, of converting the world, and (what ought to be dearer to us than the good of our neighbours, or even our own happiness) of procuring praise and glory to the great name of our God, who has created us by his power, and redeemed us by his infinite mercy. May he himself, as he is the sole author of all good, bless and powerfully sanctify us, and give us by his goodness what his holy apostle formerly asked for the Philippians, an abounding love, an efficacious knowledge, a right and incorruptible judgment, a constant purity, a perseverance without offence, and a life full of the fruits of the righteousness of his Son, which are by Jesus Christ, to his glory and our salvation. Amen.

Preached at Charenton,
Sunday, 22*nd January* 1640.

SERMON III.

Verse 12–18.

But I would you should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel, what then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

Dear brethren, among the many things which offend men in the gospel of Jesus Christ, there is not one which more violently annoys them than the cross imposed upon those who embrace its profession. Many, even of those who have heard and received the word with joy, have basely abandoned it as soon as oppression or persecution has arisen. And the generality of these wretched people do not even wait till the evil is come upon themselves. They withdraw from the fellowship of the Lord as soon as they see it threatened with any storm. They listen to its ministers while they teach them in peace. But if the preaching draw persecution upon them, (as it often happens,) from that time they give up hearing them, and all connexion with them, fearful lest intercourse with them should involve them in their disgrace. Though such sufferings are not able to overthrow true believers, nevertheless, at first they may be offended and staggered by them; Satan cunningly managing these opportunities to disgust them with the faith as an odious doctrine, and persecuted by all who are highest in the world. St Paul, fearing that his chain might produce some one of these bad effects in the minds of the Philippians, his dear disciples, anticipates this objection, and represents to them in the text we have read the glorious consequences which God had drawn from his prison; showing them that it ought rather to strengthen than to trouble them, being such by the grace of the Lord, that he and they had more cause to rejoice than to be afflicted for it, and to glory in it rather than be ashamed of it. (15)

Besides which, setting aside this consideration, the love which he bore them, and the mutual affection which they testified towards him, also obliged him to acquaint them with such happy news, so suitable for their consolation. For in the heaviness which the affliction of their good master caused them, what more delightful and agreeable could they hear than the great success of his bonds, than his joy and his triumph in this hard fight, and the strength and courage that his example had given their brethren? It is therefore with good reason, that immediately after the preface to this Epistle, the declaration of his affection, and of the opinion which he entertained of their virtue, he begins with such good news; "Brethren, I would that ye should understand that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." And to show them more particularly how his imprisonment had served to the propagation of Christianity, he adds, "that his bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places, and that many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by his bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear." But as those who had taken occasion from his bonds to preach the Christian doctrine had not all the same intentions nor the same design in this holy work, to the end that the good and the bad preachers should not remain mixed together, he has made a distinction between them in the following verses, giving to each the praise or the blame which they deserved in these words: "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel." After which he declares in the end, that whatever difference there might be between the affections and the courage of the one and the other, notwithstanding the effect and the purpose even to which they applied themselves, it gave him much satisfaction: "What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." These are, as you see, all the parts of the apostle's discourse which you have heard, and, that we may clear up and explain them, we will treat (if God permit) in this sermon these three points distinctly, one after the other: First, That the event of the imprisonment of St Paul was very useful to the furtherance of the gospel, it being understood that this was a circumstance which led many persons to preach the word of God in all the city of Rome. Secondly, We will remark the difference which he points out between these workers; the one preaching from love and with a good will, the others from envy and contention. And, finally, in the third place, The effect which their preaching produced with respect to St Paul, that he received from it consolation and joy.

I. To begin with the first point; the apostle tells the Philippians in general, that the things which had happened to him had led to a great furtherance of the gospel. Now there is no person but must see that, by "the things which had happened to him," he meant the prison to which he had been conducted at Rome, in consequence of the persecution which the Jews had raised against him in Jerusalem. St Luke has given us the whole history of it at length in the book of the Acts, chapter 21, 27–28 This holy man was recognised in the temple by some

Asiatic Jews, who had seen him in their own country, preaching Jesus Christ with admirable efficacy and zeal; the people, excited by their accusations, rose seditiously, and having desperately seized him, would have torn him in pieces, had not the captain of the citadel, informed of this tumult, rescued him from their hands, causing him to be bound and kept in the fortress till he made himself acquainted with his crime. After which, finding that the rage of the Jews was so violent against Paul that he could scarcely remain in safety in the city of Jerusalem, he sent him to Cesarea, where he was consigned to the hands of Felix, a Roman officer, and governor of the country, who, whatever knowledge he might have of his innocence, detained him two years in prison, until he resigned his situation to Festus, who had been sent from Rome to succeed him in the office of governor of Judea. He, being desirous to gratify the Jews, was disposed to send Paul back again to Jerusalem. But the apostle, well knowing the fury and the plots of his nation, appealed to the emperor; and, in consequence of this appeal, was carried to Rome, where he arrived, after having encountered many dangers by sea; and being more humanely treated than the other prisoners, was permitted to dwell in his own house, under the guard of a soldier, with liberty to receive there the attentions of his friends, and the visits of all those who wished either to see or converse with him. Such was the situation of St Paul, at the time of his writing this Epistle. It was this long persecution, coupled with his present captivity, that he means by "the things that had happened to him," assuring us that the whole had rather served to advance the gospel than otherwise. I shall not enlarge on what he did in Judea, where his imprisonment afforded him the opportunity of conversing on his doctrine, first with Felix, and afterwards with Festus, governors of the country, and with king Agrippa, and Bernice his wife, the highest personages in the country, whose consciences this illustrious prisoner pun gently touched; and if he did not altogether convert, he at any rate very much softened their hearts, and drew from them a testimony to his innocence. I shall not say any thing either of the adventures of his voyage, in which he doubtless made a prudent use of every opportunity of being of service, to the glory of his Master, and particularly his miracles in the island of Malta, where his bonds did not prevent his making notable conquests, having gained there the principal man of the country, and almost all the people of the island. I come to that to which he particularly calls our attention, namely, to the success of his imprisonment in Rome itself. And truly St Luke, his faithful companion in all this voyage, expressly declares to us, that, during the two years he remained in his own lodging, he preached the kingdom of God, and taught the things concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, with all boldness of speech, without any hinderance. As he never uselessly displayed the light of his doctrine and miracles, we cannot doubt but that this preaching was productive of much fruit, converting some, confounding others, and stirring up all who were skilful and inquisitive in this great city, by the clearness which all found in his discourses, spreading every where the glory of the gospel. Thus you see the chain of Paul in no degree impeded or retarded this holy doctrine, against the hopes of his enemies, and the expectation of believers, and contrary to the usual and natural appearance of things themselves.

What! do I say that his imprisonment did not retard the gospel? It hastened and furthered its course, as he here declares, and instead of restraining or weakening his preaching, it gave it greater extension and efficacy than it ever had before. In
16 the first place, this chain having led him to Rome, placed him by this means on the greatest and most convenient theatre of the world, where he had the whole universe assembled in one place, and from whence he could, in a single day, speak to all the human race, instruct the idolaters, edify the Greeks, teach the barbarians, convince the Jews, convert the humble, astonish the great, and in short set forth the wonders of his Christ to all people, to all languages, and to all sorts and conditions of men at once. For Rome was then the first city, and the mistress of the habitable globe; the seat of the greatest empire that ever existed; the abode of its sovereign, of the laws, and of its highest tribunals; the resort of all nations; and, in a word, a fine and admirable abridgement of the universe. It was the heart of the world, from whence its manners, opinions, doctrines, and customs circulated into all the provinces, as from a rich and public source. And this was the reason why St Paul had so ardently desired to go there, as he declares in the beginning of his Epistle to the Romans, and even had already planned a journey thither, as we read in the last chapter of the same Epistle; well knowing that there was no place in the world where the gospel could be more usefully preached; and that Ephesus, Corinth, and many other celebrated cities which he had already honoured by his preaching, were of little account in comparison of Rome. Now that which the plans of his mind and the circumstances of his life had not yet enabled him to do, this chain, with which he had been bound in Jerusalem, fully procured him; so that if he had formerly furthered the gospel of his Master, by publishing it in the provinces of Syria, Asia, and Greece, it is evident that he now furthered it still more.

But besides the extension which this imprisonment gave to his preaching, it added to it a new degree of efficacy. For who does not see that the discourse of a man who preaches in bonds is much more noticed, and capable of making an impression on our hearts, than if at ease and liberty he broached the same doctrines? His very misery disposes us to listen to him, and commends to us the sentiments for which he has had the courage to suffer. We must not then be astonished at what the apostle adds, that this very disgrace had been of so much use in furthering the gospel, "that his bonds in Christ are spoken of in all the palace, and in all other places." He calls the prison in which he was at Rome "his bonds in Christ," because he had only been placed in it for the name of our Lord Jesus, for the profession he made of that name, and the zeal he had for his glory, and finally, for the faithful service he yielded him in this sacred ministry of the apostleship, with which he had been honoured. By the "pretoire," he certainly means the palace of the emperor of Rome. And indeed this word is sometimes used by the Latin authors for the place where the pretor held his audience. But the name of pretor was originally given by the Romans to all their first chief magistrates, who had and exercised the principal part of the public authority; hence it arose that in *war*, and in the *camp*, they named the abode of the general of the army pretorium, and in the *city*, the palace of the emperor, after the Cæsars had possessed themselves of the sovereignty of the Roman state. By the "other places,"

here distinguished from the pretorium, the apostle means the rest of the city of Rome, its houses, whether public or private, signifying that his bonds were celebrated both in the palace of the emperor, and in the rest of the town; that they were spoken of every where; there was no part of this great city where the name and the prison of Paul were not known. And in truth, there had arrived at Rome a large company, more than two hundred persons, who having been witnesses during this voyage of the innocence and holiness of his life, and of his miracles; who had been saved from shipwreck according to his prediction, and by his means, and had seen him cure all sorts of diseases in the island of Malta; there is every reason to believe they would not fail to publish what they knew of him to all their acquaintance, more especially the captain who had had charge of him, to those of the household of the emperor; so that in consequence every one would be desirous of seeing this wonderful prisoner, who, on his part, doubtless did not fail to take advantage of so fine an opportunity of preaching to them the gospel. To this must still further be added, that the Jews by whose accusation he had been made prisoner, not appearing at Rome to prosecute the suit which they had brought against him, it was evident that the zeal of his belief was alone the cause of his imprisonment. This would but increase his reputation, every one being astonished that there could exist a man so much in love with any doctrine as to be willing to suffer for it; a circumstance quite extraordinary among the pagans, where the philosophers only recommended the opinions of their sect by their arguments, and by their conversation, and not by the sufferings of their persons. But the manner, and even the nature, of the apostle's doctrine, must assuredly have also acquired the wonder of the Romans, when after all they had discovered that he only preached to them the faith, love, and service of Jesus Christ; so many words, so many miracles, so much suffering, so much goodness and holiness, as they saw shining in this person, were only employed in favour of a man, who had formerly been crucified in Judea, even by the very confession of those who wished to have him worshipped by the world. These, and such-like considerations, rendered the bonds of St Paul celebrated in the palace of the emperor, and in all the city of Rome. And although this word, to take it literally, only signifies that the apostle acquired a great reputation, and that his name, out of this little lodging in which he was a prisoner, was spread throughout the town, and publicly spoken of; all this great people, almost infinite in number, having heard of it; it nevertheless gives us to understand that a great many were converted by his preaching, some among the people, and some in the court, where St Paul afterwards tells us that there were believers, Philippians 4:22. For if there had not been persons in these places who had favoured the cause and the doctrine of the apostle, the glory of his bonds could not have entered there so deeply, or been preserved there so long.

But besides this admirable effect of his imprisonment, he tells us also of another not less strange in the following verse, that is to say, the courage which it gave to many Christians to preach the gospel, and boldly to announce that same doctrine for which they saw him suffer with so much constancy and glory. "Many of the brethren in the Lord," (says he,) "waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear." He calls believers "brethren," according to the

usual style of this first apostolic church, on account of the close communion there was between them, having all sprung from the same Father, and been brought up as one family in the hope of the same inheritance. But he adds, "in the Lord," to show that this relationship was according to the Spirit, and not according to the flesh; founded in grace, and not in nature; and derived from the blood of Jesus Christ, and not from that of Adam. By "the word" he means (as often elsewhere) the gospel of the Lord, the word of life; which is simply called "the word" because (17) of its excellence, above not only all human doctrines, but even the law and regulations of Moses. He says then that many believers had the courage to preach the gospel boldly at Rome, "waxing confident by my bonds." But how could thy bonds, O holy apostle! give such confidence to the Christians? How, instead of opening the mouths of the mute, did they not rather close those of the eloquent? How was it that they did not rather intimidate the preachers than encourage them? This chain, with which thou wert bound for having only spoken for Christ, how, and by what means, could it give courage to others to speak for him? To make it produce such an effect, is it not as if we would gather grapes from thorns, or, according to the enigma of Samson, draw meat from the eater, and sweetness from the strong? Judges 14:14. I acknowledge, dear brethren, that the bonds of the apostle produced not this effect of themselves. To look at them alone, and to consider simply the power and fury of the enemies of the gospel, which appeared in them, they were capable only of disgusting men with so sad a doctrine, and of cooling the warmth and the zeal of those who approved it, by the example and fear of disgrace which it drew upon its followers. But the providence of God changed the nature of these bonds, and made them shine with the marks of his power and of his love towards his own, displaying in them a strength of mind and a light of grace that only served to advance the glory of his name, and the virtue and consolation of his minister; for as to him, he did not cease to evangelize as usual with a blessing so manifest, that his preaching had never been more successful. Believers observing this fine example, together with the goodness and providence of the Lord, and the happiness of his servants, were powerfully encouraged to do their duty. The glory of the apostle awakened them, the visible help of the Lord animated them, his hand assured them, and the proof that they had before their eyes of his truth and fidelity took away those doubts and fears to which we are all so prone. They looked upon the victory of Paul as a pledge of their own, and, full of new fire, went courageously where God called them, that is to say, to preach his word freely. But, believers, it is not enough that the bonds of the apostle should have edified these first Christians of Rome, inspiring them with courage to speak boldly for the gospel. It is not enough that they should console the Pnilippians, to whom he here mentions them, for the purpose of softening the sorrow which they felt for his sufferings, by the consideration of the glory and usefulness which would arise from them, both to his Master and to himself. We, as well as the ancient believers, should draw instruction and consolation for our souls from these meditations, the subject of which is preserved to us in these writings of the holy apostle. Let us honestly observe in them the wonders of the providence of God,

displayed in the government of the church, and in the conduct of those things that belong to it; how, on the one hand, he knows how to confound the malice of his enemies; and, on the other, to preserve his children from dangers, accomplishing his work by the iniquity of the one, and by the infirmity of the others; so making things bend by secret and incomprehensible springs, that they all attain his object, however weak they may appear, or even contrary to it. Thus you see in this text that the rage of the Jews and the injustice of their governors, contrary to the intention of persons, and against the nature of the things themselves, served for the advancement of the gospel of his Son. The first only sought to gratify their hatred, and the second to satisfy their avarice, or their respect for the authority of their master; and they were, both the one and the other, but the ministers of the counsel of God, who conducted his apostle to the place where it was destined that he should set forth the wonders of his preaching with more efficacy than ever. The soldiers who led him thither were, truly speaking, his escort, and his bonds and his prison the most useful instruments of his glory. This theatre was prepared for his punishment, and it became the scene of his triumph. This persecution, which was intended to cover him with shame, overwhelmed him with honour; it was to blacken and wither his name, and it rendered it illustrious in the first city and in the most superb court in the universe. Oh the vanity of the thoughts of the wicked! Oh the admirable wisdom of the providence of God! He causes the Jew to open the apostle's mouth, when he thinks that he is closing it, and makes him spread his voice throughout the world, in desiring to banish him from Judea. He had formerly conducted Joseph to the highest pitch of glory in the same way, through the fury of his unnatural brethren. Persecution, slavery, and imprisonment had also been as it were the ladders to his prosperity. Since then he has always in the same way used them in the conduct of his people, overthrowing the designs of his enemies, and turning the artifices of their malice, and the excess of their fury, directly contrary to their intentions; multiplying his church by the deaths and massacres which seemed likely to destroy it; lighting his gospel by those very means which appeared likely to extinguish it; and drawing the brightest glory of his servants from their deepest disgraces. This has happened in the time of our fathers, and in the old times before them, when the exiles and proscriptions to which truth was shamefully condemned spread instead of stopping it.

We have the same remark to make on what the apostle adds, that his bonds had given courage to the other believers. Satan had loaded him with this chain that it might alarm others, and, behold! quite the contrary, it gives them boldness. This iron encourages them instead of frightening them, and serves but to destroy the reign it was intended to establish. Be, then, no longer astonished, believers, if the Lord treat his children in this manner. Do not accuse his providence of indifference or disorder, on pretence that he exposes his Josephs and his Pauls to the persecution of their brethren, and suffers them either to be bound, or put in prison, or smitten by some other outrage. All these indignities which offend you are the most excellent part of his glory, and of theirs. It is by those means he perfects them. These are the instruments of his work, without which they would neither so

easily nor so quickly accomplish it. And if the Lord permit that we ourselves should fall into trials similar to those of these great men, let us console ourselves by their example; and let us remember that this all-wise, all# good, and sovereign Majesty which has ordered their battles, presides still over ours, that he consecrates his own by affliction, and perfects his strength in their weakness, this method of acting being incomparably more glorious for him and for us than if he led us by easy and plain paths where we met with no difficulty. Let us bless those prisons and those chains which advance the gospel. It is so great a good that we cannot purchase it at too high a price; a good which comprehends altogether the glory of our God, the salvation of our neighbour, and our own happiness. St Paul is one of those who has the most suffered for its furtherance. But still we may say with truth, that there are men to whom the vanities of the world have cost as much as this sovereign felicity (18) cost him; who have run, and who still run daily as many dangers, and endure as many evils, to be for ever miserable, as did this great apostle, to render himself and others eternally happy. Hardly do I dare bring forward among the benefits which ought to incite us to these duties that glory of which the world thinks so much, and with which God crowns no men here below more pre-eminently than his martyrs and confessors, rendering their names and their struggles illustrious even in the palaces of the Neros, and forcing the courts of the most cruel and unjust princes to speak of them, and to acknowledge their innocence and their magnanimity. For this palace where the apostle here tells us that his bonds were celebrated was the palace of Nero, the most infamous of all tyrants, the shame and torment of his age, the horror and execration of all succeeding times. But however abominable this monster might be, and however abandoned his court, the sink of every vice known among pagans, nevertheless, by the blessing of the Lord, the light of his apostle pierced into this abode of iniquity, making itself seen and felt; showing that there is no place in the world so opposed to piety where God does not make the sweet odour of our name to enter if we serve him zealously. It is this, my brethren, that the example of the apostle teaches us.

But, I beseech you, let us also imitate that of these believing Romans, who were encouraged by his bonds. Let us not be of the number of those cowards to whom the trials, either of their pastors or of their neighbours, have caused their hearts lamentably to fail. Their sufferings ought, on the contrary, to animate us, and their dangers to open our mouths. It is a feature of false courage to abandon innocence or truth when it is persecuted. It is of all times that in which a noble mind would least withdraw itself from its association. It would then be the time most openly to declare for it, and the most firmly to defend its cause. And this thought, dear brethren, is necessary for us in these wretched times, when the sad and calamitous state in which truth is found, which is in bonds in many places in Europe, and is no where but half at liberty, forces us to consecrate our mouths to it, and those of our people, courageously to support its cause, boldly preaching its word without fear.

II. But to understand fully the holiness and the excellence of this duty, let us proceed now to the second part of our text, in which the apostle distinguishes the good workmen from the bad. “Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife;

and some also of goodwill: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel." He divides into two different classes those persons who, from his bonds, had taken the opportunity to preach the gospel of the Lord; the one with pure and sincere affection, the other with a wicked mind and an evil design. Of the former he says, in the first place, "that they preach Christ with good will;" that is, with an honest heart, who principally sought in this labour the end to which it naturally tends, that is to say, the glory of the Lord, the edification and salvation of their hearers, and the satisfaction of their own conscience. He adds, in the second place, that they did it also from love; "knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel;" by which he bears witness to their praiseworthy and excellent affection, not only towards those whom they instructed by their words, but also towards himself, seeking by the exercise of this part of their ministry to comfort and not to vex him, to soothe and not to afflict him, conforming their preaching to his satisfaction, and not to their own advantage, as did the others. For acknowledging him as an apostle and principal minister of the gospel sent by God for the establishment of his word in the world, they ascribed their preaching to his order, pretending by that not to lower or diminish his authority, but merely to second it, and to supply in any way the want of his voice in those places in which his bonds prevented its being heard, so that neither the church nor those without should have any thing to find fault with. Upon which we have first to consider the excellence of the office of the holy ministry in the object which the apostle assigns to it, viz. the defence of the gospel. For what other title can we bear, in the house of God more glorious than that of being the defenders of his word, and the advocates of his cause? This honour, my brethren, obliges us to defend it well, to represent with liberty and vigour to men all the rights of the Lord, to preserve them with all our might, without losing one, either by our silence or our negligence. Inasmuch as our voice and our tongue have been consecrated to this service, it would be weakness and extreme ingratitude that they should ever fail in so holy and so honourable a duty. But we must remark, in the second place, that it is the ordinance of God, and not flesh and blood, which calls and appoints men to this holy ministry: "I am set," or ordained, says the apostle; and elsewhere he observes, "that God had separated him from his mother's womb," Galatians 1:15; and that it is he "which afterwards called him by his grace," on account of which he is called "the vessel of his election," that is to say, an instrument chosen of God to exercise the apostleship. The Lord had long before said of Jeremiah, chapter 1:5, "that he had known him before he was formed in the belly, and before he came out of the womb he had sanctified him, and ordained him a prophet." From which it appears that the calling and appointment to this office is a work of the providence of God; that he has predestinated before time those whom he called in time; a consideration which ought to arm, with invincible constancy and courage, those who feel the work of the Lord in them. But besides the office of the holy ministry, St Paul has respect also in this place to the peculiar quality which it then gave him of being the confessor of God, suffering for the name of his Son; it being evident

that the work and the constancy of those who are persecuted for this profession are an apology for the gospel, as the apostle had before taught, when he called his imprisonment the "defence and confirmation of the gospel." Let us then presume that it is neither chance, nor hatred, nor the fury of Satan and of men, but the order and the counsel of God, which leads believers into these trials. May every one of those who shall find himself in such a situation be able to say truly with the apostle, "I am set for the defence of the gospel." Finally, we have yet to learn from the example of these good servants of God, who, seeing St Paul in prison, began to preach the word, that it is one of the principal duties of love to extend the hand to those of our brethren who labour for the Lord's sake. It is not enough to bless them in our hearts, or to help them with our tears or prayers, we must join ourselves to them, lend them, courageously, our hands and our tongues, and where their voice cannot penetrate, boldly cause our own to be heard. For if we betray the cause of Christ on such occasions, what can we expect, but that this great Advocate will also abandon ours before the tribunal of his Father, where we have no other intercessor or mediator than himself.

19 Furthermore, in this assistance which we owe our brethren, we must so conduct ourselves that our diligence shall only turn to their consolation, bringing to it minds free from every evil leaven, and which have nothing in common with the disposition of those wicked doers, censured in this place by St Paul, who preach and proclaim Jesus Christ of envy and contention, and not sincerely, thinking to add affliction to the bonds of this holy man. The crime of these unhappy beings is so strange, so unjust, and so contrary to all appearance of common sense, that it is difficult to imagine how men endowed with reason could have been capable of committing it. They proclaim Jesus Christ with their mouth, and have envy and contention in their heart. They preach Christ, and hate his apostle. Even this is a very strange anomaly; but there is yet more. It is envy that makes them preach, and that at a time and in places where the gospel was persecuted, and where there was a particular spite against those who preached the word. O monstrous and incredible production! How is it possible that so good an effect should have sprung from a cause so vile? If you look at their labour, what can be conceived greater and more praiseworthy than preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ at Rome, under the government of Nero, at the very time that St Paul was suffering for this cause? If you look at their motive, what blacker and more malicious than the envy with which their heart was infected, and this envy against St Paul, the great apostle of the Lord, then suffering for his name? How is it that this poison had the power to make the persons despise the danger into which they brought themselves by preaching? But their design is still stranger than all the rest. For in preaching Jesus Christ they did it to afflict St Paul, thinking, (says he,) by this means, to add affliction to my bonds. What an extravagant and ridiculous thought was this! The preaching of the gospel was the whole joy, triumph, and glory of this holy man, and yet these wretches think that they shall vex him by preaching Jesus Christ. Dear brethren, the whole of this circumstance is so perplexed and entangled, that it is very difficult to unravel it clearly. Some have fancied that the doctrine of these

persons was impure, and mixed with the venom of some heresy; such, for example, as was the preaching of those who confounded the law of Moses with the gospel of Jesus Christ, against which the apostle argues so cuttingly in the Epistles to the Galatians and Colossians; and supposing this to be the case, they say, that their intention was to cause grief to St Paul, by sowing their tares in the field of the Lord, whilst his imprisonment prevented his opposing them, as he would have done, had he been at liberty. But it does not appear that this could have been the case, for undoubtedly St Paul would not have taken pleasure in seeing the gospel corrupted, nor could he rejoice that a deadly tare had been sown among the people of Jesus Christ. Now he says expressly, that he did rejoice that these people preached Jesus Christ, although they did it for a pretence, and not through a real zeal. From whence it follows, that however corrupt these evil workers might be, their doctrine, nevertheless, was pure. We must then take it for granted that their preaching was right and true. It was only their conscience that was evil. The word was good; but the heart, the motive, and the design were bad. And it is precisely to this, and to nothing more, that we must refer what the apostle says, "that they did not preach Jesus Christ sincerely." He means the impurity of the heart, and not that of the doctrine; as if he had said, that while they were preaching the truth of the gospel, they did not practise it with a mind upright and simple, free from deceit, and without hypocrisy. St Paul once discovers enough of their malice, when he accuses them, in the first place, of envy and contention, two of the blackest plagues that can afflict the human heart. And it is not here alone that we learn that the apostle has met with these scourges even among those who professed the name of Jesus Christ, minds which, jealous of the great advantages that God had given this holy man, groaned at it inwardly, and endeavoured by every means in their power to deprive him of the esteem in which he was held by Christians. The two Epistles to the Corinthians, and some others, sufficiently show us that sometimes he was forced to fight for his own glory, and to represent, at length, the fruits of his ministry, and the favours which the Lord had shown him, to preserve the authority of his office against the attacks of the envious. It is a great consolation for those who labour in the house of God, if sometimes there happen to them some one of these secret, but lively and acute, persecutions; if, beside the blows from without, they have still to suffer secretly the stings and bitings of envy within. For since St Paul with such eminent and splendid virtue did not escape giving offence, and having those who envied him, no other minister of the Lord should think it strange that this plague should also persecute him.

But see, I pray you, how far the rage of their passion carried these people. They think, says the apostle, "to add affliction to my bonds." O barbarous and inhuman beings! O cruelty, only fit for hell! They see him persecuted by Jews and pagans after the storms and shipwrecks of the sea, breathing with difficulty on the *earth*, bound with a chain—the prisoner of Nero, expecting each moment the hour of his torment. And yet all this is not capable of softening the fury of their passion. They still envy him, they still wish him evil. And to such sad and painful bonds, which might have been sufficient to content the bitterest hatred, they endeavour to add

affliction. It was this foul and mad design which led them to preach Jesus Christ. And it is in this lies the knot of the difficulty; how and in what way the preaching of the gospel, as they did, could injure the apostle, or add affliction to his bonds, and from what it was that they could conceive such an idea. Dear brethren, if we clearly knew all the circumstances of this fact as did the believers who were then living at Rome, perhaps it would be easy for us to solve this difficulty. Now that we are ignorant of them, we are obliged to have recourse to conjectures; and two present themselves which neither want authors nor reasons. First, It may be, that the enemies of the apostle hoped that their preaching would irritate Nero and his officers against Christianity, and that, offended at this new increase which this doctrine had received at Rome, they would quickly discharge their anger upon him, whom they kept a prisoner, and who was considered as the principal support of this growing religion, that is to say, St Paul, either by putting him to death suddenly, or by condemning him to some more grievous trouble than his present prison. Secondly, It may be that envy had inspired them with another thought, that by labouring in preaching the gospel they should obtain a part of the apostle's glory, and that by making good use of the time of his imprisonment, to establish themselves in the minds of the disciples, they should, by degrees, take away the credit and authority which he possessed; and judging of him by themselves, they imagined that it would be an immense increase to his affliction to see them thus enriched and decorated with his spoils. Such, or such like, were
20 the thoughts of these wretched men. Judge by this what is the nature of vice, and, in the first place, how very horrible is its impudence in daring thus to profane the most sacred things, and to abuse them so vilely for its own ungodly purpose. What is there more sacred than the gospel of Jesus Christ? The wicked man not only has the boldness to take it into his mouth, which of itself is great sacrilege, but he dares further to employ it in the designs of his basest passions, to satisfy his envy and his cruelty, like these vile beings, who made an ill use of Jesus Christ against the best of his servants, and employed his name and his word to ruin his glory. Thus Satan sometimes clothes himself as an angel of light to further the works of darkness. From which you see that it is not enough that our actions be good and praiseworthy, if our intentions are not pure and upright. It is to profane the good to do it with a bad end in view; it is to dishonour it and prostitute it to evil; and so far from those who act thus having a right to hope for the reward that the Divine word promises to good actions, they can, on the contrary, only expect the most rigorous punishment with which hypocrisy, sacrilege, and profanation are threatened in the Scriptures; it being evident that there is no more abominable injustice than that of him who covers the filthiness of vice and impiety with the marks and characteristics of virtue and holiness. See again after that, how the thoughts of vice are not only impudent, but even foolish and vain. These deceivers, judging of St Paul by themselves, believed that their preaching would vex him, they thought by so doing to "add affliction to his bonds." Poor creatures! how little you knew of this high-minded man, to imagine that so small a thing could trouble him!

III. Thus you see the thing turned out exactly contrary to their expectations: they

thought to vex him, and they comforted him; they thought to weary him, and they afforded him contentment: he rejoices in their hatred, and profits by their envy. This is what he declares in the last verse of our text, "What then? (says he,) every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." What business have I, says he, to labour to detect the secret intentions of men, and to sift into the motive of their actions, to vex myself with the malice of their plans? God their Judge sees through all. Whatever their heart may be, whether true or false, nevertheless, my Christ is preached, and his doctrine set forth. If the instruments are bad, the effect they produce is good. I shall not fail to find my account in it, whilst these wretches will not have theirs. Christ preached is always to me a matter of joy, whatever may be the heart of the preacher. He calls it "preaching Christ in truth," when he who proclaims the doctrine of the Lord proceeds in it with a pure and sincere heart, seeking with a good will, and from the bottom of his soul, the glory of Him whom he announces, whilst he testifies of it in his words. To preach it occasionally, or by pretence, signifies quite the contrary, it is seeking something besides Jesus Christ in preaching his word, to make an ill use of his name to cover some dishonest design; which is precisely what these evil workers did whom the apostle has just been reproving. He does not simply say that he rejoices in the success of the preaching, both of the one and the other. He adds further, that he will rejoice in it for the future, to show that they are much mistaken if they think to vex him by it; as, on the contrary, the more they laboured in preaching, the more satisfaction they would afford him thereby.

Thus you see, dear brethren, that God by the secret springs of his mysterious providence so powerfully governs the most corrupt instruments, that he still does his work by them when he employs them. He converted men to the faith by the word of such as had none themselves. He edified a true church by the preaching of one who was a hypocrite. Thus formerly he blessed his own Israel by the mouth of a false prophet. Whilst we detest the abominable profaneness of men who so dreadfully abuse the gospel, let us not cease to rejoice in the good effects which God produces by their hands. Let us hold the thorns of such plants in horror, and gather with thanksgiving the roses which the goodness of God causes to spring from them; and, after the example of the apostle, let us rejoice to see our Christ preached, whatever may be the mind or the hand which presents us his mysteries. But in conclusion, remark here, my brethren, the truth of what the apostle elsewhere teaches us, that all things work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. The efforts of envy and contention against St Paul turn to his satisfaction. His Lord changes poison into medicine for him, and makes him reap consolation and joy from what had been sown for his vexation and ruin. Nothing in jures this holy man. He finds satisfaction every where. He handles the most painful evils, as he did formerly the viper at Malta, without receiving any injury. Every thing profits him, and there is no wind so contrary which does not waft him to his haven. Dearly beloved brethren, let us have his faith; let us evince for Jesus Christ and his glory such a zeal as Paul's. Let us despise, as he did, the world, the flesh, and their vanities. Let us detach our

hearts from so many worldly ties, which bind them to the earth, the lusts of riches, voluptuousness, and honours. May our hearts be pressed with no other chain than that of St Paul; may this bond alone attach us, as it did him, indissolubly to Jesus Christ, who lives in us, and there mortifies whatever is fleshly. Let us be holy as Paul, and we shall be happy like him; as it was to him, so will all turn to our good, prosperity and adversity, the favour and the hatred of men, life and death itself. Whatever may happen to ourselves or others, we shall always be content; and after the consolations of this world, we shall enter into the endless glory of the other, to live and reign there for ever with Paul and the other saints in Jesus Christ, their Saviour and ours: to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one true and only God, eternally blessed, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Preached at Charenton,
Sunday, 26*th February* 1640.

SERMON IV.

Verse 19–21.

For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For Christ is gain to me living and dying.

Dear brethren, examples are of great and efficacious use in forming the manners of men to piety and virtue; for besides that they show us the nature of our duties much more clearly than precepts, presenting them to us in persons and in sensible effects, while precepts only exhibit them to us in idea, 21 they have also this advantage, that whilst precepts only declare to us that they are duties which we ought to perform, examples prove to us also that they can be done; and moreover they spur us on, and induce us to endeavour to do them from that desire of imitating others, which, like a secret but sharp and stinging goad, they leave in our hearts. This is the reason that our God has not felt it enough to give us in the Scriptures his Divine commands, which most perfectly contain all the rules for a holy and happy life; he has added to them the examples of his most excellent servants to direct us, and to serve as so many lights and patterns in that great and noble design; so that being stimulated to obey him on earth, we may hereafter attain to the glory of his heavenly kingdom. Thus he has taken care to trace in the ancient books, as in so many pictures, all the history, actions, and sufferings of the most illustrious personages whom he formerly raised up under the Old Testament, such as an Abraham, an Isaac, a Jacob, a Moses, a Job, a Joshua, a Samuel, and a David, and many others like them; so that the first people having these fine models before their eyes, might form their lives according to their features, forms, and colours: he has acted on the same plan in the writings of the New Testament, where, with the heavenly laws of his Christ, he has also set before us the examples of those great heroes who were the ornaments of the early days of his church, and who dissipated the darkness of error and vice by the light of their doctrine and of their holiness; such were formerly the apostles and their beloved disciples. But there is not one of them whose life is more particularly and exactly described than

that of St Paul. It must also be acknowledged, that it contains the pattern of all our duties, whether towards God or towards men, expressed in their noblest forms, and represented in their highest and most brilliant colours; there is no vice which is not conquered, and no temptation that is not rejected. You see in it the ardour of zeal, the gentleness of humility, the courage and constancy of faith, the joy of hope, the triumphs of the love of Jesus Christ, the kindnesses and tendernesses of charity; a magnanimity without pride, a prudence without cunning, a simplicity without folly; a harmless wisdom, an indefatigable labour, and a bold modesty; a contentment without disdain; a soul which perfectly hated vice, and equally loved men, which, entirely attached to its Christ, breathes but for his glory and his interests, and which, although linked to a poor and vile body, already lives in the heavens with the cherubim and seraphim. These great virtues of the apostle are continually presented to you in this place, my brethren, that you may imitate them. But upon the present occasion we have only to consider his firm and unshaken resolution in afflictions, as he himself represents it to us in the text that you have heard. The Jews hated him with furious passion; the pagans threatened him; he was at Rome in the prison of Nero, as in the claws of a lion. Besides the enemies without, many false Christians, animated with malice and envy, persecuted him within; and their rage was so blind that they even employed against him the preaching of his gospel, to add affliction to his bonds. He complains of this, if you remember, in the preceding verses; but in the midst of so many evils, he nevertheless does not cease to say that he rejoiced in them, and would still continue to rejoice. Now he assigns the cause of this his marvellous disposition. Tell us then, O holy apostle, whence arises the calmness of thy mind, in the midst of such a violent tempest? Is thine heart of iron or of steel? Does thy nature hide under this human form which it outwardly wears some rock, insensible to those accidents which trouble other men? No, says he; it is something very different from insensibility which gives me this constancy. My flesh is not harder than yours; my soul is of the same temper as that of other men, and subject to the same passions. It is to the knowledge and power of the Lord Jesus alone that I owe my tranquillity. It is he who maintains my joy, and will preserve it, even to the end, pure and entire; "for I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." And that you may not take his assurance for vain presumption, he declares to us, in the following verse, the wonderful power of this sovereign Lord, on which it was founded, "For Christ is gain to me living or dying." Thus we have two things on which to treat, in this discourse, by the grace of God: the assurance of the holy apostle, which he represents to us in the two first verses of the text; and the excellence of the power of the Lord Jesus on which it rested, so abundant in grace, that it is gain to those who serve him, either to live or die, as he protests to us in the last verse.

I. As to the first point, he sets forth to us, in the 19th verse, his assurance in respect to the. particular trial under which he then laboured, and in the following

verse the stedfast hope and confidence which he felt of not being ashamed in any thing, of which his assurance against the present danger was a part, or an effect. He commences then by the particular trial, and from thence takes occasion to testify the confidence that he felt generally against all sorts of temptations: "I know that this shall turn to my salvation;"—this, that is to say, the persecution that was carried on against him by those without, and those within, of whom he had spoken in the verse immediately preceding; they do (says he) all they can to ruin me, but I am certain that they never will attain the object of their cruel and sanguinary design; and that, instead of ruining me, all their violent and malicious efforts will serve for my safety. I shall even find my salvation in that which they have contrived for my destruction. Do not imagine that the salvation of which he here speaks is simply his bodily deliverance from the imprisonment in which he was then detained. It is true that he did come out of it, and was preserved for some time longer on the earth, to finish his race. And it is further true, that from this period, when he wrote this Epistle, he had a certain assurance that the thing would happen thus, as he himself declares to us afterwards; so that if it meant nothing else, what he says here of his salvation might be referred to his temporal deliverance from the prison of Nero. But that which he adds in the following verse, "that Christ shall be magnified in him, whether by life, or by death," evidently shows that he here speaks of the salvation of the soul; and, leaving for the present his bodily deliverance in doubt, he means, that whatever may happen, he is nevertheless assured that all the work which the cruelty and malignity of his enemies may give him will succeed, contrary to their expectation, to the benefit and promotion of the salvation begun in him by the Lord Jesus Christ. And that you may not think this confidence which he feels in the happy success of his present trial was the fruit of carnal presumption, arising from some opinion of his own strength, after having said, that all that the adversaries of the church devised against him will turn to his salvation, he adds, (22) "by your prayer, and through the supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus." It is not of myself, neither from the strength of my mind, nor from the light of my understanding, that I expect such great success, but indeed from the Spirit of my Master, who perfects his strength in our weakness; I am sure that he will supply me with all I need for this combat, and that the prayers which you present to him on my behalf will obtain this grace from his goodness. For it is thus that the words of the apostle must be explained, in taking "the supply of the Spirit of Christ" for the true, proper, and only cause of his perseverance in the paths of salvation; and the prayer of the Philippians only for a help and a means, which will serve to procure for him the grace of God, which was necessary for his victory. "By your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Christ that is to say, by the help and assistance of the Spirit of Jesus Christ that your prayers will obtain for me, God hearing, according to his goodness and truth, the prayers that so many believers offer to him for my salvation. See the humility of this holy man! He professes to owe his salvation to his disciples, and imputes the success of his great combats to their prayers. And do not imagine that this is only a civility, or an artful flattery, which he here shrewdly employs to please and oblige the Philippians. He speaks as he thinks, knowing, that

the prayers of the righteous, aye, of the least of them, made in faith, are of great efficacy. And he speaks of them in this manner, that they may be induced to pray so much the more ardently to the Lord for him, seeing how much effect he promised himself from the help of their prayers. In the following verse, he shows us the root from whence sprang the assurance he felt in his heart of the happy success of his own conflict. "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed." The word[1] which we have translated "*earnest expectation*," signifies properly an expectation joined with a great and ardent desire, which keeps all our mind, thoughts, and affections riveted upon the thing expected, as when we continually turn the head and the eyes towards that side from whence we are looking for some beloved friend for whom we wait with impatience. In Romans 8:19, where St Paul says, "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God," he uses the word very elegantly, to express the deep and secret, though ardent and vehement, desire felt by all the universe to see and to possess the glory in which the Son of God will reestablish it at his final coming, and the affection, so to speak, with which it sighs after this same felicity, wearied with the misery and the vanity to which it has been subjected by the sinfulness of man. Here he employs the word in the same sense, to show us that his expectation was not weak and languid, similar to that with which we expect things that are indifferent to us, but ardent, and passionate, and joined with a vehement desire to possess that salvation for which he hopes: such was the expectation of those violent men of whom mention is made in the gospel, who, burning with impatience to see the kingdom of God, sprang forward, as it were, beyond themselves, and going to meet it took it by force, through their desires and the transports of their faith before its arrival, Matthew 11:12. Such was the expectation of our Paul, so ardent, that by it he already in some measure enjoyed the salvation for which he hoped, and looked upon it as a thing not absent and future, but present and already in his hand, so much was he both delighted with it and assured of it. To this expectation he adds the hope which he cherishes, "that in nothing he shall be ashamed." We are ashamed when we cannot attain the end we desire, and when we are deprived of those good things which we had promised ourselves. The end of the apostle was the glory of Jesus Christ, and his salvation, and his life in him. His hope then was that nothing either good or bad might prevent him from attaining this his object, or take from him that felicity which he promised himself; in the same sense in which he elsewhere says that "hope maketh not ashamed," Romans 5:5. He therefore adds, in order that he may explain himself still more clearly, that far from being ashamed in any thing, "Christ, as well now as always, shall with all boldness be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death." Should men and devils (says he) unite all their strength and fury together, I fear not their devices; and am certain that in whatever way this combat may terminate, it will redound to the glory of my Lord, and that this circumstance will tend to heighten the greatness of his name as well as all others have done already.

1 Ἀποκαραδία.

He draws his soul out of this engagement, as a thing that the shafts of the world cannot reach, according to what the Lord has said, that men cannot kill our souls, however capable they may be of injuring our bodies. And as to his body, he does not deny that it is a thing that may happen, that the iniquity and the rage of his adversaries may deprive him of the life that he possessed, God often permitting that his warriors should lose their blood and their lives in such circumstances. But certain he is, that whether it be preserved, or whether it be lost, either the one or the other shall not be done to the prejudice of his Master's interests, who would not fail to derive from either event the glory which is his due. This poor body, (says he,) this earthly tabernacle, this feeble flesh, which is in the power of our enemies, bound with their chains, and exposed to the shafts of their cruelty, will notwithstanding itself bring glory to my Lord; and however man may dispose of it, God shall thereby be magnified. For, my brethren, although the grandeur of Jesus Christ is infinite, and absolutely incapable of increase in itself, yet, nevertheless, the Scripture says that it is magnified when his glory increases among men, and that his servants do or suffer things which make the light of his glorious majesty to appear, and testify how marvellous is his power, his wisdom, or his goodness. The apostle then means, that whatever the *enemy* may do, *he* will always remain, consecrated to the service of Jesus Christ, without any thing ever being able to make him swerve from the fidelity which he had vowed to him. For in this case, it is evident that both his life and his death will equally promote the glory of the Lord. Presupposing that he should remain alive, and be set at liberty, as he was, is it not clear that in this case Christ would be magnified by him? as in truth he was, the glory of his power being manifested in the preservation and deliverance of his servant, saved by his providence from so imminent a danger, and, as it were, torn from the very claws of a lion, or from the prison of a whale, as Jonah had formerly been. And would not Christ still be magnified in his body, in another manner, by the service which his redeemed servant would continue more and more to render to the Lord in the work of the gospel, by the miracles of his hands, and by the preaching of his tongue, and by the purity, correctness, and holiness of his other members? Presupposing, on the contrary, that Paul should die in this combat, (which did not happen this time, but which occurred some years after, when the issue of his second imprisonment was his being beheaded by the order of Nero,) (23) who cannot see that even in this case Christ would be magnified in his body? that happy body preaching in a more lively way than ever the grandeur of that Jesus for whom it suffered so resolutely, and thus triumphantly sealing with his blood all that his tongue had ever said, and all that his hand had ever written, on his Divinity, to the unparalleled edification of the faithful, to the conversion of the pagans and of the Jews, to the conviction of unbelievers, and to the utter astonishment of all.

But it must not be forgotten that he says, that Christ will be magnified in his body "in all boldness." For this word shows us by what means he would magnify the Lord, namely, (whether in recovering his liberty, or in losing his life,) with a full and entire boldness, without hesitation, without stumbling, with a firm and

heroic resolution never to purchase his life, never to escape death, at the price of any baseness against the name of his Master; but to employ either his life or his death willingly for the furtherance of his kingdom, to make mention always of him, at all times and in all places, with Christian freedom, without caring either for the threats or for the promises of the world. Such in truth was the boldness of this holy apostle, as well in life as in death, having never shown a desire for the one, nor a fear of the other, when they were in question as regarded the service of Jesus Christ. Such also has been the boldness of a great many other martyrs, and particularly of the blessed saint Cyprian, who, seeing that the proconsul requested him to think of himself, and to sacrifice to the gods rather than die, answered him courageously, that there was no need of deliberation on so right a thing, freely offering to die rather than to offend his Master. This boldness, my brethren, is what most delights men; it is this which forces them in the most efficacious manner to give to the Lord Jesus the glory of a sovereign power, and to his confessors the praise of a noble courage and of an extraordinary strength of mind. Finally, we must also consider what the apostle says, that Christ will now be magnified in him "as always," in which you see that the past fortifies him for the future; the experience that he had already had of the aid of his God, on all other occasions, giving him a solid hope that the same assistance would be afforded him this time, according to the doctrine which he has left us elsewhere, "that experience worketh hope," Romans 5:4.

Behold, believers, the constancy and resolution of St Paul in the midst of his bonds! But it is not enough to look at and to admire this fine example; we must profit by it, and draw from it the rich instruction which it contains for our consolation and edification. Let us here first learn the lesson that St Paul often gives us, that all things work together for good to believers. The enemies of Paul had conducted him to Rome under the eyes and into the prison of Nero, the greatest enemy of piety and virtue that the world ever saw. They exasperated and irritated his judges against him daily, and did every thing in their power to ruin him. Yet so far were their efforts from succeeding as they thought, that all this, on the contrary, turned to his salvation. How many of such like instances could we now bring before you! Ruin changed into deliverance, affliction into consolation, by the miraculous power of the hand of the Most High. Fear not, then, Christian, whatever may be the rage of men or of the elements against you, your Master has the motion of every creature in his power, and you are of the number of those blessed ones to whom he has sworn that no weapon forged against them shall prosper, that he will make them walk through the waters and through the flames without being injured by them; that all the furnaces of Babylon shall not have power to scorch one of the hairs of their heads, and that instead of burning and death, they should find refreshment, consolation, and life. Then afterwards, you see further, in this example of the apostle, that the salvation of believers is certain, and their perseverance assured: "I shall (he says) in nothing be ashamed, and Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death." This sovereign Shepherd, to whom the eternal Father has given his elect, keeps them faithfully as the apple of his eye. He holds them in his hand, and declares aloud that no force shall ever draw

them thence. I acknowledge he does not promise them that they shall pass their lives in enjoyment, or even free from danger and inconvenience; or that the hatred of men, or the infirmities of nature, shall never cause them to die. On the contrary, he freely declares to them that they shall be as much or more subject than others to such accidents, and that the profession of piety will burden them with his cross. But then he promises them that the gates of hell shall never prevail against them; that their faith shall never fail; that he will preserve his peace and the joy of the Holy Spirit in their hearts in the midst of the most horrible trials; and that, in spite of the waves and the winds conspiring against them, he will conduct them into the haven of his blessed kingdom, being always with them, without ever leaving them, till he has brought them into the heavenly Canaan. Moreover, St Paul here shows us what is the cause of the constancy and perseverance of believers; not their pretended free-will, or the strength either of their understanding, or of their own inclination, (unhappy they who build on so moving a sand, or who expect their firmness from a thing so weak and so changeable,) but from the Holy Ghost, who stays our fickleness, who produces in us the power, efficaciously, to will and to do according to his good pleasure; the Divine Comforter, alone capable of inspiring and of preserving in our minds the light of truth, of forming and of maintaining in our wills the love of liberty, of breathing into our hearts the strength and resolution necessary to support us to the end in so dangerous a combat, in which we have the world and hell opposed to us, and legions of infinitely cunning, violent, and cruel enemies always surrounding and seeking opportunities to ruin us. Believers, who labour in so hazardous a warfare, have recourse to Jesus Christ, and renouncing all other strength, call day and night upon his name; ask of him with faith, with tears, and with sighs his heavenly unction, which may frame your hands for the battles of the Eternal, so that you may be able to stand in the evil day, and may remain victorious, to receive the crown of glory and of immortality which he keeps for us in the heavens.

We have now to learn, in the fourth place, that it is he who is the depositary of the Spirit. The apostle calls him "the Spirit of Jesus Christ," not only because he proceeds from the Son as from the Father, having with him his essence from all eternity by an ineffable and incomprehensible communication, but also because the Lord Jesus has received, at his rising from the tomb, all the treasures of his grace, all his knowledge and virtue, to be for ever the dispenser of them, giving to each one his share in a suitable measure. The apostle explains this to us by the word "supply," which he uses in this place, which signifies that the Lord Jesus supplies us out of that fulness of the 8pirit which he possesses, and whose source is in himself, as much grace as we need to direct and conduct us, by degrees, to perfection. From (24) whence it appears, as the apostle has said to us elsewhere, Romans 8:9, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And perhaps this also is one of the reasons for which he is named "his Spirit," because he is never without him, and that he never communicates to us either his salvation or his life but by the light of his Comforter, in such a way that it is not possible to be of the number of his members without having some portion of this Spirit.

Further, we learn from hence how powerful and admirable are the prayers of the church, and how necessary is their mutual interchange and assistance. For if St Paul, that great apostle, so advanced in the ways of God, did not despise the prayers of the Philippians; what do I say, that he did not despise them? if he prized them even so as to put them among the means of his salvation, and expected from their power a part of his perseverance; what ought we to do, dearly beloved brethren, who are so infinitely below him? Let us then earnestly pray for one another; let not your greatness, whatever it may be, make you despise an aid that Paul so highly esteemed. The greater you are, the more need you have of the prayers of the less. These prayers have often arrested the scourges of God. They have delivered the faithful from prisons, as they formerly did St Peter. They have rendered the conspiracies of Satan against the soldiers of the Lord useless. They have drawn the Spirit of Jesus Christ upon the earth, and established by his power that which was about to fall. But, dear brethren, if we ought to desire this help from the faithful who are here below, that is not saying that we ought to invoke those who are on high with Jesus Christ, as those of Rome conclude from this passage, and others like it. As for believers who are on earth, we see them, and converse with them, and know that they hear us; and besides this, we have in the Scripture both the order and example of requiring the help of their prayers: on the contrary, the dead have no communication with us, and the Holy Spirit teaches us that they no longer "know any thing," (that is to say, of what is done upon the earth,) they do not even know whether or not their sons are noble, their eyes see not the evils which happen to the places where they lived, and there is not found in the whole Scripture any command or example to address our prayers to them. In truth, it is impossible to pray to them, absent from us as they are, without attributing to them some species of divinity; in imagining that they see all that is done in the world, and have even a knowledge of our hearts; a quality which Scripture attributes to God alone, exclusive of all others. Thus it is clear that the requests which are made to them by the Romanists are quite of another nature from those by which we ask from living believers the help of their prayers. For they prostrate themselves before them on their knees; they dedicate' temples, chapels, and oratories to them; they consecrate images to them, to which they make vows, and pray that they will defend them from the enemy, that they will cure the improprieties of their manners, and that they will receive their souls at the hour of death: all of which things are never practised by believers towards any man living on the earth.

But I return to the apostle, who shows us clearly by his language that he was certainly assured of his salvation, contrary to the error of those who place him among the number of their doubters: "I know (says he) that this trial shall turn to my salvation, and I have an earnest expectation, and a hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, and that Jesus Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." How did he know, how did he hope, how did he firmly expect these things, if he were not assured of their accomplishment? And, once more, how had this knowledge produced in him that joy which he said he had in the preceding text, if it had not been clear, and certain, and unmixed with any doubt?

He speaks elsewhere of it in the same manner: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." From whence it appears how misplaced are the objections made against the assurance of salvation which we teach, that this belief chills the affections, and the practice of good works—seeing that none was ever more ardent than St Paul, who was so entirely persuaded of his perseverance. Let us also then, dear brethren, cherish this firm hope in our hearts, the source of our joy, and the treasure of our consolations. I acknowledge that St Paul was greater than ye are. But he derived this assurance from the goodness of Jesus Christ and the grace of his Spirit, which is common to us with him, and with all believers, and not from his greatness and his personal advantages; and as he here says that he firmly expects the happy effects of his salvation, so he elsewhere very nobly declares, speaking of all true believers, "that he is assured that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Romans 8:38–39. He had already observed, in the same chapter, that the Spirit of the Lord, which forms and conducts our perseverance, bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, his heirs, and co-heirs with Jesus Christ. Now if we are armed with this confidence, who in the world can be happier than we shall be? Neither the sorrows of life, nor the horrors of death, will occasion us any fear. We shall look upon the good things of the world without envy, and upon its ills without alarm, being assured that neither the privation of the one, nor the suffering of the other, can prevent our being eternally happy. But, O faithful soul, learn from this representation of the apostle that the ruling passion of your heart and your only aim ought to be to magnify the Lord Jesus. May every thing else be indifferent to you, provided that you succeed in this glorious design. Consider your sufferings well employed, and your disgraces happy, if they lead to that. Possess nothing, either in yourself, or out of yourself, which is not consecrated to this. Say not, as some hypocrites and worldly people do, I am contented in my heart and in my mind to glorify Jesus Christ, although the outward appearance of my life may be contrary to his will. This language is undoubtedly false, it being quite impossible to magnify the Lord in the mind whilst he is dishonoured in the body. These two parts of our being are too closely united for us to be able to serve two masters at one time. But though this pretended separation were possible, (which it is not,) still it would be unjust and pernicious. Unjust, because it would deprive our body of its highest and most precious glory, it being evident that this poor flesh cannot be more honoured than in being employed to magnify its Creator and Redeemer, nor more debased and dishonoured than in offending him. But this division would also be pernicious; for it would bring upon us death and the curse, since the Saviour only acknowledges for his own those who believe on him in their hearts, and confess him with their mouths, and who glorify him (as the apostle (25)

elsewhere says, 1 Corinthians 6) with the body and the spirit, which both belong to him. Henceforth then, dear brethren, let us carefully imitate the apostle. May the Lord Jesus be magnified in your bodies both in life and death. During life, clothe them with the ornaments of the Lord, with chastity, purity, honesty, modesty, and humility. May your tongue ever speak his praises, may your eyes ever contemplate his wonders, and your ears ever listen to his teaching; may your feet ever run in his paths, your hands labour in his works; may your persons only be found in those places and in those companies where that great name that is named upon us is not ill spoken of. And when the hour of death shall come, may Christ also then be magnified in your body by a holy and Christian patience, by a gentle and humble submission to his providence, by a constant confession of his truth and of your hope, till your very last sigh, whether he calls you to suffer for his gospel's sake, or takes you out of life by some other means. For do not imagine, I beseech you, that it is only in the prisons, the fetters, or the fires of the martyrs, that the Lord is magnified. The beds, and the last hours of other believers, serve also to his glory, when they show to those around them a faith, a humility, a hope, and a consolation worthy of the profession which they make. Finally, this example of the apostle teaches us further, that assurance and boldness are the true means of glorifying the Lord. Besides which, those effeminate and cowardly beings, who waver in a shameful irresolution, debate on all the changes of the earth and air, and know not to what master to yield themselves. These are the lukewarm, whom the Lord threatens to eject from his mouth, Revelation 3:6; 21:8; the fearful, whose part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. These are those unhappy beings who dishonour Christ in the highest degree, and who most cruelly abuse his name. Christian, if you truly desire to magnify him, invest yourself with the heart and the strength of mind of the apostle. Confess him boldly, and publish his glory in all liberty, always ready to lose every thing, and to suffer every thing, rather than betray him.

II. But, that we may have more affection and courage to imitate this excellent example of the apostle, let us now, in the second place, consider the reason which he gives us for the assurance he felt of never being ashamed, either in life or in death: "For Christ is gain to me living or dying." The words of the apostle, as they are couched in the original, signify simply, word for word, "that Christ to him is life, and that to die is gain," and all ancient interpreters, and the greater part of the modern, have thus taken them, in a sense suitable enough, to say that Jesus Christ is his true life, and that it is only in him and for him that he lives, according to what he says in his Epistle to the Galatians, chapter 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And as to death, so far from fearing it, or esteeming it bad and hurtful, he considers it, on the contrary, a gain, an advantageous thing, as, instead of a vile and perishable life, it will give him the true life, which is glorious and immortal. But this text being also capable of another interpretation, namely, that Christ is gain to the apostle "to live and to die," our Bibles have preferred this exposition to the

other, because the sense which it gives is excellent in itself, and has a more just and entire agreement with the preceding text. He said that Christ will be magnified in his body, whether by life or death; he now alleges the reason, because Christ is gain to me in both, that is to say, in life and in death. Christ is a fruit, a profit, and an advantage, which I draw both from my life and death, in such a way, that being always a gainer, it matters little to me which God sends me, whether life or death. Finding in both the wages and the acquisition to which I look, that is to say, Jesus Christ my Saviour's glory, and the power of his grace, neither the one nor the other can frustrate the fruit of my designs and my desires. From which evidently follows the conclusion which he proposes to draw, that is to say, that he shall never be ashamed in any thing. For as his present trial cannot terminate otherwise than either by life or by death, and as he found his advantage in both these events, you see clearly that it was not possible that this trial should issue in his shame, nor otherwise than to his consolation and salvation. As to the rest, this language is figurative, and derived from the similitude of operations in trade and commerce, where the profit which results, whether from the toil or industry which has been employed in such occupations, or from the money which has been hazarded, is properly called gain; from whence the apostle takes this word to express fruit, profit, and advantage, and says in like manner "to gain," signifying to acquire and obtain a useful and fruitful thing; as afterwards, in the third chapter, when speaking of the worldly advantages which he had formerly had in Judaism, he says, that "that which was gain to him," that is to say, which was advantageous to him, he had counted loss for the love of Christ, and had given it up voluntarily, and esteems it no more than dung, "that I may win Christ." This figure is so much the more elegant, as our Saviour had already employed commerce for an image of the conversion of man to the gospel, and of the excellent advantages which accrued to him from it: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it," Matthew 13:45–46. St Paul is just this merchant, and the Lord Jesus is the pearl. He has sold all to get it, and in it alone he finds a thousand times more happiness, contentment, and profit, than every thing else could have given him. This jewel is his great gain. It is his honour, his pleasure, and his riches; and what other men seek in many different subjects, he has met with entirely in this pearl alone. It is for it that he loves life, that he may tell its worth to other men, and publish its glory to the world; it is that which prevents his fearing death, being assured that if death should take from him the light of the sun, and the use of his senses, and the other portions of that life which we lead here below, it never could deprive him of the possession of that Divine pearl, infinitely more sweet and more precious than either the light of the day, or the enjoyment of the rarest and most beautiful things in this world. It is a happiness which supported him in life, and which did not forsake him in death. But besides the fruit which he derived from it himself, for his own good and contentment, he made this admirable jewel profitable for others, communicating to them both the knowledge of it and its possession. For there is this difference between the evangelical pearl, and those of

the world, that to gain in the traffic of these you cannot in parting with them yield them to those to whom you sell them, without depriving yourself of them. But the Lord Jesus will not cease to dwell with you, whilst you communicate him to your
26 neighhours. It is an indivisible and inalienable pearl, which, like the sun, gives itself wholly to all believers, and remains entire in each of them. This multiplication of the knowledge and enjoyment, of the Lord, when it is shared with others, and his glory is expanded and increased by these means, is also one of the principal gains made in this negociation of the gospel. Hence the apostle elsewhere uses the phrase, "to gain men," signifying to convert them, and lead them to the faith of Jesus Christ. If it be a gain as it respects Jesus Christ, who by this means acquires new servants, and with respect to the believer, who enters into the possession of the kingdom of God; so also is it a gain as it regards him who converts them to the Lord, since by so doing he acquires a brother; besides which, he will not fail to receive from his Master for it the praise and the reward which he promises to those who faithfully employ his talents. St Paul derived all these advantages from his Christ, both in life and death. He found them for himself, as Christ was his righteousness, his sanctification, and his consolation in life; his happiness, his joy, and his end in death. He found them for others, as life and death gave him the means, the one of preaching, the other of sealing the gospel, to the glory of his Master, and to the edification and conversion of men. This is what he means when he says that Christ is gain to him living and dying. O holy and blessed soul, who bearest in thine own heart Christ, the inexhaustible source of blessedness! Why are we not like thee? Why have we not in our hearts these Divine fruits of life and of joy; this heavenly manna, which supports and preserves us always happy and contented amidst the accidents and troubles of earth? Beloved brethren, it is our own fault if we are not as happy as the apostle, if Christ is not gain to us as well as to him, both living and dying. This Christ, the sole author of his happiness, the cause and matter of all his gain, presents himself to us every day. This Divine pearl is not hidden on the coasts of Oriental seas, nor shut up in shells from whence it cannot be extracted but with difficulty, to see and possess its beauties. It shows itself to us; it seeks us, and spreads before our eyes all the wonders and perfections of its nature. If we have it not, like the apostle, the fault is ours, and not his. Poor worldlings, so greedy of gain, that ye seek it in the most thorny affairs, among the most dangerous elements and countries, who give your lives to the sea and to the winds, and to the faith of men, worse and more treacherous still than either the sea or the winds, who do and suffer all things, even the most dishonest, for I know not what uncertain profits; how is it that ye despise a gain so great and so certain? In the first place, ye are not sure whether these labours which ye give yourselves and others will succeed. Of those who sail on this sea under such hopes more than half are lost, and we see every day new shipwrecks. Instead of which, if you seek Jesus Christ, you are assured of finding him; it is a trade which never fails of success. He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matthew 11:28. He receives all men; he rejects none; and there is no wind, no storm, no peril, either on the land or on the sea, which can prevent your coming to

him. He is present every where and at all times. He comes himself, and presents himself before us, and solicits us to seek him; he says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him," Revelation 3:20. Now it is a very uncertain thing that you should meet in the world the treasures or the goods that you seek there, but it is a very certain thing that you will never derive from aught you may find there any true gain, or any profit worthy of being so called. Far from gaining, when you have calculated all, and compared your returns with your expenditure, you will repent of your folly, in having lost so much time and trouble to acquire so little, and acknowledge that these commodities, which have cost you so much, are very far from being worth the price at which they are valued. Instead of which, in Jesus Christ you will assuredly find an inestimable gain, which you will no sooner have tasted than you will be delighted with, and confess that he alone is worth more than the whole universe together. For suppose that you had all the gold of Peru, and all the pearls of the East, with the chiefest honours of the state, and the highest glory that any of the great captains and lords of our age have obtained; after all, would you be either the better or the more happy? Would your mind be more content, or your body more healthy? Would this imaginary blessedness remove the trouble of your conscience? Would it soften the vexations, the fears, the avarice, the envy, and the other passions of your soul? Would it heal your diseases? Would it cure you of the gout, or a fever, or of intense pain? Do you not see, on the contrary, that there are no persons in the world who have more care and less repose than these pretended happy people? that distrust, remorse, regrets for the past, fears for the future, envy, uneasiness, and a thousand such-like passions, the scourges of humanity, usually nestle in their hearts, and preserve themselves there night and day, without giving them any respite. Their bodies also are much more subject to diseases than those of others; their toil and their continual luxury bringing upon them many others than those to which our common nature is liable. Great and tragical misfortunes oftener fall on their houses, as the thunder-bolt on the summits of the more elevated mountains, or upon the tower or pinnacles of some lofty temple. But the Lord Jesus, if you receive him truly and faithfully into your heart, will bring you all sorts of gaitis and advantages. He will drive away the alarms of conscience, and the fear of the wrath of God, which are amongst our greatest miseries. Washing you in his blood, and investing you with his righteousness, he will give you boldness to approach the throne of grace. He will cause the face of his Father to shine upon you in joy and in salvation; and whereas other men never look upon him, but they behold him inflamed with a terrible and devouring fire, which in an instant scorches up whatever joy there may be in their miserable souls, you will there see continually a mild and genial light, which will shed more contentment in your heart than the children of this world possess in the time of their greatest prosperity. This Jesus will deliver you from the delusions of error, and will show you the true and simple nature of things, and will fill your understanding with a pure and salutary wisdom. He will free you from the slavery of sin, the cause of our misery, and will place a gentle peace in your hearts, by

chasing from them, by the power of his word and of his Spirit, that infinite brood of vain lusts, which, like a swarm of tyrants, tear you continually, and hold your poor soul in a state of lamentable uneasiness. And with respect to those diseases and accidents which afflict human nature, if he should permit them to happen to you, he will never fail with the trial to give you strength to support it, perfecting his power in your weakness, and softening in such a way your afflictions by the unspeakable consolations of his Spirit, that the endurance of them will not prevent
(27) your rejoicing in him; witness this Paul, who, with his chain, and in the midst of all the persecutions which befell him, did not fail, by the assistance of his Lord, to have a thousand times more contentment in the secret of his heart, than the Neros, the Senecas, the princes and the philosophers of the world, with all the vainglory of their prosperity.

But if even the things of the world did bring some true and solid advantage to men, still it is evident that this would be but for a very short period, that is to say, for a few miserable years, however much might be extended the short and perishable life that we lead on the earth. Death troubles and ends all their enjoyment, whatever it might be, with so much the more grief and bitterness in proportion to the ease and contentment that they have found here below. There is neither grandeur, honour, nor glory which can protect them from this sad blow. If these things are gain to them in life, still it is very certain that they are not so in death. On the contrary, there are none to whom this passage appears more frightful, nor who have so much difficulty in meeting it, as those who have the most possessed them. But this same Christ who is gain to us in life is also gain to us in death. He takes from us its terror, and, filling our hearts with a holy hope, he consoles us till our last sigh. We then quit all our other possessions. We strip ourselves even of this body with its senses, which made a part of our being. But for all that we do not lose Jesus Christ. This good and merciful Saviour, who has governed and consoled us during life, accompanies us in death. He walks with us in that dark and frightful valley, and, in dissipating its obscurity by his light, conducts us with his crook; and, on going out of this miserable world, elevates us into heaven, where he receives our souls into his rest, delivering them from all the evils that we suffer or fear here below, and putting them into the enjoyment of all the blessings we desire or hope for. Thus, behold, dear brethren, how Jesus Christ is gain to us living and dying, and how, out of him, strictly speaking, there is nothing that is not loss to us both in life and in death. For there is no middle path; we must gain all and have all with him, or we must lose all out of him. Let us then give up all other blessings, and, acknowledging the vanity of riches, honours, and pleasures, the great idols of this world, let us embrace the Lord Jesus. Let us lodge him in our heart: may this be our part and our inheritance. Let us, individually, prepare to receive him on Sunday next, with the fruits of his death and resurrection which he presents to us on his holy table. Let us wash our souls from all filth and impurity; and let us clothe them with an ardent faith, a lively repentance, and a true charity; that he may willingly enter into us, that he may delight himself there, and remain there for ever for our gain, both in life and in death, in this world and in that which

is to come. To him, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, one true God, blessed for evermore, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Preached at Charenton,
Palm Sunday, 1*st April*, 1640

SERMON V.

Verse 22–26.

But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

The fear of death is one of those passions which is most troublesome to the minds of men; so that the apostle says, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is by it that they are subjected to the service of Satan. This wretched apprehension makes them do and suffer an infinity of things contrary both to the excellence of their nature, and to the dictates of their conscience; and keeps their minds in a continual state of disquietude. But if death appears to them hideous, their life is not so agreeable but that they oftentimes hate it as much as death itself; witness the number of persons who, in their fury, have violently deprived themselves of it, finding it so insupportable, that they have been unable to wait with patience until nature should come and deliver them from their miseries. These passions which are so different, the one against death, the other against life, proceed both from the same source, from that ignorance into which sin has plunged us, shrouding us as in a thick night, in the darkness of which every thing that we meet causes alarm, because we know not what it is. But Jesus Christ, the Sun of righteousness, has discovered to our senses, in the holy light of the gospel which he has spread abroad in the world, the true nature of these things, that life is not so unhappy that we ought to fly from it, nor death so terrible that we should fear it. They have each their use; and the believer who knows what Jesus Christ has taught us, so feels and apprehends what there is in them of evil, that he also desires and possesses what they have of good, and gathers from among these sad and piercing thorns with which they are, as it were, bristled, those flowers and fruits which the cross of his Lord forces them to bear in spite of themselves. Possessed of the faith and hopes of his Divine Master, he is neither ashamed to live, nor fears to die; as St Ambrose, one of the most famous teachers of the church, said in the last moments

of his life. The apostle presents us to-day, my brethren, in the text which you have just heard, a fine example of this holy and happy condition of the Christian soul, which neither hates life nor death, which finds its advantage in both, and knows how to enjoy each. For having said before (as you may remember) that Christ was gain to him living and dying, he now declares to us the thought and feeling of his mind in regard to these two things; protesting, that if he were to choose, it would be difficult for him to decide which he should take, finding himself, in a manner, suspended and balanced between two different desires, that of his own good, and the welfare of the church; for if death was an advantage to him by elevating him to heaven, his life was useful to the church by the great edification that men received from his ministry. "But if I live in the flesh, (says he,) this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." But what he could not himself restore by his own judgment, he adds, that God had decided in the favour and to the advantage of the Philippians and of other believers, having ordained that he should still remain on earth to complete the work of his apostleship. "And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again." This is the subject to which we wish to call your attention, my brethren, in this discourse; and, that we may proceed in an orderly manner, we will consider two points, if it please the Lord. The first shall be, The irresolution of the apostle, which of the two would be most expedient for him, whether death or life, with the two reasons on which it was founded. The second, The assurance which he gives of his deliverance still to live upon the earth, and to exercise there his ministry to the joy and glory of believers.

28

I. He says then, in the opening verse, that he does not know whether it would be profitable for him to live in the flesh, nor which of the two he should choose. Now these two modes of speech, "to live according to the flesh," and, "to live in the flesh," though they vary but little in words, differ greatly in their meaning. For in the writings of the apostle, "to live according to the flesh," signifies to follow after its filthy and unholy lusts, to pursue and have them for the principles and motives of life, a course which belongs only to worldly men, who, not being regenerated by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, lead a carnal and animal life, plunging into every vice, and not refusing their sensual souls any of those enjoyments which they desire. But "to live in the flesh" simply speaks of living in this mortal and corruptible body, such as it is now, which applies also to believers while they are sojourning on earth, and before they can be admitted to that heavenly life which they expect from the grace of God, on leaving this valley of tears. For you know that the Scripture gives the name of "flesh" not only to a vicious nature corrupted by sin, but also to an infirm nature, which for its preservation requires the aliments of the earth, and which is subject to the accidents of this world and to death, however freed it may be from the tyranny of sin by the sanctification of the Spirit from on high. Hence the human nature of the Lord himself, although perfectly holy, is, nevertheless,

called flesh, whilst it was in the state of infirmity, as when St John says, that "the Word was made flesh," chapter 1:14; and St Paul, that "God was manifest in the flesh," 1 Timothy 3:16: the time of his sojourn on earth is called in the Epistle to the Hebrews "the days of his flesh." As then the nature of believers remains under these infirmities whilst they live here below, not being unclothed till their departure from the earth, you see that it is with good reason that the apostle speaks of "their life in the flesh," and which St Peter calls, for another reason, "the time of their sojourning here," 1 Peter 1:17. St Paul again employs these words elsewhere in the same sense, when he says, "And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," Galatians 2:20. And St Peter calls also in the same manner, and for the same reason, that period which we have still to live upon the earth, "the time which remains to us in the flesh," 1 Peter 4:2. And from thence comes that beautiful and elegant opposition that the apostle makes in 2 Corinthians 10:3, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh." But (you will say to me) how could St Paul know, as he says, that there would be an advantage for him to live in the flesh, whereas he declared before, that Jesus Christ would be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death, and that Christ was gain to him, living or dying; and seeing still further, what he adds below, that his stay on the earth would serve for the furtherance, and faith, and joy, and glory of believers? What fund can be imagined more profitable than a life which produced in abundance such excellent fruits? Dear brethren, the difficulty is not great. To speak only of the life which this great apostle led on the earth, and to consider it abstractedly, it is certain that it was extremely profitable, both to others and to himself; those services in which it was passed being such, that they could not be exercised with a good conscience, without bringing great advantages to him who rendered them to others; peace and joy of mind during this life, and a crown of righteousness in the other. But it is not in this manner that St Paul considers here his temporal life. He has compared it with another state, that is to say, with one into which he would enter by death, and asks, not simply if life or death would be profitable to him, (for he had just declared that both in the one and the other there was gain to him,) but rather which of the two would be most expedient, whether to live or to die; to shed his blood in the chains of Nero, or to escape from those chains; to bow under this persecution, or to be delivered from it? And that it was thus appears from what he said in the preceding verse, "Christ is gain to me to live or to die," where he makes express mention of these two things, which he compares together, namely, life and death, in such a manner, that saying, in continuation, "now whether it be profitable for me to live in the flesh I wot not," it is evident that his thought is, "now whether it be better for me to live in the flesh than to die I know not." But what he adds leaves us no reason to doubt it, "What I shall choose I wot not," it being clear that there can be no choice where there is but one thing. He does not then speak of life alone, but of life compared with death, saying that he did not know which of the two to choose. Upon which arises a new difficulty. For choice or election can only take place in those things which depend on one's own will, and of which we can, if it seem good to us, take the one, and leave the other. As to those things whose

necessary causes are out of ourselves, in nature and in the power of God, as we do not deliberate about them, still less can we make the election; seeing that neither the powers of our understanding, nor the motions of our will, can either hasten or retard their effect. For example, no one deliberates which will be best, that the autumn be dry or wet, that he may resolve in the end to take the one of these two things rather than the other, it being evident that they both depend on Heaven, and not on us, so that it would be a piece of pure extravagance to reason or to exercise the mind thereupon. Now the life and death of the apostle were things of this nature, which depended not on his will, but on the providence of God, and on those inferior causes which he had established as well in the nature as in the intercourse of men. How then does he say that he does not know which of the two he should choose, whether to live in the flesh, or to leave it? In truth, a frail and carnal man thinks that on such occasions he has much on which to deliberate, whether he ought to die rather than deny the gospel, so that his life or death depending on his giving it up or confessing it, which are voluntary actions, one might say of such a man, that he is employed in choosing between life and death. But it was not thus with the apostle; he is resolved rather to die a thousand times than to deny his Master, and means, that if he lives, it will be in retaining the faith 29
and confession of the gospel; and that taken for granted, it is clear that his life and death did not at all depend on his own will. I acknowledge further, that according to the opinion of some among the wise pagans, who permitted men to kill themselves that they might get rid of the miseries of this world, a man might deliberate on his life or death, because that being granted we should have both in our own hands and in our own power. But God forbid that it should ever have entered into the mind of St Paul, or of any other true Christian, to believe or to authorize so unnatural a frenzy, guilty in so many ways of rebellion and disobedience against God, of injustice towards our neighbour, of murder and cruelty against ourselves, and finally, of great impatience and cowardice, in not being able to support what the sovereign Lord of the universe has commanded us to suffer. What, then, does the apostle mean by saying that he does not know which of the two he ought to choose, whether life or death? Dear brethren, I reply, he was in doubt to determine and to resolve, not the effect, but the desire of these two things. He left the guidance of their effect to God, to whom it belonged, resolved to take from his hand all that was wearisome to him, if even it should be the thing the most contrary to his own wishes. He only looked at which of these two events (which were both in the hand of God alone) would be most expedient and advantageous to him, that he might in future arrest and fix his desires upon it. For though those effects which have their causes beyond us are not in our power, it is not forbidden us to consider their nature, and to fear or desire them, according as they are good or evil. If these are things nearly or even entirely equal, in that case we know not on which side to incline our desires, reasons presenting themselves in favour of both, which draw them to itself. Our mind remains balanced between the two, as a piece of iron between two magnets of equal strength. For it is very certain (as even philosophy has acknowledged) that we only love and desire any thing for

the good that we see in it. That idea alone touches and attracts our will, so that when we do not perceive in one object more good than in another, our feelings necessarily remain undecided and irresolute, dividing themselves between both, without yielding entirely to either. This is what happened to the holy apostle when considering the two contrary issues that his imprisonment might have, that is to say, either life or death; he found in these two objects, in themselves so different, such equal advantages, that he knew not which of the two he ought the more or the less to desire, his mind remaining so undecided thereupon, that if God had left either event in his own choice, he would have had much trouble to decide which he ought to take. And this is exactly all that the apostle means by these words, "I wot not what I shall choose." He then afterwards proposes to us in the two following verses the reasons for such admirable indecision: "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." Here are the two loadstones which held this holy soul in suspense, the one attracting it towards heaven, the other detaining it on earth. His own good made him desire to be with Christ, that of the church obliged him to be contented to remain still among men. If he loved his own happiness, he no less cherished the happiness and edification of the church. These two desires divided his compassion. The one could only be accomplished in heaven, the other on earth. The apostle could only attain to the enjoyment of the first by death, whilst the other could alone be gratified by remaining on earth. What shall I do, (says he,) and which shall I choose, in so difficult a dilemma? I have great reason to wish for death, but I have no less reason not to refuse to live. If I consider myself, the happiness which awaits me on high with my Lord makes me desire to leave the earth. But when I think of you, your interest, which is not less dear to me than my own, makes me wish to remain still with you. My heart is not at liberty, and on whichever side it turns its desires, it there finds a just and legitimate resistance. You hinder it from taking its flight entirely to the skies; and Christ, who is in the heavens, prevents its remaining exclusively on the earth. Thus divided between you and myself, I do not decidedly wish either for death or life, your necessities preventing the one, and my own happiness not permitting me the other; but I regard them both with an indifferent mind, which finds satisfaction in both the accomplishment of my own happiness in death, and the edification and joy of your faith in life: this is, in a word, the thought, of the apostle.

Let us consider the two parts in particulars: First, that he says he is in a strait between two difficulties, shows us how false and vain is that weak and languid turn which some give to its meaning, when they say that it always left to the will the imaginary liberty that they attribute to him of yielding himself to either of these proposed things. I acknowledge that we desire and choose things voluntarily, but I also maintain that we do that also necessarily. Knowledge arrests and leads captive the will, as the apostle speaks here and elsewhere, when he says, "The love of Christ constrains us," 2 Corinthians 5:14. It is by gentle and human ties, I confess, but nevertheless they are ties. Then afterwards St Paul makes us here understand very clearly that death does not destroy our souls, (as say the ungodly,) but only

detaches them from the body, so that they still live after being so separated. That he wished to be unclothed evidently snows it; for he could not have wished a total and entire destruction of his being. The word itself which he employs to signify death necessarily proves it. This word has been explained in two ways. Some have taken it to mean "to be dissolved." Others, whose explanation our Bibles have followed, say it is "to be unclothed." But in either sense it evidently is conclusive of the immortality of the soul. For "to be dissolved" signifies to disjoin and separate two things which subsisted together; so that if you follow this meaning, the apostle teaches us by the word that death only detaches our souls from our bodies, disuniting, without abolishing, the parts of which they consisted. But if you take the word here employed to mean "to dislodge," (as in truth this meaning is more suitable to it than the other,) then it is still more evident that, according to the doctrine of the apostle, the believer does not perish when he dies; he only changes his dwelling, he only leaves this earthly tabernacle, in which he has lodged on earth, to go and dwell elsewhere. In the third place, besides the existence of the believing soul after death, the apostle here teaches us its state and condition, and in these two or three words overthrows all that the ancients and the moderns have imagined on this subject contrary to truth. First he refutes the dream of those who hold that souls on leaving the body are plunged into a state of insensibility, their reason and other faculties remaining motionless, as if buried in a profound sleep, till the day of the resurrection, when they will awake, and not before, as these persons take for granted. St Paul, on the contrary, declares that being dislodged here, we are with Christ. How with Christ, the source of light, life, and motion itself, if we remain in so sad a picture of death? And further, if it be so, how, and by what right, could the apostle say that it was much better for him to be with Christ than to live on the earth? Who does not see that his conversation here below, which was so full of sense, wisdom, and action, was not worth a thousand times more than the imaginary sleep in which these people would drown our souls, which, to say the truth, is nothing but a death. But the apostle no less overthrows the error of those who, leaving life and motion to believing souls, keep them from heaven, shut up in I know not what sort of a place, either under the earth or in the air, waiting for the day of resurrection. Although this fantasy has had on its side the great authors of antiquity, in which they have been followed by the greater number of those first and most celebrated teachers who are called "the fathers," nevertheless it cannot stand with this text of the apostle, which testifies clearly that the believer, on leaving the body, goes to be with the Lord, and that, on the contrary, we are with the Lord when we are parted from these bodies. Since then the Lord is in heaven, who does not see that we shall be there also, and that that blessed sanctuary of immortality is the true home, in which our spirits are received on their departure from the body? From which you see, to remark in passing, that the Scripture of God is the only source from whence we ought to draw our faith, this example showing us that all other authors, however praiseworthy they may be, are liable to fall into error, and may draw us in after them, if we follow them. But these words of the apostle are no less opposed to the state in which the Romanists place

30

the souls of the faithful on leaving this life. For after being dislodged from the body, the apostle shows us that they are with the Lord, and consequently not in their fabulous purgatory, as they themselves confess that the Lord is not in this imaginary place, but in heaven, according to the teaching of Scripture. It proves nothing to allege that St Paul was of the number of those who, not having any remains of sin to be purged, went straight to heaven. For, in the first place, supposing that it was really so, still he was not at all certain of it, according to the Romish doctrine, which will not allow that any man living here below can be assured of being now in the grace of God, much less of persevering in it to the end. And they themselves say sometimes that St Paul was not certain of not going to hell, much less that he was not sure that he should not pass into purgatory. If that were the case, he must have feared, according to their supposition, that he should go into this subterranean prison. Notwithstanding which, he here speaks of being assured of going to heaven with Jesus Christ when he should leave the earth. Certainly then he neither believed nor feared their purgatory, and consequently held quite another doctrine than theirs on the state of the soul on its departing this life. Add to which, the apostle often speaks of himself as one of those who was not yet perfected; so that, not ceasing to hope with assurance that he should be with the Lord as soon as he should have parted with his body, he shows us by the same means, that such also shall be the condition of all believing souls who have embraced the gospel with a lively and sincere faith, as well as of those whose faith is feeble and imperfect. After all, the Scripture makes no difference among the disciples of the Lord, as it respects their salvation at the end of this life. As they have had the same causes for it in this world, it gives it the same effects in the other, and no where tells us that they will be purged from their sins, some in one way, and some in another, but all by the blood of Jesus Christ alone. It makes all who die in the Lord (of which it speaks) pass from earth to heaven, and from the flesh immediately to glory; and says of us all in general, that if our earthly habitation of this building be destroyed, we have a building of God, that is to say, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. If some among believers had been otherwise treated, Scripture would not have failed to have told us so; but as it does not, let us reject, beloved brethren, all these vain opinions, arising from superstition and the curiosity of men, fomented by their avarice, and supported entirely by obstinacy. Let us hold fast the doctrine of St Paul. Let us be contented with what he has taught us, that if we are truly Christians, our souls, on being dislodged from their earthly tabernacle, will be received into heaven; that they will be with Christ their Lord in the light of his blessed kingdom, enjoying all the felicity of which their nature is capable in such a state, waiting with sweet and ineffable content the great day which will restore them those bodies, their precious half, to live and reign eternally. It is of that state that we can truly say with the apostle, that it would be much better for us than the one in which we languish here. As to insensibility, or to the darkness of I know not what sort of subterranean caverns, it is certain that it speaks of nothing of the kind, and still less of the flames of the pretended purgatory, as vivid as those of hell, if we are to believe the Romish fables, and I do

not think that there is one among the holders of these doctrines who would not greatly prefer to live on earth than to burn in such a fire as they imagine that to be. But as to the condition of our souls with the Lord, where is he who cannot see that it must be infinitely more happy than all that we can imagine of happiness on earth? Here, we are in a storm; there, we shall be in a calm. Here, we are in a perpetual contest; there, we shall be in a triumph. Here, we groan, surrounded by the world and the powers of darkness; there, we shall live with saints and angels. Here, we are subject to a thousand infirmities, and countless sufferings; there, we shall be delivered from all evil. Here, we see but darkly, and as it were through a thick veil; there, we shall see face to face. Here, we are burdened with the flesh in many ways; there, we shall be spiritual and heavenly. And, to comprehend all in one word with the apostle, here, we are absent from the Lord, the treasure and, the glory of our heart, the life and the joy of our souls; there, we shall be with him. For it is not possible, my brethren, to be with this sovereign author of all blessedness, without being at the same time perfectly happy; from which you see how absurd is the imagination of those who suppose the real presence of the Lord in the bread of the Eucharist, desiring that now, that is to say, in this earthly pilgrimage, in the midst of infirmity and of death, we should be notwithstanding with the Lord, aye, and that too in a more intimate manner than we shall be with him in the heavens, as they pretend that we have him really and substantially in our stomachs, which will not take place in the other world. Who does not see that they confound earth with heaven, and mix the condition in which we are in this body, with that on which we shall enter on being removed from hence; to which St Paul gives this particular advantage, that then we shall be with the Lord, instead of which, if you believe those other teachers, we are already with him. If we are with the Lord, we should neither do nor suffer evil; we should neither be subject to sin nor death. The presence of this great Sun of righteousness would dissipate all the darkness both of (31) our ignorance and of our sorrows, and would transform us into so many images of his perfection and glory. I acknowledge that formerly, when he was in his state of weakness, he did not communicate these blessings to all who were with him. But the glory in which he now is does not admit of any being with him who are not blessed. And St Paul shows this to us here very expressly, when he says simply, "to be with the Lord," meaning to express all the happiness which was enjoyed by every spirit in heaven whom God had collected there by his grace. It is the sweetness and the glory of that condition, my brethren, which makes us desire with the apostle to depart. He did not wish for death for its own sake. In itself death is a very hideous thing, there is nothing in it desirable, nothing but what is agonizing and alarming; thus considered, it is what was very truly said by the prince of philosophers, the most fearful stroke in the world. For it is the most terrible of all the marks of God's anger; the ruin of his most accomplished work, the destruction of our nature, the confusion of our senses, and the separation of the most beautiful and closest union that can possibly exist. But whatever it may be in itself, to the soul of the Christian it is by the blessing of God the gate of heaven, and the entrance into eternity. The pains of death are but the paths which lead into the light of true life. If it pluck his

soul from this dungeon, where she only breathes with difficulty, it is to place her in full liberty; if it defaces this tabernacle of clay in which she is imprisoned, it is to lodge her in a heavenly palace; and if it spoil her of a form, it is to reclothe her in another incomparably more excellent. St Paul, who knew it, and who had seen and tasted its effects in paradise, where he had been in ecstasy, considering these wonderful consequences of death, desired it for this reason, and regarded it not only without fear, but even with joy, as the end of his labours, as the haven of his painful voyage, as the day of his coronation, and the commencement of his happiness and glory. And indeed I am not astonished that he did so. For all that death may have in itself that is painful and bitter, is nothing in comparison of that infinite and eternal felicity into which it conducts happy souls; so that the ardent desire which the apostle had to arrive at this blissful state, possessing all his senses, and holding them, as it were, in a state of rapturous enjoyment, caused him to disregard what there might be painful in the passage itself, and not only did he not fear it, but he even wished for it; according to what we experience every day in the natural consequences of the emotions of our hearts, that when we love and are ardently attached to one object, we also infallibly embrace and desire those means which we know to be indispensable for its attainment. But however ardent might be this just and legitimate desire which the apostle had for his own happiness, and for the separation necessary for him to acquire it, it was usefulness to the church which arrested him and held him in suspense, as he expresses to us in these words, "Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." The spiritual welfare of those believers to whom he wrote touched him no less than his own. O admirable love, which, for the profit of others, is willing to be deprived of its own happiness, and to remain in a state of suffering! It was this same heart which elsewhere wished to be separated from Christ for the sake of his brethren, Romans 9:3: he prefers their salvation to his own, and has more earnestness for their edification than for his own glory. It is true that here he only speaks of the delay, and not of the loss of his salvation. For he was deeply assured that sooner or later he should arrive at the haven of a blessed immortality. But he preferred reaching this some years later, than leaving the instruction of his converts imperfect. He was like a good and wise mother, who, ardently desirous of following her absent husband, is prevented by her anxiety for her children, preferring to deprive herself of her own happiness rather than fail in seeking their good. Such was this holy apostle. The love of those believers, the children whom he had begotten by the gospel, and the zeal which he felt for their furtherance in it, kept him on earth, and made him support with patience the absence of his beloved Lord, and the sorrows which it caused him. From which you see how pastors ought to love their flocks, as this example incites them to seek and to procure their edification with as much or more ardour than their own happiness.

II. After having thus declared and explained by pertinent reasons his doubt which of the two would be most expedient for him, whether to die or to live, the apostle adds, in the second part of this text, that he was sure God would decide this his difficulty to the advantage and consolation of the Philippians: "And I know

that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again." Upon which we have two things to consider: the one, If the event corresponded with this certain hope which St Paul testified that he felt, that is to say, if he was delivered from the imprisonment in which he had been kept at Rome, and again saw the Philippians and the other churches of Greece. And in the second place, What were the fruits that he promised himself from this deliverance. On the first point, it is a thing on which all the ancient historians and teachers of Christianity are agreed, that St Paul was delivered from his first bonds, of which we have the account written in the book of the Acts; and that, after having been detained for more than two years a prisoner at Rome, he was at last set at liberty, and still lived till the first persecution of the Christians, which took place in the tenth year of the emperor Nero, and the sixty# fourth from the birth of the Lord; a time at which they all hold that St Paul was again a prisoner for the second time at Rome, and there suffered martyrdom with a great many other believers. According to this he continued to live for six years after his deliverance from his first imprisonment, and consequently had leisure to visit the Philippians, and the other churches which he had founded in Greece. Ancient historians hold, that on leaving Rome, he went to preach the gospel in the countries of the west; and it appears by the Epistle to the Romans that he had had such a design; for he says (Romans 15:14) that he desired to go to Rome, and from thence into Spain. But whether he did or did not preach in the provinces of the west, it ought to be considered certain that he again visited the churches of Philippi and Colosse, and others which he had established in Greece and Asia. For in the first place, he speaks of it with great assurance, saying, not only that he knew, but that he was certain of abiding and continuing with them; and likewise in the following chapter, where, promising to send Timothy to them, he adds, "And I trust in the Lord that I also shall soon come," chapter 2:24; and in a parallel passage in the Epistle to Philemon, a Colossian, written about the same year as this, he says, "Prepare me a lodging, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given you." But that which is unanswerable is, that it appears by the Second Epistle to Timothy, written certainly at Rome a little before (32)
his martyrdom, that he made a second voyage into Italy, and that before doing so he had visited the churches of Greece and Asia; for he tells Timothy that Erastus had remained at Corinth, and that he had left Trophimus sick at Miletus, and says that he had left a cloak, with some books and parchments, with one named Carpus in Troas, 2 Timothy 4:13, 20; things which can in no way coincide with the first voyage that Paul made to Rome, when he was carried there a prisoner; it being clear, from the history that St Luke has so accurately described to us in the Acts, that he did not then either go to Miletus, or to Corinth, or Troas, and did not even approach them, but sailed direct from Palestine to the west, taking his course below Candia, and from thence (having been carried by a tempest) to the island of Malta, from whence he afterwards went to Rome; and there is no appearance that these things relate to the voyage that he had formerly made from Macedonia into Palestine, mentioned and described by St Luke in the Acts, from the long period

that had since passed; for St Paul having been detained for two years in Cesarea, before setting out for Italy, he must have arrived at Rome about three years after having made this voyage. How could he suitably remark, after so long a period, that he had left Trophimus sick at Miletus? and still more, why did he tell Timothy of it, who having been his companion in this voyage, would have known it without requiring to be told of it? Certainly, to unravel this difficulty, we must necessarily presuppose that St Paul, having been delivered from his first imprisonment, visited some years after the churches of Greece and Asia, according to the design and hope which he here declares he possessed; and that having seen, consoled, and edified them, on leaving them he passed through Troas, where he left the books and parchments in the hands of Carpus, and from thence to Miletus, and to Corinth, where Trophimus and Erastus remained, and returned for the second time to Rome, where he was again put into prison, and there suffered martyrdom, a little time after having written the Second Epistle to Timothy. There is one thing which appears to contradict this presumption, namely, what we read in the 20th chapter of the Acts, that St Paul, going to Jerusalem before his first Roman imprisonment, said to the elders of the Ephesian church, "that he knew that they should see his face no more," Acts 20:25. But the answer is easy; he spoke then according to his own apprehension, arising from the warning that had been given him by the Spirit, that in every city, and in Jerusalem also, bonds and sorrows awaited him. Not knowing then what would be the result of these trials, he imagined that, from the greatness of his troubles, he should die under them, although the Lord had otherwise decreed, having delivered him from his first bonds, and afforded him the opportunity of seeing once more his dear flocks, and even afterwards of foreseeing this very happiness, and to conceive a certain hope of it, before the thing happened, as appears by this text. We may then conclude that the apostle, according to the assurance he here gives to the Philippians, was delivered from the danger of death in which he then was, and continued still on earth, and even returned to them. From which you see, dear brethren, that the courage and inclination of believers for death is sometimes followed by their deliverance. God again gives them that life which they had committed to him, as he formerly restored Isaac to Abraham, being contented with their voluntary offering. This apostle as ready to die for him, he was prepared to do so, and even his desire tended that way. The Lord accepted his inclination, and receiving it as a holy oblation, gave him notwithstanding life and liberty; teaching us to have always our loins girded, and our lamps burning, particularly in times of sickness, and in those circumstances in which our lives are in danger. For the best and most proper means to escape them is to be prepared for them, and resigned early to the will of God.

As to the objects and effects of this deliverance of the apostle, he represents them as of two kinds: in the first place, The furtherance of the Philippians, and the joy of their faith, that is to say, their edification and consolation. For though the preaching of the apostle was full of fruit and of spiritual utility, it cannot be doubted but that it would be still more efficacious to the Philippians after the glorious trial of so long an imprisonment, and that their faith would be strengthened, and their

piety fortified, by the example of his patience, by the sight of his person, and by hearing his words. Their joy would also be very great at seeing again among them, safe and sound, so good and so dear a master, after all the dangers he had gone through, and the apprehensions they had felt on his account. But he calls this joy that they experienced at again seeing him "the joy of their faith," as it sprang entirely from feelings of piety and faith in Jesus Christ. There was nothing carnal or worldly in it. It was only founded on considerations of faith, of heaven, and of salvation, and not on those of the earth. He also adds another effect of his deliverance, "That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again." What is this rejoicing of believers in Jesus Christ? It is in my opinion the holy assurance they feel of the power and wisdom of the Lord, and of his love for his own, and of his care in making all things work together for their good, and for their salvation. For that is the only subject of their rejoicing, and the whole cause of their joy and confidence. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we" (say they) "will remember the name of the Lord our God," Psalm 20:7. In every thing else they acknowledge their weakness and vileness. But they rejoice in the name of the Lord Jesus. They triumph in it. They think of it and speak of it in a lofty manner. Now that the deliverance and return of the apostle would make this rejoicing abound in the hearts and mouths of the Philippians, and of all the other believers who were then alive, is very evident. For they saw clearly in his person what and how excellent was the goodness and power of that Saviour, who had preserved his servant from the jaws of the lions, and had miraculously delivered him from the prison of Nero, having faithfully defended him from the efforts of the world aïid of hell, which both conspired for his ruin. They also saw in it the care which the Lord had for their edification, who for their good and for their furtherance in piety, and not for any other consideration, preserved his apostle on earth, contrary to the appearances of things, against the interests of his happiness, and against his own wishes. And this, dear brethren, is the fruit that we should draw from the deliverances that God gives to his servants, whether in relieving them from those sicknesses to which our nature is subject, or in snatching them from the hands of their enemies, or in keeping them in the midst of the many dangers by which they are surrounded. May these proofs which we daily receive of his goodness and sovereign power increase more and more our confidence in him, and cause the rejoicing that we have in our hearts to abound, and to receive new strength and vigour, so that not only we may be consoled in the sorrows and various difficulties of this miserable life, but triumph even in the midst of the (33) greatest storms, having nothing low, cowardly, or mean, either in our minds or in our mouths. May all our thoughts and our words be courageous and lofty, and worthy of the grandeur of that Christ whose disciples, whose sheep, and whose members we are.

Such, my brethren, is the exposition of this text of the apostle. Let us profit by it, meditating upon and carefully practising the lessons contained in it, on which we have briefly touched each in its own place. Let us, above all, receive into our hearts what he teaches us of the nature of death, and of the use of life, that we may

neither fear the one nor abuse the other, and reduce to their true and legitimate form the inclinations and feelings we should entertain for both. This is the most important point of heavenly doctrine; and if a pagan formerly said that the life of a wise and virtuous man should be a perpetual meditation on death, how much more ought a Christian to say so, the disciple of a crucified Master, who only leads them to life through death! But besides the quality and instructions of the Lord, the necessity of the thing itself recommends its meditation to us. For as to those other evils against which we prepare ourselves, such as poverty, exile, sorrows, or such like, perhaps they may never happen to us. But death is inevitable, and there is neither birth nor condition that can secure either us or those belonging to us against it. Let us then all equally think of it, and prepare ourselves for it early, so that whenever it comes it may not take us unawares. Let us see it as it really is, and without being alarmed by the vile and hideous form in which painters and men of the world have represented it; but let us believe what the apostle says of it, that if we are truly Christians, it is much better for us than life. It is much that it frees us from those continual miseries in which we languish here below. This consideration alone makes it desirable to many persons, and has led entire nations to celebrate the funerals of their dead with songs and rejoicings, not like us with tears and lamentations, with which they accompany the birth of their children, thinking that those are to be pitied who are entering into a life so full of sorrows, and that those only are happy who are leaving it. But, O Christian believer! besides the sufferings from which death will deliver you, it will put you in possession of a great and assured happiness; it will elevate you into the heavens, and give you life with Jesus Christ. Let those fear death whose minds superstition has filled with error, who see nothing after this life but fire and torments, either the flames of hell or of purgatory. You, disciple of Jesus, who have learned of his apostle that there is now no condemnation for those that are in him, and who behold him in the heavens extending his hand to draw you thither where he is, how can you dread so happy a transition? Are you afraid of being with Christ? Do you fear to enter into the company of his saints? into the fellowship of his angels? into the marvellous light of his eternal kingdom, where your faith will be changed into sight, and your hope into rejoicing? How does the creed you profess accord with this fear? There have been, and there still are, an immense number of persons in the world, who cheerfully expose themselves to death for the hope of acquiring a vain glory to their name. But ours, brethren, gives a true and solid glory, not to our name, which is nothing, but to ourselves, placing us in the heavens by the side of the Lord. Let us then be fully resolved that it is much better for us to be dislodged than to remain in this earthly tabernacle, and instead of dreading with the world this last hour, let us desire it with the apostle, and welcome it when it shall present itself to us, as the period of our freedom; saying, like Simeon with a heart full of joy, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." Being thus inclined, we shall be the happiest men in the world. Nothing will disturb our lives, or tempt our piety; for of what can we be afraid if we do not fear death? nay, if, far from fearing it, we desire it? May this same thought console us when we mourn the death of those who have

been dear to us; for as they are with the Lord, it is more proper to rejoice at their happiness than to complain at their removal from us. It is those who remain on the earth for whom we should weep, those whom the world and the flesh estrange from God, who are every day in sorrow or in danger. But, Christians, I beseech you, do not thus disgrace those holy beings whom you have seen depart from this earth in the faith and hope of the Lord, with the garments of his household, and the marks of his election and love, in the midst of the applause and the rejoicing of angels; do not do them this dishonour, to mourn their triumph, and mar the consummation of their happiness by your tears. May faith quickly dry those which nature forces from you. May *their* happiness soften your grief, and oblige you to keep your hearts continually elevated toward heaven, where they are gone before, waiting with patience and true Christian resolution till you are yourselves gathered in peace, to live and reign eternally with your Master and theirs, Jesus the Prince of life, and the Lord of glory; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, one true God, blessed for ever, be all honour and praise, world without end. Amen.

Preached at Charenton,
Sunday, *7th May*, 1640.

SERMON VI.

Verse 27–28.

Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

In all enterprises of importance, it is a grand point to have them well and happily commenced; and he who said, that this is to have done half the work, was not far from the truth, because, as their beginnings are usually more difficult than their terminations, they occupy men more, and contribute thereby to the execution of all the rest. But however important this commencement of an affair may be, it is of no value, but turns rather to shame and loss, if it be not followed up, and carried on to its completion, with a constant perseverance in the enterprise undertaken. He who begins and does not finish, besides the time and trouble which he so uselessly fritters away, naturally exposes himself to the blame and ridicule of the world, and remains justly deprived of the fruits of his own labour. But if this occurs in all the enterprises of human life which are of any consequence, it is more especially so in the profession of religion, incomparably the greatest and most important of all. It is not only useless to have commenced it if you do not persevere in it, but it is very
34 hurtful; the warmth and the exertion of the beginning redoubling the unhappiness of those who, in a cowardly manner, decline from so noble and divine a task. This is why the holy apostle, after having before praised the commencement of the Philippians in the gospel of the Lord, now exhorts them, in the text that you have just heard, to persevere constantly, without ever allowing themselves to be carried out of that path of life, in which they were running so resolutely, by any opposing force or violence. In the words immediately preceding, he promised them, if you remember, that however adverse appearances might seem, he should be released from prison, and once more revisit them, to the joy and edification of their faith. He entreats them, while waiting for this consolation, that they would continue always to progress from good to better in the study and exercise of religion: "Only let your conversation be as it besometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come

and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God." That we may meditate on this text with more regularity and profit, by the assistance of the Lord, we will consider four things in it consecutively. The first shall be the general exhortation that the apostle gave to the Philippians, "To let their conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ." The three others will be the three particular duties which he proceeds to point out, and which are as three principal parts of this evangelical conversation which he here recommends: the first, "To stand fast in one spirit;" the second, "To strive together with one mind;" and the third, "Not to be terrified by their adversaries." May God give us grace so to acquit ourselves in this meditation, that all our lives henceforth may be a constant practice of them, keeping ourselves all united together under the governance of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, continuing in his fear and love, and courageously repelling with the shield of faith every arrow of our visible and invisible enemies, to the glory of our great God, and to our own salvation.

I. The general exhortation of the apostle, which we proposed to treat in the first place, is conceived in these terms, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ." The first word, "only," relates to what he had said before, when, having spoken of the issue of his imprisonment, of life, of death, and of the fruit of both, he declared that he was firmly assured of remaining on earth, and of again seeing the church of the Philippians, and of edifying and consoling them by his presence. Adding then now, "only converse according to the gospel." As if he had said, As God will conduct all these things to his glory and your good, leave to him the care of all that remains, and give yourselves entirely to the study of religion, living in exact accordance with that form which is prescribed to you in his word. From which you perceive, dear brethren, that the whole business of a believing soul is to live here holily and religiously, in a word, evangelically. It is the one thing needful. As to every thing else, God has either already provided, or will provide in time to come, without our anxiously caring for it. For he has fully executed on his side all that was necessary for the establishment of our happiness. He has given us his Son, and has secured to us, by his cross, the remission of our sins, peace in our consciences, and an entrance into and the enjoyment of a heavenly life. He has sent his apostles, and abundantly blessed their ministry. He has called us to himself, and has made his will known to us in the gospel of his Son. And for the time to come, he has promised by his faithfulness to keep us tenderly, and to make all things work together for our good, however contrary or adverse they may appear, so that neither the accidents of life, nor the horrors of death, shall ever be able to deprive us of these treasures. He has taken all this upon himself, and does not wish that any of these thoughts should occupy our minds. What then is the work that he requires of us? It consists entirely in this, that enjoying his benefits with perfect contentment for time past, and an assured hope for the future, we should dispose our lives according to his commandments, and that we should employ our whole care, time, and attention, to see that our conversation be worthy

of his name and of his gospel. This is the only employment he has given us, the only work that he asks of us. He releases us from all other care, and is contented that we should solely attend to this. And indeed how happy should we be if we were to stay our minds on this study alone, leaving those things which so uselessly occupy other men! This work always brings its fruit with it, the repose and joy of the conscience. It is agreeable to God, useful to our neighbours, and salutary to ourselves. It neither leaves regret, shame, disgust, nor repentance in the heart. Every thing else, however specious it may appear, whether in life, or even in the religion of men, is either vain or profitable for "little," as St Paul says, speaking of "bodily exercise." "But godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," 1 Timothy 4:8. Hence the reason why he recommends this exclusively to his Philippians: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ." It is word for word in the original, αξὶως τοῦ εὐαγγελίον, "converse worthily, or in a manner worthy of the gospel." I remark this to show you how vain are the pretensions of the advocates of merit, when they desire to support their proud opinion on what is said in the Scripture, "That the faithful are counted worthy of the kingdom of God," 2 Thessalonians 1:5; as if these words signified that *they* deserved the heavenly kingdom, and that the value of their *works* was such that God could not refuse them this reward, without doing them wrong, and committing an injustice. This text clearly shows that that is not the apostle's meaning. For when St Paul here says "a conversation worthy of the gospel," you see plainly that he does not intend a conversation which *deserves* the gospel, (this would be a palpable misconstruction,) any more than St John, when he commanded those who received his baptism "to bring forth fruits meet for repentance," meant works which deserved repentance; it would be a manifest absurdity to interpret it thus. Who does not see that in both these places the worthiness spoken of signifies nothing but a certain relationship of suitableness, and not of merit, consisting in this, that the conversation of which St Paul speaks be such as the gospel requires, bearing its impress and its marks; and that the fruits of which St John speaks should be such as repentance demands and produces, works such as are becoming and suitable to be done by those who are truly repentant. It is in the same sense that St Paul speaks in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where he beseeches his converts "to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called;" that is to say, not in such a manner as would imply they were called for their own merit, but (as every one must acknowledge) in a manner that should be suitable to their vocation, and as it became persons to live who are thus called. (35) In the same sense must the apostle be understood when, he enjoins the Colossians "to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord," Colossians 1:10; and likewise what he writes to the Thessalonians, that they should "walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory," 1 Thessalonians 2.

Now it is evident that he means to speak, not of a life which deserves God, (which would be an absurd and impious thought,) but rather of a life suitable to the name and the quality which they bore of children of God, and which should accord with the excellence of their calling: so that when he elsewhere says that

believers who suffer persecution with faith and patience are "counted worthy of the heavenly kingdom," 2 Thessalonians 1:5, he does not mean to imply that they have merited this reward, and that the value of their sufferings is equal to that of this glory, and may be weighed against it, contrary to what he expressly denies, Romans 8:18; but simply that they have marks suitable to the kingdom of God, and, as it were, the garments of his household, and the qualities to which, out of his pure mercy in Jesus Christ, he promises eternal life; according to that maxim so often repeated by the apostle, that "if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him."

But to return to our subject. Every one must sufficiently see and understand what this conversation worthy of the Spirit of Christ is, which St Paul here proposes to us as the only business of our vocation, without requiring any thing else. Would to God that it were not more difficult to practise than to understand it. And yet, to speak truly, that we acquit ourselves so ill arises oftener from our cowardice and wickedness than from the difficulty of the thing itself. The gospel of Jesus Christ is that holy doctrine which the Lord has brought us from the bosom of the Father, which he has published on earth by the ministry of his apostles, which he has revealed to us by his Spirit, and the profession of which he has given us grace to embrace. The mystery of godliness is, without doubt, great; it proposes to us a God manifest in the flesh, justified by the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, raised into glory; and teaching us besides, that after having received the grace of God, profitable to all men, we should renounce iniquity and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. The conversation worthy of the gospel is that which agrees with this beautiful and heavenly doctrine, and which bears its credentials; in which none of the productions of ignorance or error appear; where the rays of knowledge and faith shine throughout; it is, in short, a life which bears a just relation to the rules of the Lord Jesus, tinted with his beauty, and moulded and formed after his example. This holy law teaches us that vice is the greatest evil of our nature; that it degrades man from all excellence; that it changes him into a brute or a devil; that it kindles against us that violent and just anger of Almighty God, which nothing can extinguish but the blood of his own Son. Undoubtedly the life in which vice reigns is then unworthy of the gospel, and bears no relation to it; on the contrary, wherever it exists, it opposes and seeks to overthrow it. This same law warns us that the earth is the abode of vanity and death; that this world is but a shadow which passeth away; that its pleasures, its honours, and its riches are but false idols, incapable of affording us any real or solid contentment. Those then who fix their desires on it, and whose whole life is only occupied in serving mammon, or in worshipping ambition, voluptuousness, and luxury, have nothing in their conversation which is worthy of that high and heavenly doctrine of which they make profession. The gospel declares to us that our happiness is above in the heavens, hid in Jesus Christ, the depositary of our glory and immortality; that in this high sanctuary are our country, our city, and our abode, and that love and holiness are its sovereign law. To respond to this instruction, who does not see

that we must continually have our thoughts, our desires, and our hearts entirely in heaven? that the design of arriving there ought to be our only anxiety, and that therefore the search for that which can lead us thither, that is to say, the love of God and of our neighbour, ought to occupy all our mind and intellect? From hence, believers, judge, I pray you, how very small is the number of those who converse in a manner worthy of the gospel; and, seized with shame and horror, let us henceforth labour to be of the chosen few. Let us leave every other care to attend to *this*. Remember the direction of the apostle, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel." God calls you to that alone. You call yourselves "evangelical;" and those even who try to corrupt your faith, by adulterating it with a mixture of the traditions of the flesh, still flatter you with this title. Be then such in truth. May this name be your glory before God and men. Do nothing that is unworthy of it. Consult it on every thing which presents itself to you. This name alone, if you listen to it, will be sufficient to teach you what is your duty. Receive nothing that is contrary to it, either in your belief or in your manners. If the world invite you to share in its superstitions, in its vices, in its amusements, reflect how unworthy are these things of the gospel of Christ. If the flesh entice you to hatred, vengeance, or impurity, remember how directly contrary are these feelings to the voice and to the Spirit of your Master. If it were only in consideration of our own honour, it would ever oblige us to lead a life conformable with our profession, there being nothing more shameful than to do the contrary of what we say, and by the example of our manners to ruin that which we have professed and established with the mouth. This contradiction is so abominable, and so unworthy of every honourable mind, that even among the sects of worldly philosophers, which were at best but folly and vanity, every one endeavoured to adjust his manners to his dogmas, and to live as he taught. But, alas! here is much more than honour. For we shall be judged at the last day by our life, and not by our language; by our conversation, and not by our profession. If we do not live in a way worthy of the gospel, in vain shall we have made profession of it, in vain shall we have called ourselves evangelical, or have been so called by others. All this vain-glory will be useless, yea more, it will be infinitely hurtful to us. We shall be reproached with it, and with good reason, as the greatest of our crimes, having had the insolence to profane so holy a name, and of not having been ashamed to lead the life of a pagan under the profession of a Christian, sullying and tarnishing the venerable name and holy law of the Lord Jesus, the King of angels and of men, by the blemishes and filth of our actions. God preserve us, dear brethren, from falling into so frightful a misfortune. Let us be true Christians, and evangelical. May our conversation henceforth be worthy of this gospel that we maintain.

To enforce so necessary a duty on the Philippians St Paul, besides their own interest in salvation, re presents also to them that which he takes in it: "Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; so that (says he) whether I
(36) come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit." If ever there was a master whose disciples were bound to hold him in high esteem, it was doubtless this apostle, who had delivered to the Philippians, not

the vain and perishable arts and sciences of the world, but the knowledge of God, and of salvation; who had drawn them from the abyss of hell into the true light of heaven; and who, for communicating to them this Divine treasure, had even suffered shame and persecution to the very shedding his. blood, so great and so ardent was the love he bore them. To which must be united the situation in which he then was, bound with a chain for the gospel, and the constancy of his affection for them, which he so tenderly felt in the midst of all his troubles. What did they not owe to such a man? And certainly the care that they had shown for him during his bonds, a sure sign of the love which they bore him, evidenced also that they would have been very much concerned to have displeased him. He puts then this consideration foremost; and to lead them to live in a manner worthy of the gospel, he proposes to them the joy that he should receive at hearing such good news. I ask of you no other reward (says he) for so many troubles that I have undergone to instruct you in the gospel, than that your conversation should respond to my doctrine, and that you should show forth in your manners that beautiful and holy way I have set before you in my instructions. This ardent affection that I had and still have for your salvation will be abundantly rewarded, if the gospel of my Lord shines as well in your conduct as it is retained in your mouths. Such, my brethren, is the desire of St Paul, and of every true minister of Jesus Christ. All the payment that they seek for their laborious exertions is the sanctification and salvation of their flocks. As in truth, from the little taste that you have for heavenly things, you will confess that there is no labour in the world whose fruit is either more delicious or more glorious than to see religion flourish, and sanctification, the first-fruits of a blessed immortality, the ornament and the light of heaven, in a flock that you have yourselves instructed and formed. If fathers and mothers bless the infinite trouble that the education of their children has given them when they profit by it, and if the masters of worldly arts esteem themselves happy to have made some clever scholars in their calling, what must be the delight of ministers of the Lord, when they see his word prosper in their hands, and the ground that he had committed to them crowned with his blessing, and entirely covered with those Divine fruits of godliness which endure eternally! O sweet and happy troubles! O blessed and valuable labour! Dear brethren, if the care that we take to instruct you by the preaching of the gospel deserve that you should have any regard for our comfort, give *us* that which the apostle here asks from the Philippians. May the purity of *your* conversation testify to the power and Divinity of *our* gospel, that your manners may show that we have not laboured in vain, and that your life may praise our preaching. God knows, dearly beloved brethren, that it is the most ardent of our wishes, that it is the joy and crown that we daily entreat from him. As for the rest, when the apostle says to the Philippians, "That whether I come and see you, or else be absent," it is not to retract what he had said in the preceding verses of his certain return to them, but only to make them understand that he had nothing more at heart than the goodness and holiness of their life; that if present among them, he could see nothing more agreeable; and that absent from them, he could hear nothing sweeter than the report of their constancy and progress in piety.

II. But it is time to come to the three last points of our text. For the apostle, instead of saying that he desires nothing more than to learn, whether absent or present, that the Philippians behaved in a way worthy of the gospel, (as it seems that the order and natural course of the language would require,) acts otherwise; and, that he might take occasion to particularize some of the principal duties of an evangelical conversation, see how he explains himself, "To the end that I may hear of your condition, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries." You see that he touches three points in which an evangelical conversation almost entirely consists, in its three principal and most important parts. The first is to "stand fast in one spirit." The word στήκετε in the original signifies to hold on, and to remain firm at one's post, and is derived from the combats, in which each endeavoured to keep his place, and to maintain himself in his seat, without going back, or being shaken by all the attacks of the enemy. The apostle, employing this image to represent to us the life of the faithful, means, that in this spiritual warfare we should never allow ourselves to be drawn from that position in which God has placed us, and that all together, like his faithful and valiant soldiers, courageously repulsing the enemy, we should always stand firm, without quitting either the faith or the profession which by his grace we have made. And as things diametrically opposite sometimes help to give us light, you will know what to stand fast is, if you consider what fault is opposed to this duty. In the first place, they fail in it who, having given their name to the Lord, shamefully desert his standard, to pass into the enemy's camp, like those who quit the profession of the gospel to follow that of superstition. In the second, those fail who, retaining the profession of Christianity, corrupt it by the intermixture of error, and (like the Galatians formerly) having begun in the Spirit, end in the flesh, receiving into their faith the deadly leaven of some false opinion. Thirdly, those likewise fail in it who, remaining in the camp of Israel, relax in their affection to piety, or, like the angel of Ephesus, fall from their first love. I would add also, that in religion not to advance is, in some respects, to retrograde. For this strength, as much as depends on us, is extremely active, and in continual motion; and when it makes no progress, it is a sign that it is weakened, and that it has lost something of its natural vigour. From which you see, my brethren, the duty opposed to these failings, and signified here by the apostle, when he commands us to stand fast; it is a firm and inextinguishable perseverance, not only in the profession, but also in the zeal of piety, in the purity of the faith, in the warmth of love, and in the reality of all the other Christian virtues; so that instead of losing any thing in this respect, we should rather go on acquiring and growing daily, until we come to the measure of the perfect stature, which is in Jesus Christ. Now the apostle does not only say that we should stand fast, he adds, "in one spirit," which may be understood in two ways, according as the word "spirit" is used; either for the spirit of a man, that is to say, his understanding, or for the Holy Spirit, and the grace which he communicates to believers. Taking it in the first sense, the meaning of the apostle will be, that believers stand fast, and persevere together in the same mind, having all one thought, one faith, one belief. For the

understanding being the seat of our knowledge, those are said to have the same mind who have the same belief and the same sentiments in religion. The present state of the Philippian church gave occasion to the apostle to address this good and suitable exhortation to them; for the evil workers of the circumcision, whom he afterwards names, having an eye upon this flock, and endeavouring to slip in their false and deadly opinions, of the necessity of the Mosaic law, and of the mixture of its ceremonies with the gospel, gave just reason for St Paul to apprehend that their minds might be divided, and that some members of this church might receive in their understandings this strange doctrine. Thus he could very properly exhort them to stand fast in one spirit, and not to permit that diversity of opinions should divide and puzzle their minds, breaking that holy unity of faith in which his preaching had previously bound them. (37)

But perhaps it will not be less proper to refer what he says to the Spirit of God, and to his grace, and those salutary effects which are often called by his name in Scripture. For this spirit is the sole cause of our constancy and perseverance in the faith; and as our body, deprived of the soul, which gives it life, immediately falls to the earth, having no more strength nor vigour, so also it is impossible that a man should remain good and continue firm in piety if this holy Spirit should fail him. It is then with good reason that the apostle refers us to him for continuance in this holy profession: "Stand fast in one spirit," says he; that is to say, by the Spirit of God, with which Jesus Christ has baptized you. Retain him amongst you, so that, delighting and animating you with his salutary presence, he may preserve your feet from backsliding. How many are there, dear brethren, whom the neglect of this great Comforter has thrown into deadly sorrows! They grieve him by the impurity of their lives, by the coldness of their devotion, by the licence of their thoughts, by the audacity of their reasonings, and by the impiety of their opinions. This Divine guest, grieved by such bad and irreverent conduct, departs from their souls, which are as immediately taken possession of by their spiritual enemy, who never fails in the end either to drive them into the abyss of infidelity or superstition. This is undoubtedly the real cause of the rebellion of the greater part of those who have quitted us. That we may not fall into their calamity, let us walk purely and holily under the eyes of the Holy Spirit. Let us serve him in truth; let us draw him into our hearts. Let us take no rest till we hear his voice, and experience his movements. But the apostle says that this Spirit is *one*. It is very true that that might relate to his person. For as there is but one Father, and one Son, so also there is but one Spirit. But I am of opinion that here St Paul rather looks to the uniformity of his graces; for he spreads in all believers, though in divers measures, the same faith, the same love, and the same hope; by reason of which the Scripture says that we all make but one and the same body: "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body," 1 Corinthians 12.

It is then in the enjoyment and participation of this one Spirit that we must look for our continuance in the church; it being evident that no body could live if agitated by two different minds, nor could one state support itself if the people were governed by divers and conflicting authorities; so also would the church

inevitably fall into ruin, were the members of whom it is composed led, or rather, to speak more properly, torn, by many contrary spirits.

III. But because this perseverance of believers is opposed in many places, and by many kinds of enemies, it is impossible to maintain it without fighting. This is the reason why the apostle adds, as the second part of our duty, "Striving together with one mind by the faith of the gospel." Some translate it *for* the faith of the gospel, or "together with;" as if it directed us to aid or help the faith with all our powers, to prevent its being extinguished, or tarnished, or obscured by the malice or violence of the enemy. But it seems much more proper to understand it as it is translated in our Bible, "by the faith;" by which faith is the weapon, and not merely the subject of our warfare. Thus you see that the apostle recommends us, in the first place, to fight; then, union and agreement in this spiritual combat; and finally, shows us what means or what arms we ought to employ, that is to say, the faith of the gospel, that we may happily accomplish it. As to the first, it is not here only that St Paul compares the condition of the Christian to a warfare. "Endure hardness, (says he to Timothy,) as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," 2 Timothy 2:3. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life." And elsewhere to the Ephesians, he bids us "put on the whole armour of God; for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers," Ephesians 6:11–12. And in 2 Corinthians 10:4, he says of our warfare, and of the arms that must be employed in it, that they "are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." Indeed, if you consider attentively the condition of a Christian, you will confess that that which Job formerly said of all men in general belongs to him in particular, namely, that his life was a warfare upon earth, Job 7:1, or, (to follow more closely the comparison of our apostle,) a furious and bloody battle, in which he is always in danger, and always engaged with cruel and implacable enemies. Jesus Christ is his General; the spectator, arbiter, and judge of his combats. The devil and all his servants, the profane, the superstitious, heretics, tyrants, and others whose numbers are infinite, are his adversaries. Our flesh itself, with its perverse inclinations, is on their side, and importunes us as much or more than the rest by its understanding and collusion with the enemy without. The subject of this battle is the glory and the truth of the Lord Jesus, our own salvation, and that of our brethren. The adversaries, to snatch this precious treasure from our hands, employ both force and artifice, and there is nothing so abominable or so infamous that is not good to them, if they can injure us by it. Who can tell all their stratagems, the colouring of their sophisms to embellish lies, the tricks of their chicanery to conceal the truth; the subtlety of their wit, their promises, their flatteries, their menaces, and their invectives; their words, sometimes as it were steeped in honey, and then again in gall; their arrows, some of gold, and others of iron; their calumnies against the good cause, their pretences for the bad; their assiduity, their zeal, and their indefatigable industry, in spying out all our steps, in searching out all the secrets of our condition, to find out our weak point and to attack us by it? Who can tell their harshness and their blind injustice to those who do not yield to them; the unkindnesses and the hatred with which they oppress

them; the shame and reproach with which they overwhelm them; the tricks and delusions they practise on them? If these artifices do not succeed, they at last resort to cruelty; and the history of the first and last ages of the church show us that there never was any thing more furious nor more inhuman among men, than the rage of the enemies of the gospel, except that other abominable and hellish device of Satan, when he raises up persecutors against us from among our own offspring; or false friends, who only remain with Jesus Christ to give him up to the priests, and who only kiss to betray. I have not enumerated many other of the wickednesses of the enemy. I should never have done were I to enter into all the particulars. Neither is it necessary, for the trials in which it pleases God to place us all every day teach us enough of them. It is then against this thick crowd, against men and devils, against the great and little, against the learned and the ignorant, against impiety and superstition, against fraud and violence, against enemies from without and false brethren from within, that you must fight, O Christian. If there is difficulty, there is still more honour in the enterprise; and its necessity is not less apparent than its glory. For it must be granted that in this engagement you must either conquer or perish eternally. There is no middle course. Courage, then, believers! Listen to the apostle, who cries to you, "Fight;" and to Christ, who promises to assist you in the combat, and to crown you in the heavens after the victory. Stand fast, and support this great onset. Shut your ears to the flatteries and to the promises of the enemy. Reject the vain fancies of those who undertake to make truth agree with error, and light with darkness. Persevere in an open and pure profession of the gospel. Oppose *your* confession to the blasphemies of the *enemy; your* prayers to *his* curses; *your* thoughts, *your* words, and *your* actions to all *his* efforts. May the day of the Lord find you standing. "Whosoever shall persevere unto the end, the same shall be saved," Matthew 14:13. (38)

But remember, believers, to fight together, as the apostle directs, with one mind, and one soul, as the original means, μύα ψυχη. As there is no body or society more noble than the church, so there is none in which union and concord are more necessary. You are begotten of the same seed, that is to say, of the gospel, brought up in the same family, nourished with the same food, animated by the same Spirit, destined to the same inheritance. If so many close ties cannot unite you, at any rate let this common warfare in which you are engaged, this common danger that you run, and these common enemies with whom you contend, extinguish your differences, and make you rally together for your common preservation and defence. Often among the kingdoms of the earth, the fear of an enemy without stays the misunderstandings and quarrels within. Let us imitate in this respect the prudence of the children of this world. Let every difference that there may be in our thoughts, our dispositions, and affections sleep in eternal silence. Let us all do what the cause of the Saviour requires, keeping whatever strength we have for this enterprise alone, without wasting the least part elsewhere. Whatever you may have of wisdom or courage, turn it against the enemy. May he alone feel the vigour of your arm, and the point of your weapons. It is not against your brother that they should be employed. They are made, and they have been given you, to defend, and

not to wound him; to preserve, and not to shed his blood. God forbid that the army of Israel should do as the army of Madian did formerly; which, alarmed by a spirit of terror and division, turned against themselves, every one raising his sword against his companion. For if, when well united together, we can nevertheless only subsist by a miracle, what can we expect but certain and inevitable ruin if we separate; and if, instead of helping, we tear each other? I say it with regret, it is nothing but our division, my brethren, which has prevented the defeat of the enemy, and the triumph of the church. If we had all fought together, we should tong ago have been conquerors. But Satan, who cannot stand against our united forces, planned to separate them, by throwing amongst us unhappy differences, which have weakened our body, and uselessly consumed against ourselves that which ought only to have been employed against the common enemy. As the effects of discord are so fatal, dear brethren, if we love the glory of God, if we desire our own salvation, let us promptly extinguish whatever there may have been amongst us of hatred, animosity, differences, and passions, contrary to that mutual love which we owe to one another. Let us give all our interest to the glory of God, and the salvation of the church, and let us unite in such a perfect concord, that it may be truly said of us as of the early Christians, "that we have but one heart and one soul," Acts 4:32; and that all this congregation may be like a divine army of people, who, animated by one Spirit, and aiming at the same object, fight all together with one mind. Then we shall experience the truth of the saying of the prophet, "that it is there that the Lord has commanded his blessing, and life for evermore," Psalm 133.

Besides, for this great combat, the apostle arms us with faith alone. By it believers have "conquered kingdoms," Hebrews 11. By it they have "shut the mouths of lions, stopped the violence of fire, and escaped the edge of the sword." By it they waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens. *Faith* is the *shield* of the believer, by which he quenches the fiery darts of the enemy, Ephesians 6:16. It is the victory which has overcome the world. For if we are really and truly persuaded of the truth of the gospel, what temptation can there be that shall be capable of shaking us? What arrow or what sword shall not be turned back by such a solid shield? Will the multitude of the enemy, the pomp of their preparation, their strength, and their fury, make us throw down our arms? How can they, when faith shows us Jesus Christ on our side, with the legions of his angels, infinitely more powerful both in number and strength than all the armies of the world and of hell? We will laugh at their efforts, and be as little touched with the magnificence of their promises as alarmed at the terror of their threatenings, because faith shows us blessings and evils infinitely greater than those of the world; the first prepared for those who persevere, and the others for those who are led away by temptation. Prisons, losses, exile, afflictions, torments, and even death itself, can do nothing against us; as we are assured that for these little sufferings we shall for ever enjoy a perfect felicity in the heavens. For the earth and its dust, God will give us heaven and its light; for false hope and vanity, a solid and weighty glory; for trifling pleasures, eternal bliss; for a building of clay, a heavenly palace; for a vile life, a blessed immortality. Dear brethren, it is only the want of faith which ruins us. If we

have it only as a grain of mustard seed, we may remove mountains, as says the Lord in the Gospel, Matthew 17:20; that is to say, we might do wonders. There would be no difficulty that we should not conquer, no mountain could present itself which faith could not remove, nor abyss that it would not close before us.

IV. After having supplied us with so good a weapon, the apostle is right in ordering us, in the third place, "to be in nothing terrified by our adversaries." I acknowledge, that to look at them with the mind of the flesh, they are capable of causing us alarm. But if you regard them with the eye of faith, you will find that all their fury ought only to excite pity, and not apprehension. For in reality they are but an empty trouble, a tempest which, with much noise and clamour, discharges itself uselessly, without being able to do us any harm. Let them fret and storm as much as they please, they cannot take from us the Lord Jesus, the peace of conscience, the joy of the Holy Ghost, the heavenly life; that is to say, in one word, supreme happiness. Their blows, for the most part, can but fall on this poor flesh, and upon those things with which it is surrounded. Our true life, and our true blessings, are in safety, above the reach of their rage. "Fear not (says the Lord) those who can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." Besides, they have no other power over our body, or over the other things which we possess on earth, but what God gives them, that same God who is for us, our Prince and our Father. Live then in assurance, O truly blessed flock of the Lord Jesus. Look on your adversaries without dismay, with a calm and stedfast soul. These great efforts, in which they exhaust all their mind and strength, shall fall on their own heads, and instead of ruining, will only help to establish you. Instead of disturbing, they will permanently establish your happiness. And this is what St Paul represents, when he adds, in speaking of their hatred, and of the persecution with which they pursue the truth, "that it is to them a token of perdition, but to you of salvation." For since it is just in God (as the apostle teaches elsewhere) that affliction should be given to those who afflict us, and rest to us who are afflicted, according to his immutable decree to punish for ever in hell those who persecute the gospel, and to crown with immortal glory in the heavens those who suffer for the truth; what greater or more certain testimony can you have, both of their perdition and of your salvation, than the afflictions that they make you suffer for the profession of his law. I acknowledge that there is a great difference in the union of these two consequences with that which precedes them, and that if the persecution of the one merits hell, heaven is not due to the patience of the others, judging them by strict justice. But while it is the goodness and mercy of the Lord which crowns your patience with his glory, whereas it is his justice which punishes the cruelty of your persecutors with the torments of hell; nevertheless, as the consequences of these two effects are necessary and certain, and that it cannot be but that the believer, suffering with patience, shall be saved, nor but that the adversary, persecuting the truth, must perish, it is obvious that the war which they wage against you on account of the gospel is a clear and certain demonstration, both of their perdition and of your salvation. Far then, from being troubled by this sort of affliction, you ought, on the contrary, to regard it as the seal of your happiness; and as to your adversaries,

39

to conceive for them more pity than hatred or indignation, seeing the unhappy end to which they are proceeding, by the blind hatred and unjust persecution of that which they ought most to love and cherish. You see, beloved brethren, what is the meaning of the lesson which the apostle gives us to-day in this text. Never was it more needed than in these degenerate times, in which impiety and error, profaneness and superstition, perfidy and treason from within, hatred and violence from without, employ every thing that is most malignant and dangerous against the truth. Believers, as God has given you the grace to know and to embrace its profession, fight valiantly for it, and show in this conflict a constancy and a courage worthy of so good a cause. Be not troubled, either by the efforts of the enemies, or the seductions of false brethren, nor yet by the bad examples of apostates. Fix your eyes on Jesus the Prince of your profession. May nothing snatch from your heart the Divine deposit that he has placed there. Preserve it more tenderly than the apple of your eye. Stand nobly fast in one spirit. Fight together with one heart by the faith of the gospel, opposing your union to the plots of the enemy; the truth of heaven to the lies of the earth; the hope of salvation to the threats of the world; the consolation of the Spirit, and the glory of the world to come, to the evils we must endure in this; and to calumny a conversation which is truly worthy of this heavenly doctrine, of which you make profession: so that after having here fought this good fight, kept the faith, and finished your course, you may one day receive, from the merciful hand of the Lord Jesus, in the company of saints and angels, that crown of righteousness laid up for those who shall have loved his appearing. Thus may it be with you; and to him, the only true God, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be honour, praise, and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Preached at Charenton,
Sunday, 10*th June*, 1640.

SERMON VII.

Verse 28–30.

And that of God, For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

One of the Christian's greatest consolations, amidst all his conflicts, is the firm assurance which he feels that all his affairs are conducted by the providence of God, and that nothing can happen to him but by Divine permission. For this sovereign Lord, loving us infinitely, and being moreover perfectly wise and powerful, if we be persuaded that it is he who governs our life, it is impossible but that we should look forward with a well-grounded hope of a happy termination to all the difficulties in which we may find ourselves involved. For this reason we ought always to have our eyes upon his hand, and consider it as the true source which dispenses to us good or evil; to enjoy the one with gratitude, and to bear the other with submission. But we ought to be particularly armed with this thought in those afflictions which from their nature most violently trouble our mind, and be certain that it is the Lord which sends them, and that without his will and his order neither men, nor other causes which alarm us, could have any power against us. Thus Job, when suddenly overwhelmed with divers calamities, did not fix his mind either upon the Sabeans and Chaldeans who had ravaged and pillaged his flocks, nor on the tempest which had crushed all his family under the ruins of a single house; but rising above the heavens to God himself, and acknowledging him as the true author of all these severe blows, made this beautiful and magnificent confession, "The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." David afterwards did the same in a case of a similar nature, when Shimei insolently insulting him in his deep affliction; "Let him do it, (said he to his servants,) for the Lord has said to him, Curse David," 2 Samuel 16:11. This our apostle points out to his Philippians in the text we have just read, for their consolation under the persecutions they were suffering for the gospel. He conjures them in the preceding verses not to be alarmed either by the menaces or cruelties of their adversaries, telling them that these trials would terminate in the perdition of the persecutors, and in the salvation of the persecuted. Now, to keep

and fix this thought in their hearts, he recalls to their recollection, that it is God who guides the whole business; so that from the power, wisdom, and justice of this great Director, they should wait with confidence the happy success which he promises them in this conflict: "And that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me." The phrase at the beginning, "And that of God," may relate to both the points to which we have adverted; that is to say, as much to the perdition of the persecutors, who were hastening it by their outrages, as to the salvation of believers, who were advancing to it by their sufferings; for it is evident, in the doctrine of Scripture, that however wicked and impious the cruelties of the enemies of the gospel may be against believers, nevertheless, it cannot happen without the permission and the guidance of the Lord, who also punishes the rebellion of those who reject his grace, and do not receive the love of his truth; leaving them to fall into horrors worthy of the curse of heaven and earth, and particularly directing the point of their rage against those of his servants whom he desires either to chastise, prove, or glorify. And this is what David meant in saying that God had "commanded Shimei to curse him;" not to signify that the Lord (that is to say, equity and goodness itself) had incited this wretch to commit so abominable an outrage, or that he had given him an order for it either by word or vision; but rather, that finding these evils in the heart of this miserable being, he was expressly willing to permit that they should be poured out on his servant for the purpose of humbling him. But although this meaning may be very true, it appears in this place that the apostle was only thinking of what regarded believers. This is the only, or at least the principal, design of his words, as appears by the reason he adds, which only relates to believers; "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Jesus Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;" evidently signifying by these words, "and that of God," that he meant only, or principally, the arrangement which the Lord had made of conducting the Philippians to salvation by the sufferings with which they were exercised for the profession of his gospel. For this reason, without stopping to inquire into the conduct of Divine Providence with regard to persecutors, we will simply rest upon the fact that it has ordained the afflictions of believers, and consider the part that it takes in them, according to what the apostle teaches us in this text: and, that we may the better understand it, we will divide the exposition into three parts, examining, in the first place, what he says, "that it was freely given to the Philippians to believe in Christ;" and then what he adds, "that, besides that, it had also been freely given to them to suffer for the Lord;" and, finally, that which he particularly touches in their sufferings, in saying that they sustain a conflict like that which they had formerly seen in him, and also like the one in which they knew him to be then at Rome.

I. What he says at the beginning, that it was on the behalf of Christ that it was given them to believe in him, and also to suffer for him, seems to mean that it is for the love of the Lord Jesus, because of him, and for his sake, that God had given him these two graces; which is indeed perfectly true. For the Lord Jesus having by his

death appeased the anger of God, and opened a road for his loving-kindness, has made us capable of receiving his favours, whereas, without such a propitiation, we could have only been the objects of his indignation and vengeance; from whence it follows that he is the cause, and the only source, both of the first grace that God has given us, to believe, and of all the others which he adds, and particularly of the honour which he communicates to us when he chooses us for witnesses and defenders of his gospel. Nevertheless, to look at the words of the apostle as they are in the original, it seems that this is not what he here intends, and that these words, "for Christ," simply signify, "in what regards Jesus Christ, in that which concerns his cause and his gospel." As if he had said, that in the affairs of the Lord and of his salvation all is given to us freely, and nothing happens, with respect to them, which does not come from the pure bounty of God, and both what we do and what we suffer is alike grace. The apostle uses the same mode of speaking in the 10th verse of the 4th chapter, praising the Philippians, that the care they had of him was flourishing again; where the words which signify, "as to the care that you have for me," are arranged exactly in the same manner as these which are here employed, to say "for Christ, or in behalf of Christ," as those know who understand the Greek language.

As to the faith of which the apostle speaks in the first place, one may gather from his words three things: 1st, That faith is the gift of God; "it is given you to believe," says he. Secondly, That it is a *free gift*, that is to say, has been communicated to us by the *sole* goodness of God, without any merit on *our part*; "it is freely given you," says he; for the word here employed by the apostle signifies precisely that. And, finally, That it is a grace peculiar to believers, and not common to other men; "it is given to *you*" says he, opposing *them* to *others*, and particularly to the adversaries of whom he spoke in the preceding verse. That faith is a gift of God, is a truth so evident, that there is no Christian who does not acknowledge it to be so. And you will see it, easily, if you consider for a moment, on the one side, what is the object of faith; and, on the other, what is the power of our nature. Faith is a certain and assured knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel; it is "to believe in Jesus," to see, with open eyes, the mercy, the wisdom, the power, and the justice of God displayed in their highest degree on the cross of his Son for the redemption of men. The things which are the *objects* of faith are all heavenly and Divine; viz. the purpose of God to send his Son into the world, and to clothe him with our flesh, and to deliver him up to the death of the cross, the price of his sufferings, and the expiation of our sins; his resurrection, and his triumph, a blessed immortality, the exquisite and singular example of holiness and of love which the gospel presents to us. Never had the eye of man seen any of these things, his ear had never heard them, nor had they ever entered into his heart to conceive. It is God alone who, from the depth of his treasures, has drawn forth this new and unknown wisdom. And as it is he who has revealed it by the Son of his love, it is he also who has presented us its image by the hand of his ministers, having, by the power of his Spirit, raised up the apostles and their successors, and particularly those who have taught us. All this is the work of his goodness, and of his power. But this is not all. Besides that, the substance itself

of this holy doctrine is altogether the fruit and the production of God, neither men nor angels having been capable of revealing any thing like it; the very circumstance
(41) of our having received it into our hearts, and been persuaded of its truth, is also a gift of this same Lord. You see likewise that the apostle does not simply say that faith has been given us, which a malicious person might, in some degree, pervert, as being the sole object of faith, and of the doctrine that it embraces, which all acknowledge to be the instruction of God. But he says expressly, "that it is given us to believe in Jesus Christ," which necessarily implies that this movement itself of our heart, opening to the light of the gospel, and receiving the truth that the preacher presents to it, is a gift of God, and not a work of nature. I acknowledge that if our mind were in its right and legitimate state, similar to that in which it was originally created, it would receive this truth as soon as it was presented to it; and that, to make us believe the mysteries of the gospel, it would only be necessary to declare them to us, as to make a man that can see perceive an object, it only requires to be placed before his eyes. But the eye of our understanding having been injured, or rather blinded, by sin, which has spoiled and changed all the powers of our nature, proposing the gospel to us is no more sufficient to insure our belief, than would presenting visible objects to a blind man suffice to make him see. And this is what the apostle teaches us elsewhere, where, speaking of the mysteries of the gospel, he says, "that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," those which the Spirit of God has revealed to his servants, "for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," 1 Corinthians 2:14. Only it should be remarked, that instead of its being a simple infirmity and want of natural power, claiming rather pity than blame, which prevents the blind from seeing the light which is offered him, it is a voluntary sin, deserving the hatred of God and men, which makes the unbeliever misunderstand and reject the truth which is proposed to him. But if the causes are different, the effects, nevertheless, are similar; it being no more possible for the natural man to understand and believe the gospel, than for the blind man to see the sun. Also, as when a blind man is restored to sight and to the perception of visible objects, there are none who do not acknowledge that this blessing is a gift from Heaven, it being clear that nature could not produce such an effect; so also ought we to confess, that if we believe in Jesus Christ, it is a grace which has been given us of God, and not an emotion which we owe to the natural strength of our mind. You see also that the Lord, speaking to believers in the 6th chapter of St John, verse 45, says, quoting the prophet Isaiah, "that they are taught of God," because it is he who, by the voice of his Spirit, moulds them into the obedience of his word, and writes his covenant in the heart, as says another prophet, Jeremiah 31:32. It is he who opened the heart of Lydia to attend to St Paul, Acts 16:14. Paul plants, and Apollos waters; but they are neither of them any thing. It is God which giveth the increase. We are his husbandry, and his work, 1 Corinthians 3:6–7, 9. It is he who revealed his secret to Peter; it was not fiesh and blood, Matthew 16:17. It is he who revealed his Son to Paul, shining in his heart, that he might enlighten the Gentiles,

Galatians 1:15. In fine, it is he who, according to his good pleasure, hides these things from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes, 2 Corinthians 4:6.

But the apostle does not say simply that it has been given us to believe. He makes use of a word which signifies that it has been given to us freely, as our Bibles have faithfully translated it; and by so doing has refuted two errors, both contrary to the truth. The first is that of those who, acknowledging that faith is a gift, add, that the Lord makes a present of it to those who have made a good use of the light of nature; as if, for example, they were to see a pagan who lives sincerely in his error, they pretend that the Lord, induced by this praiseworthy conduct, gives him the faith of the gospel; and this is what they call in the schools "grace of congruity," or preparation for grace. From this they are not far who say, that the good use of the pretended free-will in afflictions, mortifications, and the humility before God which they produce in the hearts of the elect, is the preparation which invites him to distribute faith to them. The apostle condemns the vanity of these imaginations, saying, in one word, that it is given to us *freely* to believe. For according to these people, faith is not a free gift; it has not been given to us for nothing, but for and in consequence of these pretended preparations. Besides, as, according to the apostle, Romans 14:23, all that is done without faith is sin, it is impossible to understand how man, before having faith, can do any thing which should either force or invite God to give it to him. What! do sins invite God to do good to men? to give them the greatest of all blessings, faith, which comprehends in itself salvation and eternal life? Now if these pretended preparations invite God to give us faith, undoubtedly they must then please him, notwithstanding which the apostle tells us elsewhere, that without faith it is impossible to please him, Hebrews 11:6. Finally, if God crowns some works with the gift of faith, or some dispositions previous to faith, he either does it in virtue of the works themselves, because they deserve it, or in consequence of some one of his promises. They will not say the former. For they expressly confess, that to speak properly man deserves nothing out of a state of grace. But neither can they pretend the latter, because the promises of God are only addressed to those who are in communion with him, and who consequently already have faith, without which none can enter into communion with God, according to that which the apostle teaches us in Hebrews 11:6, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." God then promises nothing to those who have not faith, and consequently neither gives it them, nor any thing else, in virtue of any promise which he had made, but from his goodness and free grace alone, without being at all obliged to do so, either by their works or his promises. The second error is of those who say that God gives faith to such as he foresees will make a good use of it. But if that were the case, what the apostle says, that he gives it to us freely to believe, would be false; it being evident that, according to this, faith would not be given us for nothing. God would give it in consideration of something that would be its price—some equivalent on the part of man; instead of which, that which is given gratuitously excludes all price, and he who receives the gift after having done something, and he who receives before he has performed any thing, (for with regard to the future and

the past there is no difference,) would both in the end pay a real price. To which I again add, that the imagination of these people destroys itself. For this foresight of which they speak, of the good use of faith, can only signify that God foresees; that supposing he gives faith to a man, to Peter or to Paul, for example, the individual having once this gift of grace, will in consequence love the Lord and his neighbour, that is to say, that he will have piety and love. Now faith is of such a nature, that he who possesses it truly has also piety and love, according to the doctrine of St John; "Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," 1 John 5:1; he loves (42) him by whom he is begotten, and those that are begotten of him; so that there is no man in whom you can presuppose faith, without also, as a necessary consequence, adding both piety and love. Thus it appears that God never foresees that any man will abuse faith, for that would be to foresee a false thing, an impossibility in itself, opposed to his own truth; and which cannot be said of the Lord without blasphemy. If then this pretended foresight of a good use of faith was the reason why he gives faith, he would give it to all men, it not being possible for any of those to whom he truly gives it to abuse it. Nevertheless, one sees by experience that the number of those to whom God gives faith is very limited, in comparison of those whom he permits to fall into infidelity. Let us then acknowledge that it is the grace of God alone, and not any consideration of what man has done, or of what he will do in future, which induces God to give him faith. He gives it to us that we may make a good use of it. This good use is the end and effect of his gift, but it is not its cause. From whence it follows, that, according to the apostle in this place, faith is truly, in every respect and degree, a free gift of God.

But in the third and last place, he again here gives us a very excellent lesson; that is to say, that the grace of God by which we believe, is peculiar to us, according to what he elsewhere expressly says, "that all men have not faith," 2 Thessalonians 3:2. For it is to distinguish believers from others, and to point out the advantage that they have over them, that he says to them individually, "It is given you to believe." Consequently, this gift was peculiar to them, as common things make no difference between the subjects to which they are common. From whence it appears how false is the opinion of those who dogmatize that the grace by which faith is produced in us is universal, and common either to all men, or at least to those to whom the gospel is preached. For if that were the case, it would not be the gift of God (common to all according to this supposition) which would distinguish the believer from the unbeliever, but the choice and effort of the man who receives that which others have rejected. Now St Paul desires that this gift of God which causes us to believe should distinguish us from others. "It is given you to believe," says he. According to the supposition of this error, he ought simply to say, "You have believed," and not, "It is given you to believe;" for it holds, that they had not a peculiar belief, the gift which had produced the belief in them being common to them (as they pretend) and to those who had rejected it. That which the apostle adds, that it is given them to suffer for Jesus Christ, still shows the same thing. For as this grace of God, from which the patience and the suffering of believers spring, was evidently peculiar to themselves, why was not that from which their faith came,

here expressed by the same word and in the same way, also peculiar to them? The thing speaks for itself. For when the Lord calls his elect to himself, he enlightens them, he teaches and instructs them in his will. Certainly the grace which he imparts is then peculiar to them, it being evident that he does nothing of the kind to infidels and rebels. And the Lord expressly declares this, "Every man that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me," John 6:45. Now neither unbelievers nor rebels come to him. They therefore have neither heard nor learned of him, they have had no share in that Divine teaching with which he favours his elect. And in fact you see that it is only believers who are said to be taught of God, as well in Isaiah as by our Lord and St Paul. Let it therefore be concluded, that to believe in Jesus Christ is a gift of the grace of God, aye, of a grace not common to all, but particular, and which the Lord vouchsafes to none but true believers.

II. But do not let us imagine that this beginning of our salvation is all that is afforded us by grace. The same grace which gives us the beginning gives also the progress and the end. The whole of this work depends on the merciful goodness and free favour of the Lord. Without it, it is as impossible for us to persevere as to believe. The apostle teaches this in the following words, "that it is given freely, not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for his sake." The whole life of men is full of suffering, and neither birth nor fortune can exempt any one from it. Nature subjects us to divers evils, and vice also procures for us its own afflictions, the discomforts of the body, the vexations of the mind, the loss of goods and honour, to say nothing of those punishments which the public laws award to some for their excesses. Sometimes also the lustre of moral honesty, or of extraordinary knowledge, or of some other good, esteemed by men, raises up against us envy and trouble. There is no manner of life on the earth which is not subject to its sufferings and its trials, and which has not (in some way or other) its persecutions and its martyrs. But this is not what the apostle means. It is not by the gift of the grace of the Lord that men enter into these sufferings. It is oftener by the award of his anger, and by the order of his avenging justice. These chastisements are rather the effect of his wrath than the gifts of his love. He speaks of those which the profession of the gospel draws upon us; when it is the name and the cause of the Lord Jesus which invites the persecutor to inflict, and us to endure them. For if it be heresy, or superstition, or infidelity which draw upon a man the hatred or the sword of those who persecute him, it is useless for *him* to say that it is the name of Jesus; it is not for *him* that he suffers, according to that true saying of the ancients, That it is not the suffering, but the cause, that makes the martyr. And as it is not the name of Christ which causes him to suffer, so neither is it his grace which gives him the courage to do so. It is the spirit of Satan, or the rage of superstition; for the devil has also his martyrs, whom he disguises as cunningly as he can, in order that he may deceive men by the specious colouring of false strength of mind, or pretended patience. I will say still more; although it be truly the profession of the gospel which incites the world against us, nevertheless, if in the suffering you endure for so good a cause you seek your own praise and the glory of your own name, it is not really for the Lord that you suffer. You are a martyr, not for *his truth*, but for *your*

own VANITY, one of the most abominable idols in the world. And if there be any unhappy person who suffers in this way, whose patience is such as to give you pleasure, it is at least very certain that his firmness is of earth, and not of heaven. It is a production of vice, and not a gift of grace; a work of the flesh, and not a fruit of the Spirit. But St Paul here speaks of a suffering for Jesus Christ, which is so in deed and in truth, and not only in the outward appearance. It is to that, and not to any other, that the eulogium belongs, which the apostle here gives, when he says that it is a gift of the grace of God. But here let us pause whilst we briefly solve an objection, which our adversaries derive from this passage, against the doctrine of the inseparable union of love with faith. For from what it declares, that it has been (43) given us freely, not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for him, they conclude that it is possible that a man may believe in the Lord without suffering for him, and consequently, without loving him, and without having love; pretending, that if it were otherwise, this language of the apostle would be vain and impertinent. But I answer, in the first place, that even granting what they say, and that it were possible for a man that believes in Jesus Christ not to suffer for him, nevertheless it does not follow from thence that we can have faith without love. For God does not call all those to suffer for his Son who have the necessary constancy and zeal so to do. And the apostle in this place speaks of the vocation to suffer really and in truth for the name of Jesus Christ, and not only of the patience necessary for doing so, meaning to say that it is a grace that God gave the Philippians to call them to so honourable an employment. Secondly, I say, that presupposing the apostle here to speak simply of the gift of patience, still it does not follow that it, or the love from which it springs, can be separated from faith. I acknowledge that faith and patience are two distinct gifts. But although different, it does not follow that they can be separated. How many things are there which, though varying in themselves, never subsist the one without the other! That faith and patience always go together does not prevent their being two graces from God. Their inseparable conjunction ought not to frustrate the glory which belongs to him of giving both to believers. It is on this account that the apostle considers them apart, although they subsist together, that he may amplify the liberality of the Lord towards us. And his language is no more irrelevant than what he elsewhere says of believers, "that they rejoiced not only in the hope of the glory of God, but also in tribulations," not to signify that one may be had without the other, (for it is certain that whoever rejoices in hope of the glory of God will also rejoice in tribulations,) but to deduce from it, and to display before our eyes, all the parts of the assurance, the joy, and the spiritual rejoicing that we have in the Lord, considering them separately, although they subsist together. This difficulty removed, I return to the text of the apostle, "that it is freely given to the Philippians to suffer for Jesus Christ." I willingly admit, that by these words he means, in the first place, that the resolution and firmness of the martyrs and confessors is a gift of grace; that it is God that freely gives them by his Spirit the courage and constancy necessary to sustain these conflicts. And if you well consider their history, and represent to yourselves the natural condition of these divine warriors, if you examine their

conduct, their word, the disposition of their mind, and even of their body, in the midst of those great and terrible trials, you will confess that their strength was undoubtedly the gift of the grace of God. Persons of all ages, sexes, and qualities are seen to suffer nobly for the name of a crucified man, all that the most horrible cruelty could invent. Young and old, men and women, great and small, ran to punishments and torments. Persons of a very delicate frame and education, who had never before seen a naked sword without turning pale, sprang cheerfully into the fire, for the love of their Jesus. Neither the severity of the judges nor the barbarity of tyrants, neither the cries of the people, nor the horrors of the executioners, nor the sword, nor the hatchets, nor tortures, nor gibbets, neither the ready wheels, nor the lighted fires, could make them give way. Full of a new courage, they despise all this bloody pomp of cruelty, and, as if they were fighting in insensible bodies, suffered with a contented mind barbarities which the executioners themselves could not inflict upon them without pity. They were heard to sing in the flames, and to bless God in the torments. A heavenly light of joy, sweetness, and humility might be perceived shining in their eyes and on their countenances. They suffered as other men triumph, and endured the most dreadful ignominy in the same manner as others enjoy the highest honours. To this blessed company we must unite those who, to preserve the faith and the religion of the Lord, voluntarily quitted, with a similar magnanimity, their goods, their honours, their houses, their beloved country, their wives, their little children, and all those other things which are not less dear to us than life. From whence could so great a courage spring? or strength so extraordinary, in persons naturally so weak, arise? What could so suddenly have transfused so much vigour into their minds and bodies? What could thus have changed their constitutions, miraculously taking from them every thing that was low and earthly, and clothing them with an invincible firmness, proof against every kind of attack? Let the profane say what they will, this strength, in so good a cause, could come to them from Heaven alone. Most undoubtedly it was God who perfected his strength in their weakness; who, by the power of his Spirit, sustained the weakness of their flesh. It was this great Comforter who inspired them with these heroic dispositions, who elevated them above themselves, and who poured into the hearts of men the thoughts, the courage, and the knowledge of angels. Let us acknowledge the hand of God in the patience of his servants, and let us say, with the apostle, that it is he who freely gave them to suffer for him. But besides that, St Paul particularly intends to signify in this place, that even that which the Philippians had been called to suffer for the name of the Lord was one of his favours.

From hence we learn two things. The one, That the persecution of believers is not a fortuitous event, which happens either by chance, or by the malice of men or devils alone. It is God, who guides the whole affair by a special providence. He sees the rage of the enemies of his people. He knows their designs, he perceives all that they are contriving against the gospel, and could (if such were his good pleasure) dissipate both their plans and their efforts in an instant. He lets them alone, and by secret arrangements manages their violence against every one of his servants,

as his supreme wisdom sees best. He himself marks the field where the combat is to be decided. He orders the weapons and the blows, and rules every action. He calls his warrior, and himself places him in front of the enemy. Christian, do not stop at men, and at the appearances of things. Be convinced that it is the Lord who arranges all your trials. You will enter into none but by his permission. But the apostle also shows us, in the second place, That this employment which God gives us, and this calling which he directs us to suffer for him, is a gift of his grace. I well know that flesh forms quite another judgment, and that of all the favours of God, there is none that it esteems and desires less than this. It takes it rather for an effect of his hatred than of his love, and considers it an unkindness rather than a bounty. Thus in war, a coward does not think that it is favouring a soldier to send him on an assault or to a conflict, or to give him some other commission where there will be blows to endure, neither would he think himself obliged to a friend, who would choose him to go and defend his quarrel at the peril of his own life. But these are only the thoughts of low and pusillanimous minds. They who are brave and noble
(44) judge otherwise, and so highly value this sort of employment, that they are vexed if it be given to others, thinking that to leave them behind on such occasions is to despise and underrate their courage, forasmuch as they value honour more than life. They deem the choice made of their persons as a testimony of the high opinion entertained of their valour and fidelity, and consequently consider it as a gratification. It is the same, dear brethren, in the government of Jesus Christ. Lukewarm minds, which have not tasted aright the goodness and excellence of this sovereign Lord, and who have but a weak desire for his glory and for his service, do not regard it as a good to suffer for him. But his true disciples, they who have seen in his light the wonders of his kingdom, and who have been strongly animated thereby, they who, like his apostles, have been baptized from heaven, and whose feelings have been sanctified by his Spirit from on high, *these*, my brethren, think there is nothing on earth more honourable and more glorious than to suffer for the Lord. Such were those blessed ones whose names and praise St Paul has registered in his Epistle to the Hebrews, who took the reproach of Christ for greater riches than the treasures of the world. Such were the holy apostles, who, having been ignominiously scourged by the Jews for the sake for Jesus Christ, rejoiced (says the sacred history) to be "counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." This also was the opinion of our St Paul, who took pleasure in infirmities, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, and in distress, for Christ; who rejoiced in his greatest tribulations, and gloried in all the disgrace which he suffered for him, as his most splendid trophies. Such likewise were the feelings of that noble army of martyrs, who not only bravely and cheerfully endured torments and death, but who could also loudly praise the Lord for having thus called them to his service. Indeed, if, setting aside the tenderness of the flesh, you will consider the thing itself, what can be esteemed more honourable than suffering for the name of the Lord Jesus? This Jesus is the King of ages, the Prince of angels, the Lord of glory. His gospel is the highest of all truth, it is the salvation of the world, the seed of life and immortality. For what better subject then could we suffer? If men (as we have before observed)

consider it a high privilege to be chosen by their princes to fight for their interests, how transcendently more honoured is the martyr of Jesus Christ, whom this Prince of eternity has chosen to maintain his quarrel! whom he consecrates with his heavenly unction to enter into this trial! to yield a public testimony to his truth! to be the advocate of his cause, the teacher of the human race, the spectacle of heaven and of earth! Angels look upon and bless him; they accompany him both at the entrance and issue of the combat; they honour his stedfastness with their applause, and conduct and present him to their Lord and Master to receive from his own hand the crown of glory and immortality. Men gaze upon him with astonishment. The church preserves his memory here below; and his very enemies are constrained to praise him. But besides all this, he has moreover this obligation to his sufferings, that they render him conformable to Jesus Christ, and cause him to bear the image of the Son of God, consecrated as you know by his passion, and elevated into the heavens by his cross. Let cowardice judge as it will, there is no act in the world more pure, more noble, or more glorious than this. And the blood which the martyrs shed, or the lives that they lose in the conflict, must be lightly esteemed; this loss is too insignificant to be put in competition with the acquirement of so much glory and profit. For what is this life, but a wretched breath that we may lose to-morrow? Shall I call it an *enjoyment*, or a *suffering* of a few years; a vapour, which the heat of a fever, or of some other malady, will consume; which the fraud or the force of an enemy, or of any one of those innumerable accidents in the midst of which we live, may take from us perhaps in a few months or days? If you could keep it for ever, your cowardice would have some more reason. But since it must be lost, who cannot see that it is a great folly to prefer yielding it to the infirmities of nature than to the glory of Christ? Again, I would add, that to employ it in his cause is not to lose it. It is to put it to interest, as in exchange for what we sacrifice for his glory, he will give us another infinitely better, celestial, immortal, and full of all kinds of blessing; whilst that which we live here below is weak, and vile, and subject to all sorts of evils. Let us then, dear brethren, conclude with the apostle, that it is a gift of the grace of God to suffer for his Son.

From which appears how greatly they err who attribute merit to the good works of believers. For if there be any which can pretend to be such, doubtless it must be martyrdom, the most excellent of all: and after all, what reason can it have to pretend to be such, when it is a gift of the grace of God? Those who defend this error acknowledge that faith merits nothing. Now the apostle says the same of martyrdom as he says of faith, and declares that it has been freely given us to suffer for Christ as well as to believe in him. It must then be acknowledged that in suffering for him we deserve no more than for believing in him. It would be a very ridiculous absurdity to pretend, that for having received a favour from one's prince, we should therefore deserve to have a share in his crown. As then martyrdom is a gift and a grace of God, he who suffers it would not be more reasonable, if for having been so honoured by the Lord he were to boast of having merited his paradise. Thus you see in the Apocalypse, that the most excellent servants

of God throw their crowns at the feet of the Lamb; and instead of demanding a recompence from him for their services, they give him thanks for them.

But it is time to finish this discourse, of which there only remains one point, and that, presenting no difficulty, can be disposed of in a few words. It is what the apostle particularly says of the sufferings of the Philippians in the last verse: "Having the same conflict that you have seen in me, and now you hear to be in me." The conflict of the apostle which the Philippians had seen was the persecution he endured in their city when he was taken on account of his preaching, and dragged before the magistrates, shamefully scourged through, their unjust sentence, and then put in irons in the prison. The Philippians had seen him in this trial. As to the one in which he was when he wrote them this Epistle, a prisoner at Rome for the name of the Lord, they had not seen it indeed, but they had heard of it. Saying, then, that they are sustaining such conflicts as his, he means, that they also are persecuted by their magistrates and fellow citizens for the profession of the gospel. In this conflict the believer has for his adversaries the devil, the world, and his own flesh. Their weapons are the promises, and the threatenings, and the injuries, and the caresses, and the prisons, and the chains, and the swords, with all that impiety and superstition employ against the church. The arms of the believer are faith, hope, charity, patience, humility, constancy, and those other spiritual graces by which he resists the blows of the enemy, holding fast without ever relaxing in the profession of piety, and remaining, by these means, victorious to the end. It is the condition of all true Christians to be subjected to this conflict. The apostles of the (45) Lord entered into it first. Their disciples, (you see,) and the churches they planted, passed through it also after them. None is admitted into the school of Christ, but on condition of submitting to it. "Whoever will come after me," says Christ, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me," Matthew 16:24; and his apostle says, "Every one who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," 2 Timothy 3:12.

Assume, then, dearly beloved brethren, this good and noble resolution, to suffer with the Lord, that you may one day live with him, *now* taking part in his cross, that you may *hereafter* share his glory. Give him thanks, in the first place, that you believe in him, and humbly acknowledge, with the apostle, that it is a gift of his grace. Value this favour at its just price, and every day admire its wonders, whether in considering its value, or regarding its extent. As to its worth, it is the greatest of all the gifts that God has given to men, as it includes in itself all the riches of his Christ, of his Spirit, and of his heaven. This faith which he has given you is the only happiness of man, his salvation, his life, and his glory; it is the only remedy against death and sin. It draws you from hell, and opens to you an entrance into heaven, from slaves of Satan it makes you children of God. Without it man is most miserable, and with it he cannot but be eternally blessed. You are rich enough, since God has given you such a precious jewel. Do not then envy those whose bodies he fills with his provisions, to whom he gives, as formerly to Esau, the fatness of the earth for an inheritance, honours, riches, pleasure, and the other good things of this world. All this is but a fashion which passes away, (as the apostle

elsewhere says, 1 Corinthians 7:3,) a form, because it has but a false appearance and a vain colouring to please the eye, but not any true and solid substantial good to satisfy the soul. Witness the perpetual disgust in which we see those who amuse themselves with these things, and the insatiable ardour of their lusts, which are never satisfied. But the worst of it is still that this vain shadow passes away. It has nothing that continues. It flies while people are looking at it, and escapes from their hands when they expect to take hold of it, leaving them full of anguish and despair: death at last destroys both them and their idol. Do not grieve that he has not given you such wretched possession, so full of vanity and illusion. The gift that he has made you in leading you to believe in his Son is of quite another nature. This gift, if you cherish it, and rejoice in it as you ought, will fill your soul with consolation. It will cause Jesus Christ to inhabit it in the fulness of all his blessings. He will shed abroad his Spirit. He will extinguish the fire of earthly passions. He will drive from it fear and vexation, lust and envy. He will put peace into the conscience, assurance of the love of God, and the precious hope of his glory; and when you leave this world, will conduct you into his sanctuary, to possess there, for ever, his kingdom, and his eternity. But what also extremely increases the value of this gift that God has imparted to us is, that it is neither universal nor very common. How many nations are there in the universe who have never heard of his Christ! or who have never heard his gospel but corrupted and injured by superstition! and of those in whose ears his pure word has been preached, how many are there who have rejected it! What have we done to the Lord which has induced him to draw us from the number of these miserable and ungrateful beings, to touch our hearts, and to open them to the voice of his Son, by leading us to believe in him? What, then, will be our insensibility, if, having received from him so signal a favour, we do not render to him a special gratitude; living in the light of the faith with which he has favoured us, holily, righteously, soberly, and godlily; flying, as from a deadly pestilence, from all that can displease so good and so merciful a Lord, and seeking, with continual care and ardent zeal, all that may be pleasing to him! This will be the true means, dear brethren, of preparing us to suffer nobly for his glory, if he should ever vouchsafe to us such an honour. For if we serve him faithfully, let us not doubt but that, on such an occasion, he will give us the necessary strength to acquit ourselves worthily in so great and so illustrious a duty. But in whatever way he shall be pleased to dispose of us, may it be to the glory of his name, to the edification of men, and to our own salvation. And to him, the only true God, blessed over all things, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honour and praise for ever and ever. Amen.

Preached at Charenton,
Sunday, 15th July, 1640.

CHAPTER 2.
SERMON VIII.

VERSE 1–4.

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

AMONG all the religions which have sprung up in the world, none has ever been found to have a higher design than the Christian religion. For it aspires at nothing less than to change men into angels, and to form here on earth living images of those blessed societies which dwell in the heavens. It drives away error, vice, hatred, and discord from amongst those who obey it. It takes from them meanness, lewdness, and malignity, with which sin has filled the earth. It sheds there light, love, union, and the eternity of heaven; and purifying the mind, the heart, and the affections of every believer, binds them together, and makes them one body, a Divine brotherhood, and a celestial city. Such was this holy church, conceived and produced by the first rays of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that Jerusalem formerly saw, with astonishment, arise and grow in a single day; full (46) of such perfect love and piety, that the sacred history tells us that all the multitude of those of which it was composed had but one heart and one soul, Acts 4:32. Such also were other churches propagated from this one in the lands of the Gentiles. Truth and holiness flourished there, and love reigned among them; and if there were found in the profession of Christianity either persons, or entire societies, otherwise disposed, they were imperfect, irregular, and monstrous productions, not conformed to the true and natural design of the gospel. You see it clearly by the preaching of the holy apostles, the first ministers of this celestial instruction, who laboured every where to strip men of all forms and habits of sin, only to render them participators of the Divine nature in righteousness and holiness. Paul, who so often speaks to you from this place, preaches nothing else. It is the subject and the object of all that he has left us in his Epistles. You have heard before, in the first

chapter, with what care he presses the Philippians to live in a way worthy of the gospel. You will hear him again in this and the following chapter treating the same matter with the same warmth. He conjures them here, at the beginning, by the most efficacious motives he could urge, to live in perfect union, love, and humility. For this purpose he sets before them in a very striking manner the example of the Lord Jesus, and goes on to promise them a visit from Timothy and from himself, that the expectation of these two great teachers might animate them in well-doing. But for the present, we will only examine the first part contained in the four verses we have read; and to give you a clearer exposition of them, we will consider, by the gracious assistance of the Lord, three points distinctly and consecutively. The first is the adjuration which the apostle makes to the Philippians in these terms: "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy." The second is the exhortation which he adds to concord and union; for it is in that that the fulfilment of his joy, which he so affectionately asks of them, consists: "That ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." The third point is the recommendation he makes them, in the two following verses, to humility and brotherly affection, the two nursing-mothers of concord: "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

I. As to the first point, the apostle has expressed it with so much ardour and emphasis, that it would be difficult to find in any other place in his Epistles any thing more pathetic and affectionate than this; for he places before them all that is sweetest, most tender, and forcible to obtain from them what he wishes. Being the apostle of the Lord, the master, and, as it were, the father of the Philippians, having begotten their whole church through the gospel, he had the right and authority to command them. Notwithstanding which, he does not use it. He strips himself of all the dignity of his office. He humbles himself to the extreme condescension of *supplicating* those who *owe* him obedience. He throws himself as it were at their feet; and, as if he asked them not a duty, but an alms, implores their compassion, and the bowels of their pity, entreating them in a manner so sweet and humble, that the poorest beggar could not say more in his greatest need: "If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy." It was love and affection, my brethren, that constrained this holy being to these terms; for you will see afterwards that in reality he asked nothing from the Philippians but that they should be perfect and happy, an evident sign that their good was his most ardent desire, his satisfaction, and his fervent joy; which could only proceed from a very great and most cordial affection. He acts like a good father, the power of whose natural affection obliges him to supplicate his children with tears, and to conjure them by every thing that he imagines to have most power over their minds. If you have (he says to them) any respect for him who has brought you into the world; if you have any remembrance of the care that I have taken to feed and educate you; if my blood, and my affection,

and the desire that I have for your good and honour, be any consideration to you; love one another, I beseech you, my dear children, and live together in tender friendship and concord. This is exactly the image the apostle here uses, except that instead of nature and the flesh, he derives the arguments of his prayer from grace and from the Spirit; and instead of his services, represents to them his wants, willing to owe what he requested of them to their pity rather than to his merit. He touches upon four principal motives which obliged them to grant him his request; of which the first was Christian consolation; the second, the comfort of love; the third, the communion of the Spirit; the fourth, compassion and mercy. I connect all the four with what he had said at the beginning, "in Christ:" "If there be any consolation in Christ." For he signifies, in my opinion, by this word, the fellowship of the Lord Jesus, and the grace we have through being in him by the faith of his gospel. He means Jesus Christ as he is preached by his ministers, and believed on by the faithful. If there be then any consolation in this Christ, whom I have announced to you, whom ye have received, and who dwells in your hearts by faith; if there be in him any comfort of love, any fellowship of the Spirit, any tenderness of mercy; if this Divine Lord has impressed truly on those who obey him some feeling of these things; if his discipline and fellowship have formed our minds to such a state as exists among those who are in him, a mutual interchange of consolation, of love, of soul, and of compassion; I beseech you all now to exercise these sacred duties towards me.

The first of these four things which is found in Jesus Christ is "consolation." It is the duty that we ought to perform towards those who are in affliction, both by words and deeds, doing for them and saying to them, in the best way that we can, whatever we judge capable of diminishing their weariness and of re-establishing spiritual joy in their hearts. The comfort of love, which he adds in the second place, is nearly the same thing; it is as if he had said that love obliged us to contribute to the comfort of our brethren the same help and attention as we owe to those we love. The fellowship of the Spirit, of which he speaks in the third place, is the spiritual union which exists among believers, not earthly, nor indeed carnal, but real and solid, founded upon this consideration, that they are all children of the same Father, formed, quickened, and guided by one Spirit, so that they have in this respect a very close connexion; and if they are different and separated according to the flesh, they are notwithstanding joined and united according to the Spirit. The cordial affections and mercies that he instances, in the last place, are the feelings of pity that we have for those who suffer; these he calls "bowels," (for the word that we have translated "cordial affections" properly signifies the entrails, after the manner of the Hebrews, whose style he follows,) for that of which the heart is the seat. The remainder of what he says, "if there be any of these things in Christ," is not to cast any doubt upon it, as if the Lord did not certainly produce all these effects in all those to whom he makes himself known by his word, and by his Spirit, or as if the apostle were not assured of it; but, on the contrary, he means that this is very certain, and that it is not possible to belong to the Lord, without having received from him these impressions. The word "if" is affirmative in this place, as

47

it often is elsewhere, and takes what follows for granted, as true and undoubted, as when we say, "*If* you be children, honour then your father;" which is the same as if we were to say, Since you are children, honour then your father; it being evident that without so doing you render yourselves unworthy of that name. Here it is the same, when the apostle says, "If there be any consolation, and any love in Christ;" it is the same as if he said, "Since Jesus Christ gives all these dispositions to those who are in him, show indeed that you are in him by fulfilling my joy." For the Lord Jesus recommends nothing so much in his word as love towards our brethren. He desires that we should be interested in all their blessings and afflictions; that we should feel their sorrows as our own; that we should grudge nothing, not even our blood and our life, for their consolation and edification. And the better to impress this lesson on our hearts, he is not contented with giving it to us in his word, he has confirmed it to us by his example, having laid down his life for us. Certainly then it is impossible that we can be in him, that is to say, that by faith we should embrace his gospel, without receiving into our hearts the movements of this Divine affection; and those who, without having them, boast of his name, are liars. I say the same of the fellowship of the Spirit. For the Lord has but one and the same Spirit, with which he baptizes all those who are his; and "if any one have not his Spirit, he is none of Christ's," as the apostle elsewhere says: so that it is impossible to be in him without having this union in Spirit with believers. Judge by this, dearly beloved brethren, what opinion we must have of those barbarous and unnatural souls who have no affection for believers, who look upon their sufferings without emotion, who neither deign to console their troubles, to soften their sorrows, to sympathize their grief, nor to employ any spiritual commerce with them. How are they in Jesus Christ, since they have none of those things which he produces in all such as belong to him? Surely if this Divine Lord truly dwelt in our hearts, he would by his power melt the hardness of our bowels, he would open in them an active source of consolation for the afflicted, he would there establish an ardent love for his children, he would shed there that Spirit which he has given them, the Spirit of union, love, and compassion. But these Philippians who are here spoken of were not described in this way. Their profession was true, and it appears by what we have heard that they were Christians indeed, and not in name only. This is the reason why the apostle appeals to them by the things of which they had a real and lively feeling. If Jesus Christ, (says he,) our good Master, for whom you and I suffer, has put into you some consolation for the afflicted; if the love with which he has filled your hearts constrains you to dispense some comfort to those who need it; if this same Spirit which he has given us ought to bind us in a holy and spiritual union; and finally, if his grace has rendered your bowels tender and sensible to the interests of believers; I conjure you by all these sacred ties, fulfil ye my joy.

He draws this conclusion very reasonably from what he had proposed to them in the preceding chapter, with which he unites this by the word "therefore:" "If there be *therefore* any consolation in Christ." For it is to those who are afflicted that the consolation belongs. Here let us bear in mind how he said to them before he was in prison at Rome, persecuted by pagans without, and by false brethren

within, that love ought to comfort those who are overwhelmed either by trouble or necessity. Now he had represented to them the sad state to which *he* was reduced. It is principally towards those who teach the gospel, or who suffer for preaching it, that we ought to exercise the fellowship of the Spirit, or the duties of pity. He had just shown them that this was the cause of his chain. After having set before them these things in the former chapter, it is with good reason therefore that he here urges them by the love, the Spirit, the affection, and the mercies of the Lord to fulfil his joy. And the Philippians must have been harder than stones, if they had not felt touched by so warm and reasonable an entreaty.

II. But he does not tell them that they will be the cause of his joy. He only asks that they would fulfil that which he had already. For however sad and lamentable the state of the apostle might be according to the flesh, he had nevertheless joy in his heart. Neither the darkness of the prison, nor its impassable barriers, nor the vigilance of the guards, can prevent joy from entering into the souls of believers. Neither the weight of the irons, nor the obscurity of their dungeons, nor the sorrows of captivity, are capable of taking it from them. In the first place, the Lord Jesus, for whom the apostle suffered, was night and day with him, and shed the peace of the Father, the consolations of the Spirit, the assurance of his grace, and the hope of his glory, as a heavenly balm in the soul of his servant. He there sustained that inextinguishable and glorious joy which these feelings necessarily produce in our hearts; since even the success of his sufferings, which had given courage to many to proclaim the gospel, refreshed him extremely, "I rejoice, (says he,) and will rejoice." But besides that, (and it is what he particularly regards in this place,) the fine beginning of the Philippians, their love, their patience, and their other graces, had also afforded him much satisfaction. It is this joy that he conjures them to fulfil, to add what was wanting to it, and to render it full and complete. What then was it, O holy apostle, that was wanting to thy joy? What dost thou wish the Philippians to do to fulfil it? Dost thou desire that they should endeavour to deliver thee from the prisons of Nero, and to procure thee that liberty of which thou art deprived? or that, to alleviate thy wants, they should redouble their liberality, and send thee another Epaphroditus with the gifts of their love? No, says he, this is not what I ask. My chain does not weigh so heavily upon me that it diminishes my comfort, and I wait in peace for my deliverance by the providence of my God, without harassing my mind; and as to the discomforts of the prison, I well know how to find content and abundance even in indigence itself; I have been so filled with what I have already received from these believers, that I have no more to wish from them. What I ask from them with so much warmth, as the only thing capable of rendering my joy perfect, is, that "they should be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." It is this, O dearly beloved Philippians, that I desire of you; it is the only office that you still owe to the consolation of your master. If you fulfil this my desire, I freely acquit you of all the duties that the name of the Lord Jesus, and the love that he has given you, and the Spirit that he has imparted to you, and the compassions which he has impressed

48

on your bowels, oblige you to render me in my bonds. This, dear brethren, is the meaning and the design of the words of St Paul.

From which we have first to learn, that the good and the prosperity of the church ought to be the chief subject of our consolation and of our desires; according to the declaration formerly made by the psalmist, "that he preferred Jerusalem above his chief joy," Psalm 137:6. This apostle was in the fetters of the most horrible tyrant that ever lived, pursued by both Jews and pagans with the most furious animosity, and every day on the point of being exposed to the lions, or to suffer some other cruel punishment. Nevertheless, all this will not prevent his rejoicing in perfect joy, if he may see the church of Philippi in a good condition. Their good is alone capable of curing all his sorrows, of softening all his griefs, and of appeasing all his own sufferings. O admirable love, which had so changed the apostle into those that he loved, that it was their interest, and not his own, from whence sprang his sorrows and his joys! Why have not we a similar love for the church of the Lord? and especially for those with whom we here live in fellowship? Why do we not make their good or their evil the only, or at least the principal, subject of our consolation, or of our sorrows? Certainly, besides the example of the apostle, which ought to be a law to us, the reason and nature of the thing itself evidently oblige us to it. For the church is the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, formed of his flesh and of his blood, and quickened by his Spirit; it is the mirror of his glory, the pillar of his truth, and the most illustrious instrument of his goodness and wisdom. It is the family of God, and the school of his children; the depository of our most precious jewel, of the gospel, and of salvation; so that we cannot help loving it ardently, if we have ever so little zeal for the glory of God, or affection, whether for the edification of others, or for our own happiness.

But let us also learn from this, in the second place, in what this happiness of the church consists, which ought to form and to fulfil our joy. It is not that it should enjoy a profound peace in the world, that it should abound in the honours and riches of the world, that the great should caress it, that kings should favour it, or that people should applaud it. This worldly prosperity is often its greatest misfortune, and it is usually in these false calms that it is injured. Neither is it that cunning, or knowledge, or eloquence, or secular erudition should flourish in it. This vain pomp is the share of the world. But the true happiness and the true prosperity of the Christian church consist in what the apostle here asks of the Philippians, that concord should reign in it; that a common love, and one faith, should bind the members to one another, and, mingling them together, should reduce them to one and the same body. Whatever besides may be the condition of our church, she is truly happy and in prosperity, if she live in this union, and retain the form of that Jerusalem which the prophet describes to us, built "as a city that is compact together," Psalm 122:3. On the contrary, if divisions creep in, however cheering may be the prosperity and abundance which she enjoys without, nevertheless she is in a very sad condition. It is a city in which an enemy has made a breach, and it is near its ruin if the Lord do not marvellously assist it. This is why St Paul here desires the concord and union of the Philippians with so much zeal.

And although in this Epistle he every where gives them an excellent testimony to their piety, to the strength of their faith, and the ardour of their love, nevertheless, the great earnestness with which he recommends union seems to show that there was something to say to them in this respect; and his conjuring them to fulfil his joy by their agreement signifies that he saw some dissension among them, or, at least, that he perceived the seeds of it; for you know that the devil never fails to throw this bad seed among Christians, having learned, by experience, that there is nothing more suitable for his designs. In truth, we shall hear afterwards that the false teachers among the Jews, who so sadly troubled the first Christians with their pretended mixture of Moses and Jesus Christ, had also an eye upon this church of the Philippians; and what the apostle still presses upon these believers in the following chapter, to have always the same mind, and to walk by one rule, to which they had already attained," chapter 3:16; and particularly beseeches some persons, as Euodias and Syntyche, to yield themselves to this Uniformity of sentiment, and entreating his own companion and Clement to help them; all this, I say, plainly shows (as appears to me) that some difference and division in doctrine began to manifest itself among this flock. From whence it arises that he recommends concord to them in such an affectionate manner, and that he expresses himself upon it in so many precise terms, that he links one sentence with the other, although in reality they all nearly signify the same thing. In the first place, he asks of them that "they should have one mind." On which some (Beza) have in my opinion well remarked, that the apostle does not simply mean by this that they should have one opinion and belief on points of religion; which is precisely what the word "mind" signifies in our language; but that they should in general have the same disposition of mind, the same feelings, the same designs, and the same desires; that their souls, in all their faculties, should have the same form and figure, whether in the understanding, which is their highest and chiefest part, or in the will and the affections, which depend on it. Thus the apostle uses this word in a similar passage in the Epistle to the Romans, where he orders believers to "be of the same mind one towards another;" and in the verse which immediately follows our text, "Let the same mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

But after having thus in general commanded the Philippians to have each the same disposition of mind, he descends to particulars, and touches especially some one of these or similar forms, which he wishes that they should possess; adding, in the second place, "having the same love." Some (Chrysostom) make this relate to the degrees of brotherly love which ought to be in us; as if the apostle meant that we should have for our brethren the same love that they have for us, and bear towards them an affection equal to that which they feel towards us, loving as much as we are loved, that we may not fall into the crime of those who, with great injustice, for a high degree of love, return but a very moderate portion. But although this idea should not be rejected, it seems to be more simple and natural to take what the apostle says, in regard to the object of love, to mean that we ought all to love the same thing. For those have not the same love or affection of whom one loves one thing, and one another; of whom this man for example loves honour

and ambition, and that voluptuousness and pleasure; one hunting, and another learning. These are affections and passions differing according to the diversity of their objects; but love is the same, when many love the same object; as when many subjects love the same prince, or many children the same father. This, then, is what 49
the apostle here asks of the Philippians, that they should have the same love, that their affections should not be divided among many contrary or different things, like those of the Corinthians, of whom some loved Paul, others Cephas, and others Apollos; some admiring one form of doctrine, others a different one; but that their hearts should all meet on the same object, as in a common centre, all loving the same Christ and the same church.

Then he requires of them, in the third place, "that we should all be of one accord." In the original it is, "that we should have altogether the same soul," τύμψυχος. The same, not in its essence or in its nature, (for that is impossible,) but in its affections and in its designs, in its wishes and in its desires; that we should all look to the same object, and should propose to ourselves the same end, the glory of God our Lord, and the furtherance of the kingdom of his Son; that we should have the same zeal, that we should desire the same things; and, in a word, that the acts, transports, and emotions of our minds should have a perfect conformity, as if there were in us but one and the same principle of life, one only soul which animated and quickened us altogether.

Finally, the apostle adds, as the last part of Christian concord, "that we should be of one mind." Word for word in the original it is, "that we should feel the same thing." But all comes to one; it not being possible, if what we feel is but one thing, that we should not also be the same thing. From the unity of the will, he passes on to the conformity of the affections and sentiments. He desires that as there is but one and the same chief, that is to say, Jesus Christ, and but one and the same baptism, there should only be in the church one and the same faith. And this agreement in one and the same doctrine is the foundation of the concord and communion of Christians. For the understanding being the guide of our souls, it is difficult for those whose sentiments are opposed not to have different affections; and from a difference of opinions it is easy to fall into a difference of love, or contempt, or hatred for one another. Assuredly it is much to be wished that there were no difference or variety among believers in this respect. But because of the infirmity in which we live in this mortal flesh, this blessing is more to be wished than hoped for: we must restrain the necessity for the union of our sentiments to those points which are essential, and without the belief of which there can be no salvation. With respect to them, all believers ought to feel the same thing. None can here differ without a break. But as to other matters, which are not of this importance, we ought there to bear with a difference, should there be any, after the example of the apostle, who, though he afterwards obliges all believers to walk by the same rule to which they had attained, nevertheless defends those who, in some degree, felt otherwise than he and the more perfect believers did, hoping that God would reveal this to them also. As you see in a state, so long as all the citizens hold its fundamental doctrines necessary for the performance of the duties

essential to its preservation, differences are tolerated on many other subjects of minor importance. However this may be, as we ought all to strive after perfection, we should try by every means in our power to have amongst us an exact and entire uniformity of sentiments; so that it may be truly said of us what the apostle here required from the Philippians, that we should all feel the same thing. Thus it appears what this concord is which he so strongly recommends, namely, a holy union of mind and will in faith and affection. And he has every reason in the world to ask it of us so pressingly. For in fact it is our all; it is the legitimate form and perfection of the church. In the first place, this concord is the most beautiful thing in the universe; as the prophet sings in one of his psalms, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is that brethren should dwell together in unity!" Psalm 133:1. God sees nothing more agreeable to him on earth than such a society. It is an image of the hearts of those blessed spirits who adore him in the heavens in perfect union. But besides its beauty, it is infinitely useful and salutary, for it is to it that the eternal Father gives blessing and life, Psalm 133:3. It is to it that the Lord Jesus promises his grace and his favour: "If two of you (says he) shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father," Matthew 18:19. This concord is the joy of angels, the terror of devils, the strength and glory of the church. If you would know how necessary it is to the latter, behold the misery and the ravages that discord has made in it. It is it which in times past ruined ancient Israel, having broken, by a sad separation, the forces that God had united. It is it which has warped Christianity into so many fashions, and has occasioned all the old and new wounds which it has received. It has extinguished religion and love. It has pointed the swords, and lighted the fires. It has armed brother against brother, and has violated every thing that is most holy and most sacred in human nature. It has exhausted the church of blood and strength; and finally, exposed one part a prey to infidelity, and another to tyranny. It is it again that has stayed the progress of the gospel in the days of our fathers, having unhappily divided hands which ought to have laboured together in so good a work. Dearly beloved brethren, let us fly so deadly a plague, and having known, by so many sad experiences, how pernicious it is, let us dwell united together in the sweet and happy bonds of perfect concord.

III. To this end, let us attentively listen to, and faithfully practise, the instruction which the apostle gives us in the two last verses of our text: "Let nothing be done (says he) through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." To retain peace and union in the church, he warns us against two vices, strife and vain-glory, the two principal sources of division and schism, and recommends two virtues to us, humility and the care of our neighbours, the two mothers and nurses of concord. That which he calls strife is a cross and punctilious humour, which occasions suits and quarrels on every thing; the disease of headstrong and obstinate minds, which enjoy debate and contention. These people hate the beaten track, and always choose rough and solitary roads. They disdain common sentiments, though they be certain, clear, and true; and

form on all subjects peculiar opinions. They always place themselves in opposition to their brethren, and their hand, like that of Ishmael, is against every one, and every one's hand is against them. It is enough to make them give up an opinion to show them mat others hold it. Nothing charms them more than novelty, extravagance, and singularity. Unhappy and troublesome minds, plagues of human society, parents of the greater part of the seditions and wars that trouble the world and the church. But their venom is so much the more dangerous in the church, in proportion as its society is holy, and its union precious. It is this cursed humour which formerly inspired, and still continues to imbue many heretics with such wild and ridiculous opinions, that it is a wonder how they have ever been able, I do not say to please, but to enter into any man's mind. And when it has once produced some monsters of this kind, it caresses and defends them, and, engaging in this design, finally becomes incapable of yielding. It is thus that during the first ages the sects were formed which distracted the church. And would to God that ours were exempt from them. But the other vice, which the apostle adds in the second place, namely, vain-glory, has as much place or more than the preceding. It is a desire to acquire reputation and to be talked of; and the apostle calls it "vain-glory," because this lustre and renown, and all this pretended honour after which ambitious spirits so passionately aspire, is at bottom but a pure vanity, which has neither virtue nor efficacy to render him who possesses it more happy or more perfect either in body or soul. Who can tell the miseries that this fatal passion has caused among men? It is it which sows wars in states, quarrels in families, and divisions in the church. When once it has taken possession of the mind of a man, there is no longer any abomination of which he is not capable. I omit the torments and uneasiness which it gives to the ambitious and to others. But we may well say that there is no vice more contrary to concord, as it consists in a certain degree of equality; instead of which vain-glory can suffer no equal, always desiring to be first. Thus it has lighted all the divisions that have ever burnt in the church. And if contention has given a beginning to some of them, vain-glory has not been wanting to enrol itself instantly of the party. They most frequently go in company, and giving each other the hand, contention nourishing what ambition has engendered, and in the same way ambition supporting that which contention has produced. It is from this infernal couple that Arianism, Nestorianism, and Eutychism formerly sprang, which were likely to ruin the whole of Christendom. It is from hence that the famous schism arose between the east and the west; the one not choosing to endure a superior, and the other an equal. It is from hence that have arisen those sad and shameful disputes among the ministers of the Lord, whose traces appear so visibly in the history of the church. Notwithstanding which, (O madness of human passions, of so much trouble and misery!) this vice gathers no other fruit than a vain glory, as the apostle here says, and a real infamy. To these two perverse affections he opposes submission and humility: "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." The gospel every where recommends humility to us, a virtue unknown to worldly philosophy. The Lord teaches us that it is even so necessary to his

50

disciples, that without it it is not possible for a man to enter into his kingdom; and makes so great a point of it, that he gives the first rank to those who are the most humble. And in truth, if we consider, on the one hand, the excellence and the greatness of the Lord, and, on the other, the meanness and unworthiness of our nature, vile and despicable in its being, and made still more so by being infected with sin, and subject to its curse, we shall readily confess that it is very reasonable that we should think but little of ourselves, and that the most esteemed among men cannot without injustice have a high opinion of themselves. But nevertheless, it seems difficult to understand how this virtue obliges us to the duty, the performance of which the apostle here directs, that of each one of us esteeming our neighbour better than ourselves. For Christian virtues are not contrary to one another. Now it appears that the mind which is here ordered to us may be contrary to the soundness of truth which ought to be in all our judgments. For if one believer be better than another, how can he, without falsehood, esteem that other better than himself? And besides, as each of the two ought to have the same mind towards his companion, and, at the same time, it is impossible that each of the two should be more excellent than the other, it appears that humility necessarily obliges one of the two to believe a thing that is not true, which cannot be the duty of a worthy man. To that, my brethren, I reply, that things are of two kinds. Of the one the truth is certain and evident. Of others we can only judge by signs and appearances, which are not infallible. As to the first, we are obliged to believe them such as they are, and neither humility, nor any other consideration, can free us from this. But as to others, charity ought to regulate the judgment that we make of them, and to take all in good part; and if sometimes the truth of a thing does not answer to the opinion that we have of it, we may well say that we have been deceived, but not that we have lied. When then we compare ourselves with others, we must consider what sort of things are in question. If the question be about those of which we can certainly know the truth, our judgment must go with the side on which it is found. For example, if you know yourself to be more healthy, more courageous, more eloquent, or more rich, than your neighbour, (and all this may be easily and undoubtedly known,) it would be *folly*, and not *humility*, to believe the contrary. And thus is it with other things of this nature. But it is not thus with the things of which the apostle speaks. He speaks of the worth and excellence of the person itself, and particularly as relating to the kingdom of God. Now it is evident that we cannot judge with certainty what is truly the state of our neighbour in this respect; appearances not always answering to what is within, and the advantages of this nature not consisting in what may be outwardly seen. It is here then that humility should step in, to prevent, in the first place, our preferring ourselves to our brother, under the shade of some outward advantage which we may have over him; and secondly, to lead us to presume much in his favour, and charitably to believe that he has in heart hidden treasures, which place him above us, and which nevertheless are very precious in the sight of *God*, although we see them not. And it is in this feeling (as I said) he may well be in error, but it is evident that there is no falsehood. If the Pharisee had followed this rule, he would not, under the cover of some false

appearances, have preferred his person to that of the publican, who really, and before God, was worth more than himself. I confess that our nature does not easily relish such teaching. For we can hardly bear that any one should equal us, much less to place ourselves below all others, each one bearing the heart of a king in his bosom, and imagining that there is nothing more excellent than himself, and that if rank followed merit, he ought to be the master of the human race. But then we are not called by the Lord to live according to the dictates of our nature, which is entirely seasoned with vanity and pride. That we may then acquit ourselves of this duty, let us consider seriously our unworthiness, the miserable state we were in before grace came, that infinite brood of all sorts of vices which swarmed in us, the excess, the rage, to which we were carried, the curse and the hell that we deserved, our weaknesses themselves even since God has called us, our cowardliness, our ingratitude, our evil inclinations, our sins, the innumerable faults of our actions and of our words, and the secret vanity, injustice, and filth of our thoughts and affections. And that if we have any graces, they are graces which ought not to elate, but to humble us; and that the more we have received, the more we ought to abase ourselves, as you see among the ears of corn, those bend their head lowest which are the best and the fullest of grain. And as to our neighbours, let us look at and prize whatever they have that is good, acknowledging and admiring their gifts; let us be ignorant of or excuse what there is wrong, and let us do quite contrary to that fabulous nymph of the poets, who was blind at home, and had eyes only when she was with her neighbours. Let us be clear-sighted and severe against ourselves, gentle and indulgent to others. If we consider in this way our persons and those of our brethren, it will be easy, as the apostle directs, to esteem them more excellent than ourselves. If once we make this judgment in our heart, if each of us esteem his neighbour more excellent than himself, we shall establish by these means charity, patience, and concord amongst us. We shall feel no envy at the good things of others, and we shall have great compassion for their sorrows. We shall receive their good offices with deep gratitude, as favours, and not as duties; and we shall bear their insults (should such be shown us) with more patience. And if they have the same opinion of us that we have of them, what society in the world will be more happy than ours? Neither contempt, pride, nor contention, neither disputes, discord, nor envy, nor any of those other plagues which ruin and infect humanity, shall ever enter therein. Humility, as a rampart of brass or a wall of iron, shall preserve us in safety against all the efforts of the enemy. (51)

And this respectful and favourable feeling that we entertain for each other will, of itself, lead to the duty that the apostle here, in the last place, requires of us: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." For it will be impossible for us not to regard them, if we esteem them more excellent than ourselves; the little care that we have for them only proving the small esteem in which we hold them. It is true that some make even this relate to what the apostle had just directed, of esteeming our brethren more than ourselves; as if he intended, that, to lead us to this duty, we should consider not only what we are, and what God has given us, but also what others are, and what graces they

have received, being very certain that the presumption of the greater part of those who elevate themselves above their brethren arises from their never looking at or admiring any thing but their own good qualities, their talents, their knowledge, their prudence, without ever throwing their eyes on the advantages that Heaven has dispensed to others as much or more than to themselves. But in my opinion it is more proper to take these words as a new precept, which directs us, for the preservation of peace and concord amongst ourselves, to have respect, not only to that which is useful and advantageous to us, but also to what the edification and consolation of our brethren demand. He does not absolutely forbid each one looking to himself; the care is just and legitimate; but he does not wish that we should so entirely attach ourselves to it as to forget others. And certainly, if that communion of nature which men have together so evidently obliges each of them to care for his neighbours, that the pagans themselves acknowledge it, saying that they hold no human things as foreign, or separated from them, how much more should the grace of the Spirit, and the blood of Jesus Christ, which has united us all into one body, unite our interests! Do not look upon these believers whom the apostle recommends to you as strangers. They are your brethren. They are your flesh, and your blood.

But if he obliges us to look upon what belongs to them with care for their interests, it is not from thence to be said that he permits curiosity, that vice of human nature which another apostle expressly forbids, not wishing that we should be prying into the affairs of others. To know what belongs to your neighbours, and afterwards to be careful for them, it is not necessary to leave the business of your vocation, nor to intermeddle with that of others, nor to trouble yourselves with useless inquiries, or prying curiously into the secrets of persons or families. You may, at least, yield your brethren the duty here recommended, with a sincere and upright conscience, and entirely exempt from such unworthy motives.

Thus we have now explained all the parts of this text. It is not, as you see, brethren, very difficult to understand it. The principal point is, that you should put it in practice; and that this excellent instruction of the apostle should be read in your lives as well as in his Epistles. Among the reasons which enforce it upon you, I dare not bring forward, after his example, what consolation you owe us, from the extreme and immense disproportion there is between us and this great apostle; although, after all, whatever we may be elsewhere, as we have the honour to be ministers of God amongst you, it is clear that you cannot, without injustice, refuse to have some regard to our satisfaction. But putting ourselves aside, I will bring before you the example of all the church, that of the holy angels who are in the midst of us," that of the Lord Jesus himself, who incessantly sees and looks upon us. Their united joy is to behold us living holily in perfect concord. The church, in those battles which she is now enduring, can receive no greater consolation. And the Lord and his angels can see nothing on earth that is more agreeable to them. If, then, beloved brethren, "there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy." May they see nothing among us calling for their tears, or for their sighs; no disputes,

no contentions, no vanity, no pride, no quarrels, no law-suits. May they see only subjects for rejoicing; one faith, one love, one firm and inextinguishable concord, one simple and real humility, a respectful deference and a cordial affection towards each other. May they see from this age the first-fruits of that which is to come, a willing and peaceful people, full of piety and good works, clothed with light and purity, and worthy of the extraction, the citizenship, and the communion of the heavenly and immortal Jerusalem, founded and built above in the heavens. And as all the benefits of God, both spiritual and temporal, ought to minister to our sanctification, so let that favour also, dear brethren, which he has just granted us in hearing the united prayers of all this kingdom, and fulfilling the joy of the king, our sovereign lord, by the happy birth of the second son which he has given him. This favour is great and excellent in every way, both in itself and as it regards us: in itself, for it is an effect of that extraordinary power and goodness of God which the prophet celebrates in one of his psalms: "He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children," Psalm 113:9. This is the wonder that he shows us now in the house of our monarch, enriching it with these fruits of his blessing, after its having so long been without them. But this favour is also great as it respects ourselves. For the offspring of the king are the supports of his house, the column of his kingdom, the establishment of the public peace, and the (52) sure foundation of the prosperity and happiness of his people. And among all these subjects there is not one which has more' interest for us than that we, in the midst of so much evil and so many fears, only subsist, humanly speaking, by the clemency and authority of our sovereign. Let us then rejoice before God, and let us receive this his favour with all the gratitude of which our souls are capable. Let us bless his Divine majesty, and praise him with all humility, in that he has given to our king the wish of his heart, and has not refused him that which he had desired with his lips. Let us beseech this almighty and eternal Lord to pour out his grace on the sacred branches of the royal stem, that they may grow and prosper in his presence. To the devotion of our prayers, join we the innocence and the goodness of our works; let us love and religiously serve this great God who is so good to us. Let us yield ourselves with sincere devotion to his anointed, whom he deigns to load with so many favours, yielding to him and to his ministers an exemplary obedience and fidelity. Let us live with our fellow citizens in all righteousness and honesty, and amongst ourselves with a purity and sanctification which may accord with the excellence of the doctrine of which we make profession; to the glory of God, the edification of men, and to our own salvation. Amen.

Preached at Charenton,
Sunday, 16*th September* 1640.

SERMON IX.

Verse 5–8.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: who made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

My dear brethren, if there be any mystery in the Christian religion which is great and high above the thoughts of men and angels, it is without doubt the incarnation of the Son of God, and his profitable humiliation. And if there be in all the Holy Scriptures any place in which this important truth is clearly and magnificently represented, it is in the text we have now read, which is our portion for to-day. The terms of it are so sublime, so majestic, that it is impossible any thing more heavenly could be said. The meaning is so noble, and so well established, that nothing more powerful could be imagined; the apostle battering down in these few words all that hell has ever invented against this sacred and inviolable foundation of our faith. You may remember, that in the preceding text he had very affectionately recommended to us humility. But as this virtue is on one side absolutely necessary to our salvation, and on the other infinitely contrary to the tastes and inclinations of our nature, he does not content himself with those efficacious means which he had before employed for touching our hearts, conjuring us to yield ourselves to them by every thing that is most holy and most delightful in the fellowship of the Lord; but to vanquish, and entirely eradicate, all the pride of our flesh, he here places before us the example of Jesus Christ himself, as much to elevate before our eyes a true and lively image of the humility which should be in us, as to take from those who cannot relish it every excuse and every pretext for their vanity. For since the Son of God has voluntarily abased himself to such a depth of humiliation, what vengeance and hell would not our pride deserve, if, after his example, we, who are but miserable worms of the earth, should still make any difficulty in humbling ourselves? "Let this mind (says the holy apostle) be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Do not imagine that, in exhorting you to humble and abase yourselves below your brethren, I am requiring any thing

unworthy of you. I ask nothing of you which has not been in Jesus Christ. These thoughts and feelings which I recommend to you he has first entertained. Do not then disdain what he has cherished. That humility which was sanctified by having had a place in his heart, receive ye into yours. Have for your neighbours sentiments and feelings similar to those which he had for you. What could the apostle allege more suitable to his design? For in the first place, as Jesus Christ is *our* Master, and we make profession of being *his* disciples, is it not reasonable that we should follow his example? Where is the servant who does not consider it a glory to resemble his master? Surely, if we have any spark of true generosity, nothing ought more ardently to incite us to the study of great and difficult things than thinking that in doing them we shall be like our Lord. For what is there in the world finer or more noble, or more worthy of our love and of our wishes, than this holy and heavenly conformity? This is the reason why Jesus Christ in the gospel does not only propose to us the ancient prophets, although in truth it would be a great honour to us to have some resemblance to such holy persons; but he presents us with his own example, and even with that of his Father: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," Matthew 11:29. "Love your enemies, bless them which curse you, do good to those that hate you; for your heavenly Father causeth his sun to rise on the good and on the evil, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust," Matthew 5:44–45. St Paul also speaks in the same way: "Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you," Ephesians 4:32. "Be ye followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us," Ephesians 5:1. And in exhorting the Corinthians to exercise charity to the poor, he says, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich," 2 Corinthians 8:9. And in various other places he proposes to us the example of Jesus Christ, and certainly with good reason. For besides the excellency and dignity of his nature, he has also that of a private person, and as such has been given to us by the Father as the true and only pattern of our life. All the faithful are predestinated to be conformed to his image, says the apostle in the Epistle to the Romans. "He has left us an example," says St Peter, "that we should follow his steps." He is not only the author of this new and happy life, which he has purchased with the price of his own blood, he is also the mould and the pattern. He is its efficient cause and model, as they speak in the schools, having formed for us in himself a fine and living image, perfect in all its features, and set off with all its colours; so that, having it continually before our eyes, we may each of us draw in our souls the most perfect copy of it, one as like the original as possible. Thus it is with great reason that the apostle, to form us to humility, proposes to us the example of Jesus Christ. Christians, behold this (53) Divine example with attention! Open whatever you have of mind to understand and admire it, but strive principally to imitate it, which is the design for which it is here placed before our eyes. And may the Lord himself discover to us its wonders, and inspire us with a love for it, by the efficacy of his good Spirit, to his glory, and to our consolation and edification.

To explain to you what the apostle says of the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ,

we must by the grace of God consider in order the two points which present themselves in this text: first, What the Lord was in himself; and secondly, In what, and to what, he had humbled himself for us. The apostle presents the first to us in the sixth verse in these words, "That Jesus Christ, being in the form of God, and equal with God." The second in the two following verses, "That he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The former of these is the first and original condition of the Lord, in which he was with the Father; the latter, the second, in which he is among us: the one treats of his nature, the other of his dispensation or economy; the one of that state from which he had abased himself, the other of that to which he had humbled himself.

I. To arrive at the first, the apostle describes it by saying that Jesus Christ, *being* or *subsisting* (for that is precisely what the word signifies in the original) "in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God," where you see that, to explain to us the state in which the Lord Jesus was when he took upon himself the form of a servant, he attributes two things to him; the one, "that he was in the form of God;" the other, that he was "equal with God." Certainly the Son is the image of the invisible Father, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; his living and. essential image, which contains and truly exhibits in itself all his essence and all his perfections, his Divinity, his eternity, his power, his goodness, his justice, and all his other attributes; there being nothing in the nature of the one which there is not in that of the other: so, that in this respect we can justly and truly affirm that he has the form of God; in the same manner (if we may compare earth to heaven, and the creatures to the Creator) as we say of a child, that he perfectly resembles his father, not only in the features and lineaments of the body, but also in the virtues and habits of his mind; that he is the form or image of his father. But we must consider that the apostle says that Jesus Christ was *in* the form of God, and not that he *was* or that he *had* the form of God. What then is this form of God in which the Lord was when he took our *flesh* upon him? Dear brethren, it is not simply the Divine nature which was in him, the true and perfect form of the person of the Father; but it is that nature invested with his majesty, clothed with his glory, and accompanied with a pomp worthy of his supreme excellence. "To be in the form of God" is to have a sovereign majesty, to enjoy an infinite glory, to exercise the authority, the rights, and the functions of God, to live and appear in a manner suitable to this great and incomprehensible nature. Thus to be in the form of God signifies not only to be king, to possess majesty and power, but also to have the insignia of royalty, its courtly train and splendid equipage. For what is the form of a king unaccompanied with the symbols and characters of that dignity, the pageantry and the brilliance which accompany it, as the sceptre, the diadem, the throne, and the guards? Thus formerly among the Romans we might call the form of a consul, the equipage and the pomp with which the laws and customs of that people invested those who exercised the office, the purple, the ivory chair, the twelve lictors with their fasces and rods, and such like. When then the apostle here

says that the Lord, before taking our nature upon him, was in the form of God, he does not merely intend that he was God in himself, and that he had the true nature of the Divinity; but further still, that he possessed the glory, and enjoyed all the dignity, majesty, and grandeur due to so high a name. This is precisely what the Lord means in St John, by the glory which he says he had with the Father before the world was. For before this eternal Word and Wisdom had taken to himself the human nature, he had nothing low or weak in him. Every thing was great, magnificent, and truly Divine. He was with God in the bosom of the eternal Father, subsisting there in an incomprehensible manner, and worthy of his Divine nature. If he negociated with men, if he interfered in the government of the universe, there was nothing in his providence which was not glorious and majestic. Those communications which he held with the creatures were the same as those of the Father. I confess that it was the Son who created the world, and that without him was no part of the universe made. It is by him that kings rule and princes govern; he then frequented the earth, and his delight was with the children of men, as says the wise man in Proverbs 8. But notwithstanding, in all this there was nothing abject or contemptible; on the contrary, it was *therein* that a part of that glory, and of that form of God in which the Lord was, consisted. For the rule and empire over all things is an honour that belongs to God alone. Such was the state of the Son of God when he descended for our sakes upon the earth. Seated on the eternal throne with the Father, surrounded by his angels, and adored by all his creatures, he lived and reigned with him in a Divine manner, without having any other intercourse with the vileness of the world, except so far as it required his providence to uphold it in the condition in which he had created it. This is what St Paul means when he says that Jesus Christ was in the form of God.

To which, for the purpose of explaining himself more clearly, he adds that he was "equal with God." As to these words, "he thought it not robbery," on account of the different expositions of them which have been gfiven, we shall for a while defer explaining their meaning, and at this time only dwell upon that in which all interpreters unanimously agree, namely, that the Lord "was equal with God." Doubtless the psalmist and the other prophets declare in a thousand places that there is nothing in the universe equal to God, whether it regard his nature, his power, or his wisdom. As then Jesus Christ was equal to him, we must necessarily conclude that he was God blessed for evermore with the Father, of the same power, wisdom, and goodness; that he was the same Eternal formerly adored by ancient Israel, and celebrated by the prophets. Now, before going further, remark and admire, I beseech you, the richness, the strength, and the efficacy of the Scriptures in these few words of the apostle, which are sufficient to demolish all those heresies which have risen up against the Lord. In the first place, they confound the impudence of those who deny that Jesus Christ has subsisted in the nature of things, before his conception and his birth of the blessed Virgin. "Being, or subsisting, in the form of God, he made himself of no reputation, and took the form of a servant." He was then already in the form of God, when he took upon himself the form of a servant. Now it is evident that he took it when he was made

54

flesh, when he was conceived by the virtue of the Holy Ghost in the womb of his mother. Undoubtedly he then already was; he was God, and only began to be, with regard to his human nature, in the form of a servant, with which he invested himself, not having had it before. As to what some of these heretics say, that by the form of God in which the Lord was we must understand the excellence and the dignity of his human nature, shown in the rays which from time to time he caused to appear through the veil of his humanity, it is an illusion which cannot stand. In the first place, By this reckoning, Jesus Christ must have taken the form of a servant before being in the form of God; directly contrary to the sense and words of the apostle, who says that being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and was clothed with the form of a servant. Secondly, Because all this splendour in the human nature of Jesus Christ, if there had been nothing more in him, could not in any sense whatever have been called the form of God, and still less as being equal with God. The angels are as excellent, or more so, than any human nature can be, whatever grace we may suppose the Creator to have imparted to it, except the personal union with the Deity. Yet the psalmist declares that there are none of these blessed spirits who are, I will not say equal, but even comparable to the majesty of God. As then the apostle protests that the being of the Lord Jesus was equal with God, it must necessarily be acknowledged that there was in him some other thing than the flesh, which he took for us; that is to say, that eternal Word, which at the beginning was with God, and was God. I confess, that so long as the Lord was here below, the infirmity of his flesh could not so entirely veil the light of his Divinity, but that it pierced this cloud, and shone forth in splendour capable of making itself recognised by those who beheld it attentively. And this is what St John means, when he says at the beginning of his Gospel, that they had seen his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. But notwithstanding this, all these rays and emanations of his glory are not sufficient to justify the expression that he then lived in the form of God, and in a manner equal to God, as the humility of his flesh kept the greater part of this Divine form hidden.

I come to those who, confessing that the Son of God existed before he was born in our flesh, will have, that this chief nature which he then possessed had been created, and was of a substance different from that of the Father. The apostle completely upsets their impiety; first, in saying that the form in which he then was was the form of God. For who can maintain, without blasphemy, that any of the angels, or any other creature whatsoever, can be in the form of God? Give them what intelligence you please, if they are creatures, they will always remain infinitely below the form of the Creator. And it cannot here be argued that "the form of God" signifies his glory, and not his nature; his majesty, and not his essence. For in the first place, I contend that though it be true, that this word here denotes more precisely the first than the second, it nevertheless appears by the contrast, of "the form of a servant," which the apostle adds, that it comprehends both; that is to say, as we have before remarked, that it really signifies a nature truly Divine, clothed with a suitable glory; as well as "the form of a servant," that the Lord has

taken, signifies in the other part of this text a flesh truly human, clothed with all its weaknesses and infirmities. Secondly, Supposing it were granted, that this "form of God," of "which the apostle speaks, only signifies the glory and the majesty of God, still I maintain that it is enough to convince us that the Lord was truly God by his nature. For none can have this glory but God; and that for two reasons: the one, that the thing itself is absolutely impossible; the other, because the will of God is opposed to it. As to the first, it is evident that a finite subject is incapable of that which is infinite, it being impossible that that which is less should hold, or contain, that which is greater than itself; so that every creature being of necessity finite, it is a thing in every way impossible that it should have the form, that is to say, the glory and majesty, of God, who is infinite. But the will of God no less rejects it than the nature of the thing itself. For God protests loudly in Isaiah, "I will not give my glory to another," Isaiah 42:8; 48:11. As then the Lord Jesus, before he took our flesh, was in the form of God, it necessarily follows that he was truly God, no one being able to have the glory of God but He who had his nature also. And what the apostle adds, that he was "equal with God," clearly also determines the same thing; it being evident that if the Son were a creature, he could not be equal to God; every creature being of necessity infinitely below the nature, power, and majesty of the Creator. But that also incontestably proves that the Son is a person distinct from the Father, against those who, being forced to confess that their nature is the same, confound also their persons. For equality can only exist between different persons; none is equal to himself; so that St Paul, saying that the Son is equal to the Father, necessarily presupposes that the Father and the Son are two persons. Such is the power and copiousness of these words of the apostle against all sorts of error.

But he does not merely say that Jesus Christ was equal to God. He adds, that "he thought it not robbery to be equal with God." The word "robbery" may here be taken either literally or figuratively. Literally, as when we call a thing stolen, of which an individual has become improperly possessed, without any just and legitimate right. It is thus that the king of the evil angels wished to have the divinity, carried away by pride, and having usurped the honour which only belonged to his Creator. Adam, our first father, aimed at it in the same manner, having undertaken, against all reason, to become like God. If these unhappy beings had succeeded in their vain and unjust designs, the pretended equality they would have had with God, and it was such in their foolish imagination, would have been a robbery. The apostle then intended to say that it was not the same with our Lord Jesus, that he wronged no one by being in the form of God, and equal with God; because being truly God, as he is, the glory and majesty due to such a nature lawfully belonged to him; so that he had a right to possess and enjoy it, and for employing it cannot justly be accused of robbery, that is to say, of force or fraud, or, in a word, of any injustice. But although the Lord did not think this equality of being that he had with God to be robbery, although he knew that he had a right to it, and could retain it lawfully, nevertheless of his free-will he "made himself of no reputation," says the apostle, "and took the form of a servant." I acknowledge that this exposition is true in the main, and that it does not ill become either the object

or the words of the apostle. For for its foundation nothing is more true than what
(55) it presupposes, that the Son, before his humiliation, enjoyed the form of God, and a majesty and glory equal to his, by the just and legitimate right of his own nature, and not by robbery, or any other species of injustice. And as to the apostle, it forwards his object, which is to glorify the humiliation of the Son of God; showing, as it does, that he humbled himself, taking quite another form from that in which he had been before; that he had not been constrained to do it, or that he did it through ignorance of his rights, but by his pure and voluntary goodness; knowing well that he might justly have acted otherwise, had he pleased. And, finally, as to the words of St Paul, this interpretation may be accommodated, as the genius of the Greek language in which they were written permits their being so interpreted, "Jesus Christ, being in the form of God, would not have thought it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation;" or, as our Bibles have translated it, with the same meaning, "however, he made himself of no reputation."

But besides this exposition, which is the most common, there is still another, which perhaps is not less easy or less suitable, in taking the words of the apostle figuratively, "that Jesus Christ thought it not robbery to be equal with God," as implying that he has not made a trophy of this his prerogative, that he has not drawn from it any subject for glory or vanity. For it was then a custom almost universal in the world, that victors who had conquered or carried off something from their enemies by force, as their ensigns, or their arms, should erect them as trophies, elevate them on trees or columns, or some high places, and raise other similar monuments for a testimony of their valour; whilst as to the things which we possess by the ordinary rights of nature, or by civil justice, we do nothing of the kind. This vanity, which was common in the apostle's days, is a reason why these words, "thought it not robbery," may be employed, as meaning to glorify himself by it, and make a parade of it, and take it for a matter of trophy or triumph. Thus the sense of this text will be simple and easy, that the Lord Jesus, being in the form of God, did not make a trophy of being equal with God; he never thought of making a parade of it, publishing and showing it to every one, in bearing himself as God, and appearing on the earth with a pomp and glory worthy of his Divinity.

II. The apostle adds, he "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." This is the second point of which we proposed to treat. We have heard what the Lord was by nature; let us now see what he became by dispensation. He was God, equal to the Father, and in the form of God. He made himself man, and a servant, obedient unto the cross. The apostle proposes two parts for our consideration in this mystery: first the form or condition that the Lord took; and then the obedience which he therein yielded to the Father. He explains the first to us in these words, "that Jesus Christ made himself of no reputation, having taken the form of a servant, made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man." Now what he says, "that he made himself of no reputation," shows us that all this humiliation of his has been a work of his love, and not of necessity. It

is neither the authority nor strength of any opposing power that induced him to make himself of no reputation. It was his will which made him do it. He bent not under the efforts of any other power than that of his own love. Then afterwards the apostle tells us in what his "emptying himself" properly consisted, When he adds, "he took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Do not imagine that his thus abasing himself signifies that he had ceased to be God, or that he despoiled himself of either his immortal and immutable nature, or of any of its properties. He made himself of no reputation, not in losing or quitting what he had, but in taking that which he had not; not in extinguishing the glory of his Divinity, but in concealing it beneath the veil of infirmity. Furthermore, this "form of a servant" which the Lord took is not simply, human nature. For now that he is in the heavens, in sovereign glory, he has no longer this form of a servant, whilst he still has, and will eternally have, human nature. But even as the form of God in which he was signifies (as we have before observed) a Divinity clothed with its glory; so also the form of a servant which he took is a low, contemptible, and human nature, accompanied by all those infirmities which are now found in man's nature. It is the same that St Paul elsewhere calls the form or "likeness of sinful flesh," Romans 8:3. And St John expresses the same truth in other words, when he says, "The Word was made flesh," John 1:14; that is to say, not man simply, but weak man, despicable in appearance, and tempted in all things, like as we are, sin only excepted. Now a servant or a slave is not simply a man; for there are many men who are not slaves. But it is a man reduced to a low and vile condition, dependent on the will of others, and living meanly, in contempt, without glory or honour; so that the form of a servant, besides the nature which the Lord took upon himself, signifies still further the state and condition of that nature. That which he adds, "that being made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man," is only to make the same thing clear. For, in the first place, in saying that he had "the likeness of men," he specifies precisely what that form of a servant was, of which he had spoken in general, and confines it to the nature of men. The nature of angels is very excellent, particularly above that of animals. But though this be so, in comparison with that of God, it must and ought to be called "the form of a servant," as it really is, as "angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister," Hebrews 1:14. If, then, the Lord had clothed himself with their nature, there is no doubt that it might truly have been said "that he had taken the form of a servant." But the apostle shows us that it is not this that he means, and that he speaks of the nature of men, and not of that of angels, when he says that the Lord took the form of a servant, according to the information which he elsewhere expressly gives us, that "he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." Again, in saying that he was made in the likeness of men, he declares to us the manner in which he has taken to himself this poor and weak nature with which he clothed himself, not simply as a veil, or a dress, or a symbol of his presence, as he had formerly taken exterior forms, under which he had appeared to the prophets, without having any union of nature with them; but that he united it to himself personally in such a way that this flesh, in which he manifested himself, is not

foreign to him, but his own. He has not only taken man, he is become man; he was made in the likeness of men; he was made flesh, as says St John.

But let none here receive into their mind the dream of some ancient heretics, that St Paul took from the Lord the truth and substance of human nature, and left him nothing but a false and vain appearance, under pretence "that he was made
56 in the likeness of men," and not simply that he was made man; and besides that, "being found in fashion as a man," and not simply being found man. For, in the first place, it is to reason badly, to conclude that he has not truly had our nature from what the apostle says, "that he was made in the likeness of men." At this rate it might be inferred that Seth was not truly of the same nature as his father Adam, because Moses says he was begotten in the likeness and image of Adam. It simply follows from this, that the Lord was not those other men in whose likeness he was made, neither was Seth Adam; but not that he had not truly a nature like theirs. The apostle really says that the Lord had a likeness to other men. But he does not say that this likeness which he bore to us has no foundation but that of a false shadow and vain picture of our flesh, as these people imagine, and not upon a true and substantial nature, that he has in common with us, as Scripture teaches us, saying, that Christ has partaken of flesh and blood with us; that he was made of a woman, of the seed of David; that he was made flesh; that he was like us in all things, sin excepted. Secondly, I say that the meaning of the apostle is clear, "Christ was made in the likeness of men;" that is to say, that in appearance there was no difference between him and other men, that nature which he took to himself being so truly ours in all things, that to look at that alone it appeared that he was only man, although indeed he was also God. It appears that there was nothing particular in him, nothing elevated above others, though in reality he had an infinity of prerogatives above other men.

In the same manner the following words must be understood, "that he was found in fashion as a man." This form of the Lord is nothing else than the situation and apparent condition of his flesh, and of the life which he led; all the outward appearance of his person. On beholding him, there would be found nothing which should distinguish him from other men, and those who only judged from their outward senses would have taken him for a common man. They would never have believed that under so mean, so sad, and so poor a form, had been veiled the eternal Son of God, the King of angels and of men. It is a form of speech similar to what we meet with in the 82nd Psalm, where the prophet, speaking to the princes, says, "You shall die like men that is to say, as he explains it in another part of the verse, "You shall fall as one of the princes;" not meaning that these great ones, to whom he addresses this, were not truly men, but simply to say that their quality should not prevent their dying; there being, in this respect, no difference between them and others. And Samson, in the Book of Judges, Lays, "If I be bound, I shall be as a man that is to say, as another man; there will not then be any difference between me and other men. Here, then, in the same way, when the apostle says, "that the Lord Jesus was made in the likeness of men, and found in fashion as a man," he only means, that to look at the outward condition of the life which he

led on earth, it would be found, in this respect, exactly like that of others, and not appearing to have any advantage over them. And this is what Isaiah had prophesied so many ages before with extreme astonishment: "He shall grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him," Isaiah 53:2. And it is this external form in which he was found which has deceived worldly minds, and has made them ask the spouse in the mystical Song, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" Canticles 5:9.

Thus you may henceforth see in what this humiliation of our Lord, or making himself of no reputation, (for St Paul gives it both these names,) consists; not indeed simply that he has taken to himself our nature, (for he does not cease to have that now in the heavens, where he is out of his humiliation, in his sovereign glory,) but truly in this, that he clothed himself with feeble flesh, frail, mortal, and subject to all the meannesses and indignities of earth; a flesh which in reality was formed by the hand of the Holy Ghost, but nevertheless in the womb of a virgin, of the seed of David, and of a mortal substance; a flesh which came into the light of life among the lowliness of ordinary births, which was wrapped in linen, and nurtured at the breast; which grew by degrees, and which was subject to cold, to heat, to rain, and to the other injuries of the atmosphere; to weariness, to hunger, to thirst, to grief; which required sleep and rest to recruit it; which had nothing great, celestial, or extraordinary, either in its form, its complexion, or its appearance. Add to this the extreme poverty in which he willingly passed his life, insomuch that he had not where to lay his head; growing and dwelling, many years, not in the palaces of the great, but in the abode of a carpenter, labouring with his own hands at a low mechanical trade; and when he began the exercise of his office, he was accompanied, not by guards, or a number of disciples who were of some reputation in the world, but by twelve fishermen, as rough and uncouth as possible, and teaching oftenest in the deserts, on the mountains, or on the solitary banks of lakes. What shall I say of the law of Moses, to all the penalties of which he submitted, having felt its yoke from his infancy when he was circumcised, and having afterwards observed its ordinances as faithfully as if he had been its true and legitimate subject? He yielded the same respect to the baptism of John. And besides these two servants of his Father, he submitted to Roman governors, and to the orders of inferior magistrates. He paid that tribute which he did not owe, and there was no sort of subjection or servitude through which he did not pass. He was exposed to the temptations of Satan, to the blasphemies of the Pharisees, to the insults and mockeries of the people, and allowed himself to be loaded with abuse. He was willing that devils and men should have free liberty to attack him, opposing all their designs with gentleness and patience; whilst the last degree of his humiliation was that cross of which we shall presently speak. What abasement could possibly have been imagined deeper, and more wonderful, than this, I do not say by men only, but by all the angels of heaven? From what higher point of glory could Jesus have descended to the lowest condition of man? The most elevated

among men is but a miserable worm; so that had the Lord taken to himself the form and the situation of the most august on the earth, this would be to have descended infinitely lower than to have gone from the highest point of heaven to the centre of the abyss. Judge then what we ought to think or to say now, when he has clothed himself with the form, not of a king or an emperor, but of a vassal or a slave. This was truly "to make himself of no reputation," when the Son of God emptied himself (thus speaks our apostle) of all that fulness of good which dwelt in him. In that form which he took, there appeared no part of that abundance which he possessed in the other. There is neither light, nor strength, nor glory, nor empire, nor majesty to be seen. From almighty, he became very weak; from the most rich, the most poor; from the Lord of angels, the servant of men; from the glory of the (57) world, the reproach and sport of the most wretched. He dwelt above the heavens from eternity to eternity, without beginning and without end; and here we see that he was born in a manger, and died on a cross. There he was worshipped by angels; here he was scourged and nailed to the tree by executioners: there he walked on the heavens, and trod the empires of the world under his feet; here he appeared before the servant of Tiberius, and waited from the mouth of this earth-worm the sentence of life or death: there he controlled the elements, the seasons, and time; here he lived under their rule, and bore their confusion: there he supported plants and animals; here he required their nourishment and their flesh for his food: there he enjoyed a most pure and ineffable beatitude; here he had but gall and tears to drink. And do not tell me that it is the *flesh* of the Lord that has suffered all these indignities, and that his *Divinity* nevertheless preserved all its riches and glory, without either the rage of the devils, or the insolence and barbarity of the Jews, having taken from him the smallest part of it. I agree, and I willingly confess, that nothing happened to his Divine nature, neither can there occur to it any alteration or shadow of change; but this other form that he took to himself belonged to him so completely, that all he did and all he suffered was truly his own. This man, the son of Mary, who has borne all our infirmities, is no other than the eternal Son of God. Both of these natures, so different from each other, were united in one substance and made but one person, as the soul and body make but one man. It is one and the same Jesus who was in the form of God, and who took upon him the form of a servant. Since then you acknowledge that this form of a servant was extremely humbled and stripped of glory and strength, neither can you deny that the Son of God was made of no reputation; whatever belongs to either the one or the other of these two forms belonged to him equally, though in different aspects. Thus it must be added, that though no alteration could occur in the Divine nature of the Lord, still the infirmity of his flesh hid its splendour; as when the body of the moon or a thick cloud passes before the sun, its light is not extinguished, but hidden from our eyes; and if it neither become paler nor less beautiful, our senses nevertheless feel a difficulty in judging of it otherwise than as it appears to them; hence we say that it is eclipsed.

But I come to the second and last part of the Lord's humiliation, namely, his obedience: "He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." From which

we first learn, that true humility consists in abasing ourselves in the things that God ordains, and into which he leads us by his will, either by the commandments of his word, or by the dispensation of his providence, in such a way that we can truly say that our humility has been obedience. This must be remarked, contrary to that superstition which cuts out for itself the matter of its humility, placing it in voluntary devotions, (will worship,) as St Paul calls them in the Epistle to the Colossians, 2:23, which God does not require at our hands. These have some appearance of wisdom and humility, but in reality are but presumption and pride. For it is to be wiser than God, and covertly to disparage his institutions and rules, as if they were not sufficient to lead us to salvation. Add to which, it is to fail in the principal point of humility, which is to renounce our own will, and to submit entirely to that of God. The Lord Jesus did not act thus. Although he was the sovereign wisdom, nevertheless he did nothing of himself. He followed the will of his Father in all his paths. His whole humiliation was but one constant and perpetual obedience. Secondly, we must restrict this obedience to the subject of which the apostle speaks, namely, to that which relates to the no reputation of the Lord. For as to holiness, which consists in love to God and our neighbour, it is indeed an obedience, seeing that it is in conformity to the will of God; but that was not a part of the humiliation of the Lord. Nevertheless, it is in that that its chief excellency consists; there being nothing more beautiful nor more divine in rational nature than holiness. Thus you see that it makes in heaven (where abasement has no place) the chief part of the glory of the Lord and of his saints. What then is precisely the obedience which is here spoken of? It is that which Jesus Christ yielded to the Father in all things which properly and necessarily belong to the satisfaction for our sins, and his office of Mediator, and what relates to it; such was his subjection to the Mosaic law, and all the sufferings by which he was consecrated. For of himself, and by reason of his nature, he was not obliged to it. But he submitted to it by the will of the Father, to execute the commission which he had given him, to save the human race. And the apostle, to lead us to it, names here expressly the last and chief of these things, that is to say, the death of the Lord. "He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." For the word "unto" is used in this place to signify, not the continuation of the time to which the Saviour was obedient, even to its termination, but the end of the things in which he was obedient, even to the greatest and most difficult of all, and to which all the others related as to their true end. Hence, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle takes the obedience which the Lord yielded to the will of God, saying, "Behold, I come to do thy will, O God;" he takes it, I say, for the oblation of his body, offered and sacrificed on the cross for the redemption of the world. Jesus Christ then has not only been obedient in suffering patiently, according to the will of his Father, all the inconveniences and miseries of this life, poverty, contempt, grief, persecution, and such like, however unworthy they were of him and of his nature; but he was obedient even unto death. To fulfil the commands of the Father, the Prince of life and immortality has not refused death, that thing which in the world appeared most contrary to his dignity and his nature. He has bound all. the feelings of his

flesh which resisted it, and brought them into captivity to the will of God. "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done," Matthew 26:59.

But the apostle, to enhance the value and the wonder of this humble obedience of the Lord to its highest degree, remarks particularly what the death was which he suffered: "He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." There is no kind of death which would not have offended the dignity and the nature of the innocent and most holy Lord, the resurrection and the life, the author of immortality, the Father of eternity, made a quickening Spirit, and not, like the first Adam, a living soul. But among the various kinds of death, none could be more unworthy of this sovereign Lord than the death of the cross; the most shameful, infamous, and painful punishment then in use among men, and had this peculiar to it, that it was expressly cursed of God in his law. The disgrace of men was found joined to the execration of God, and the greatest shame to the most extreme torment. And nevertheless, O ineffable, O adorable and incomprehensible humility! Jesus, the eternal Son of the Father, humbled himself even to this! The
(58) Lord of the world endured the punishment of slaves. The King of glory submitted to the extremes! disgrace. The Holy of holies received the wages and the treatment of the most infamous malefactors. The well-beloved of his Father was voluntarily made a curse. Dear brethren, this obedience is so great, and elevated so much above our minds, that we neither know how to express it nor to celebrate it otherwise than by silence and astonishment. What then remains for us, ravished and, as it were, swallowed up by so high and so strange a wonder, but to prostrate ourselves in deep devotion before this crucified Saviour? and, touched to the very bottom of our hearts by so admirable an example, we should cast down before his cross all that is haughty in our nature, there faithfully strip ourselves of our vanity and presumption, our hatred, envy, and every similar passion, the true productions and offspring of pride. Let us there offer to him our courage and our interest, and let us have nothing either so agreeable to us that we do not count dross, nor so repugnant to our nature that we would not cheerfully bear, whenever his will and the good of our neighbour may require it.

Proud man! does not this humiliation of the Lord mortify your vanity? He, who was the King of glory, abased himself below the lowest of men. You, who are but a worm of earth, you elevate yourself above the greatest. He did not make a triumph of being equal to God; and a little spark of mind, a handful of dust, a shadow, a dream, a nothing inflames your heart. Being in the form of God, he did not disdain to take that of man; yet a little land, or some trivial worldly advantage which you think you possess, renders you insolent towards God. He made himself of no reputation, and stripped himself of heavenly majesty and glory, to save men; and you make a difficulty, not for their edification alone, but for your own salvation, to rid yourself, not of some advantage that you have over them, (for in truth you have none, and if you would dispassionately weigh yourself, you would find that you were either below others, or at best their equal,) but simply of an empty and false opinion which you have of your excellence. Christ, to obey his Father, quitted

heaven, and the glory that he enjoyed there; and you are not willing for his service to yield the slightest of your advantages. He has suffered, for love of you, poverty and shame, death and the cross, all things unworthy of him, and entirely estranged from his nature; and you are not willing for his name's sake to endure the least disgrace and pain to which our sin and the constitution of our flesh subject all men.

But this obedience of the Lord ought not only to confound pride, it ought to extinguish all our vices. Sensualist! how is it that you are not ashamed to pass your life in pleasure, seeing that your Master began and finished his in perpetual suffering? He quitted the joys of heaven for your salvation. How is it that you do not renounce the pleasures of the earth for his glory? Miser! how is it that you adore that which your Lord despised? how is it that you are sparing of a few pence for him who, leaving for your sake treasures and riches inestimable, made himself poor that you might be rich? Sinner! whoever you may be, how do you dare to violate the will of God, after the example of the obedience which the Lord Jesus yielded to him? He neither owed these sufferings, or this death to which he submitted himself by the will of the Father; whereas the holiness which he requires of you is a duty to which all sorts of reasons oblige you. His obedience was in no wise necessary to his happiness; without that which he demands from you, you cannot but be very miserable. Your obedience is useless to him; but it is truly useful to you. His was necessary for you, and it is for your sake alone that he performed it.

And this consideration, my brethren, ought further to recommend to us the love and imitation of the obedience of the Lord more than all the rest, that it is love alone towards us which has been its cause. It is for us that he took the form of a servant. It is for us that he made himself of no reputation, and hid for a time his form of God. It is for us that he was made in the likeness of men, and was found in fashion as a man. It is for us that he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. All this admirable humiliation was the effect of the love that he bore us, and the cause of our salvation and of our glory. Let us then love him, dear brethren, since he has so loved us; let us serve him, since he has redeemed us. Let us do nothing but for him, since he has done so much for us. It is the road in which we must walk, marked with his blood, with his example, and with his steps, to arrive at that heavenly kingdom to which the Father has raised him, and where he has prepared our eternal mansion, to the end, that after the likeness of his humiliation, his sufferings, his cross, and his obedience, we may also for ever be like him in his glory and felicity. Amen.

Preached at Charenton,
Sunday, 28*th October* 1640.

SERMON X.

Verse 9–11.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, under which we live, my brethren, has great advantages over the law of Moses, under which the ancient believers lived; and this among others, that it explains to us, much more clearly, all those mysteries the knowledge of which is needful to our salvation. Not to speak of other advantages, whilst the *law of Moses* only discovered to the Israelites, obscurely and imperfectly, the evil of sin, and the excellence of holiness, two most important things to draw us from evil and to unite us to good, the *gospel* has made them both perfectly clear. Moses most frequently represented the punishments of sin and the rewards of holiness, the two most touching arguments of their kind, only under the veils and in the form of divers earthly maledictions and blessings. But the gospel says to us openly and expressly, that the punishment which sin deserves is eternal death, and that the reward prepared for holiness is a glorious and immortal life. To which we must add, that the examples by which the gospel has confirmed, and as it were sealed, this truth, are much more lively and efficacious than those of the law. For what clearer and more convincing testimony to the evil of sin can we ever have than that which the gospel presents to us in the cross of Jesus Christ, where we see the only Son of God, and the Lord of glory, suffering a most cruel and ignominious death for the expiation of our crimes? And as to holiness, what clearer demonstration of its excellence can we desire than his exaltation, receiving, as the price of his obedience, at the end of his bitter sufferings, a heavenly life, an empire, and a glory in every respect equal to that of the Father. In truth, if our souls were pure and sincere, we should not have need of these spurs to urge us to the study of holiness. The beauty alone of the duties in which it consists should suffice to make us love it, and require but to propose them to us to insure our acceptance. But this flesh with which we are clothed, filling our understandings with darkness, and our affections with weakness and languor, the Lord and his ministers, to excite us, take

59

occasion continually to place before our eyes the glory and happiness with which he will one day crown our obedience, if we will but walk in his paths. It is with this design that the apostle now proposes to us the exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ as the end of his humiliation, that from his example, as a true and certain pattern of our destiny, we should conceive an assured hope of a glory similar to his, which would make us cheerfully imitate the humility, and the love, and all the other graces from which he has gathered such precious fruits. If you remember, he described to us in the preceding text the extreme abasement of the Lord, who, being in the form of God, took upon him the form of a servant, and humbled himself, even to the death of the cross. If there were nothing else, this ought always to be sufficient to force us to humility, it being clear that the example of such a Lord ought to be the law of our life. But there is yet more. Besides the glory which will accrue to us from our conformity to him, humility will still be very useful to us. Instead of an empty honour that we ought to have despised to obey him, it will bring us another, solid and eternal. God, the sovereign Judge of the world, will take care not to leave for ever in meanness and suffering that grace which, of all the graces, he loves the best. He has shown us in Jesus Christ the account that he makes of humility and of obedience, and the reward that he has prepared for them; when, at his rising from the tomb, into which he had voluntarily descended, he gave him all his dominion, and all his glory: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." This gift is the reward of his abasement, and of his obedience. He afterwards adds the effect and acquisition of this gift, the better to represent to us the grandeur and magnificence, that is to say, the homage, subjection, and adoration, which all creatures in the universe owe to the Lord Jesus, on account of this dignity to which the Father has raised him. He explains it in these words: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Thus we have two points on which, by the grace of God, to treat in this discourse: the one contained in the first verse of our text, the dignity to which the Lord Jesus has been elevated; the other explained in the two following verses, the privileges of this dignity, that is to say, the homage and the subjection which all creatures owe him.

I. For the first point, that we may clearly understand what the apostle says, we must primarily consider the relation which the Lord's exaltation bears to his voluntary humiliation; and, in the second place, what this exaltation is, and in what it consists. St Paul instructs us in the first word, when, after having spoken of the abasement and obedience of Jesus Christ, he immediately adds in this verse, "Wherefore," or, as it is translated in our Bibles, "For which cause God also hath highly exalted him;" clearly signifying, that it is in consequence of, on occasion of, and because of his preceding humiliation that he was exalted. In which you see he takes two things for granted: the one, That the order of the two parts of the mediation of the Lord is such, that he must first be abased, and then exalted. The other, That the abasement was the reason, or, as they say in the schools, the moral

cause, of his exaltation. Assuredly it is an order that we see established in almost all parts of nature, that things pass through a low estate before attaining perfection and excellence. And what is usual in nature has been particularly needful in the mediation of Jesus Christ. For being in himself originally in the form of God, it was not possible that he should be exalted and have any higher dignity than that, if he had not first descended from that weight of glory and abased himself that he might afterwards be exalted. It was thus also that the Father had ordained in his eternal counsel, and had so declared it in the times of the Old Testament by the mouth of his prophets; who, as St Peter declares, (1 Peter 1:10,) have in many places predicted the sufferings which should happen to Christ, and the glory which should follow. Thence it is we read, in Luke 24:26, that the Lord, speaking of his cross, said to the two disciples who were going to Emmaus, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" which also he afterwards proved to them by the Scriptures; from which, you see, that he takes this order for granted, as necessary and immutable, that suffering should precede glory. But the reason of his office did not less oblige him to this order than the decrees and oracles of the Father. For his design was to open to us the sanctuary of God, and to lead us to the throne of his grace. Now sin, of which we are all guilty, shutting against us the entrance of the house of God, it was absolutely necessary that he should begin by expiating our crimes, which he could no otherwise accomplish than by his death; that is to say, by his humiliation. The design which he also had of forming for us a pattern of patience, of humility, and of the other virtues necessary for obtaining salvation by the way of affliction, required it; examples which he could only give by suffering. And the apostle teaches this in the Epistle to the Hebrews, saying, "that it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." This order then being thus established, and taken for granted in the will of God, as becoming bis wisdom and the nature of the things themselves, that the Christ should suffer first, and then be glorified; it is evident that these sufferings once completed, it was needful that he should in consequence be exalted to glory, even though in other respects his abasement should not have contributed to his glorification. As you see in the order of this world, that nature, after having suffered the colds of winter, is afterwards comforted by the softness of spring, and that, summer ended, the autumn necessarily follows; though no one of these seasons is, truly speaking, the cause of that which follows it, these being nothing in themselves but a simple dependence of order. Formerly, the Lord transporting his people to Babylon, resolved, at the same time, to bring them thence at the end of seventy years, and foretold it by Jeremiah. This same order being fixed, who does not observe that we may say, that Israel completed the seventy years of her captivity, and this was the reason that the Lord brought them back into Judea by the command of Cyrus? In the same manner the apostle says in this place, that the Lord Jesus having been obedient unto death, God has, for this reason, highly exalted him. Nevertheless, I do not deny, that between the abasement and exaltation of Jesus Christ there may be something more than a simple consequence

60

and order of dependence. I willingly admit that his glory was the fruit of his cross, and his exaltation the effect of his humiliation. It seems, in this place, as if the apostle looked principally to that. For he wishes to recommend humility to us, and to make us love it; and it was right thus to propose to us the advantages which the Lord Jesus has derived from his, and to show us that it contributed to his glory, that it was its cause and foundation. Christ "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; *therefore* God also hath highly exalted him that is to say, that the Father had respect to his humiliation and obedience when he crowned him with glory, and that this high dignity in which he has established him is the reward of his obedience. For, in the first place, the Father had promised the Son the empire of the universe, and a sovereign glory, after the conflicts and the sufferings of his office. Christ, then, having punctually acquitted himself in it, having humbly and constantly suffered all the things that the Father required of him for the satisfaction of his justice, and for the redemption of the world, we must perceive that his own truth obliged him to exalt him into the promised glory; and that in consideration of his death, and of his sufferings which preceded it, all this grandeur and dignity were given him.

But suppose that the Father had not obliged himself to this reward by his promises; I say, that even in that case the excellence of the obedience of the Son, and the wonder of his humility, could not but have touched him, and drawn from his pure goodness this same reward which he has given him in virtue of his promises. For God, by his nature, being infinitely good, it is impossible that he should not love holiness, and that it should not be agreeable to him in proportion as he sees it shining with goodness. And his power not being less infinite than his goodness, it is also impossible that he should not do good to him who pleases him, that he should not draw him out of his misery, and shed his blessing upon him. Now the obedience that Jesus Christ rendered him in all his abasement is the work of the most exquisite and complete holiness that can be imagined; in which there was seen to shine the greatest charity towards men, a sovereign love towards God, and, in a word, an altogether Divine goodness similar to his own. Assuredly it was not then possible that, seeing in this humiliation of his Son so perfect an image of his holiness, he should not look upon it with an eye of content, embrace it with sovereign affection, as the most beautiful and most admirable thing in the world, in which he found his own good pleasure, and all that he most loved; and it was equally impossible but that afterwards he should extend his munificence towards a subject who was so perfectly agreeable to him, crowning him with every thing that was highest and most heavenly in the treasures of his glory, as he found in him all that was most holy and most conformed to his will. He could not, without giving up the laws of his own goodness and beneficence, and without, in some degree, denying himself, leave such perfect holiness, I will not say, in misery or in meanness, but even in the rank of the happiest of created beings. As the obedience of the Son was above all the holiness of earth or heaven, so also must his recompence be above all their glory. This is enough, in my opinion, my brethren, to show us how the Father has exalted Jesus Christ because of his humiliation. It

is not necessary to carry the inquiry further, and to dispute with some whether the Lord deserved the glory to which he is exalted. This question is one of the fruits of the boldness and curiosity of the human mind, on which we should wish rather to be silent than to speak, if it were not that the adversaries of our communion force us to act otherwise; not contenting themselves with positively declaring that Jesus Christ by his sufferings merited that glory for himself which he enjoys, but they pretend further to conclude from thence, that believers also merit that blessed immortality which God will give them one day in heaven; by these means rendering his merit either less necessary or less useful and efficacious to us. To stop, then, so unjust and dangerous a pretence, I will first say, that what they take for granted, that Jesus Christ merited for himself that glory to which he has been exalted, cannot be proved by Scripture, in which all the merit of the abasement of the Lord is constantly referred to the salvation of the church, and to the redemption of the world, and that we are no where told that in obeying of the Father he has merited for himself the sovereign and infinite dignity which he now enjoys. He did not need this title to acquire it. He possessed it as the well-beloved of the Father, as the Mediator and Head of the church. What he has merited is the remission of our crimes, the redemption of the world, and the right of our immortality, the true and real price of his sacrifice. And as to this passage, and many similar ones, what we have said will suffice to show, that they rightly take for granted that God had regard to the obedience which was rendered to him by Jesus Christ, when he exalted him to glory; but we may not deduce from this that he merited this glory. They truly show that God has had regard to it in his goodness, and in his truth; but they do not prove that he had regard to it in his justice, in such a way as that he could not have given him less without being unjust. We say every day of Peter and Paul, of the good thief, of Mary Magdalene, and of every repentant sinner, that they have believed and repented of their sins; and that for that reason God has pardoned and justified them; and yet none conclude from thence that the faith or the repentance merited pardon and justification. Those against whom we are disputing confess that these first graces of God are purely gratuitous, and not merited by men. They cannot then conclude that Jesus Christ merited his glory from what the apostle here says, that he was exalted because he had been abased and obedient. I say the same of what the psalmist sings, "He shall drink of the brook by the way, therefore shall he lift up the head," Psalm 110:7; in which he only shows the order of these two parts of the mediation of the Lord, disposed so by the will of the Father, and the reason of the things themselves, that after having suffered and fought, he should afterwards triumph and reign. And this is precisely the meaning of the passage in St Luke, which we have already spoken of above, where the Lord says "that Christ ought to have suffered, and to enter into his glory." And we must also take that which is declared in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour by reason of his suffering and death," in the same way as this text of the apostle, if we must thus read the passage, and not rather as it has been more flowingly translated in our Bibles, and certainly much more clearly; "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, he who was made for

a little time lower than the angels, by suffering and death." Thus the Scripture not defining this question, it ought either not to be agitated at all, (perhaps the better course,) or to be argued soberly and modestly, without offending any one in a thing so obscure. But I say, in the second place, that even if it were plain and certain by the Scripture that Jesus Christ could have merited for himself, it would, from (61) thence, by no means follow that each believer could merit for himself, there being too great and evident a difference between the obedience of Christ and that of believers to argue from one to the other. For, in the first place, his is complete in all points; whereas ours is soiled with many defects: and, secondly, his was such, that by right and nature he was not obliged to humble himself as he did; whereas we are obliged by every kind of right to the things which we do and suffer. He could, without robbery, have remained in the form of God; and we could not, without injustice, retain the glory and the vanity which humility takes from us; whereby it is evident that his obedience might have been meritorious for him, whilst ours could never have been so for us.

But let us return to our subject; and having already considered the consequence and the union which is between the exaltation of the Lord and his preceding humiliation, let us now see what this exaltation was, and in what it consists. The apostle explains it to us in two ways; saying, in the first place, that God had highly elevated Jesus Christ; and adding, in the second, that he had "given him a name which is above every name." If you have clearly understood how the Lord abased himself, and made himself of no reputation, you will easily conceive how he has been exalted. For being God and man in one person, it is clear that as Divinity is immutable and absolutely incapable of any alteration and change, he was neither abased nor exalted as regards the substance or the properties of that Divine nature, which always remained the same within him. But although in saying that he made himself of no reputation, we mean, (as was explained to you in the preceding text,) in the first place, that he clothed himself with feeble flesh, in which he endured all sorts of indignities, meannesses, shame, and grief; and secondly, that although his Divinity truly dwelt in his flesh, yet it concealed the brightness of it, allowing neither its presence nor its light to appear: so now must we understand the opposite, that the apostle, in saying he was exalted, means, first, that his human nature was really and truly drawn from the meanness, sufferings, and indignities in which it had been plunged, and placed at the same time in a high and glorious state; and secondly, that his Divinity has caused this sacred vessel to shine and glitter every where with the rays of his glory, which formerly the veil of infirmity had restrained and hidden. This word comprehends all the parts of that change which occurred to Jesus Christ after he had finished the work of our redemption. And first his holy and miraculous resurrection, when his body, lying in the sepulchre, not only took again life, but immortality, and instead of this feeble and mortal being which he had yielded up upon the cross, clothed himself with one that was glorious and incapable of suffering; being by these means exalted not only above the nature of sinful men, in the likeness of whom he had appeared, but also above that of Adam in Paradise: for however beautiful and excellent was the nature

of our first parent, nevertheless that nature was still animal, and supported by the fruits of the earth; whereas that new nature which Jesus Christ took is heavenly and spiritual, having life in itself, and subsisting in the same manner as spirits, without any longer having need of the earth or of its fruits; perfectly holy, glorious, and brilliant. As the Father clothed the nature of Jesus Christ with heavenly qualities, so also he exalted him above the earth, from these lower regions, the abode of perishable and corruptible things, into a place worthy of his new condition, when forty days after his resurrection, seated on a cloud, that is to say, on the chariot of God, as the prophet calls it, and surrounded by angels, he was carried up into heaven, the sanctuary of immortality, and lifted above all those visible orbits in which the sun, the moon, and the other stars revolve, into the heaven of heavens, the true firmament, the highest and most august place in the universe, which is represented to us in Scripture as the palace of God, his seat and eternal throne. There he crowned him with sovereign glory, and seated him on the right hand of his majesty, to live from thenceforward in a condition as highly exalted above the honour and happiness of all creatures visible and invisible, as the place where he is seated is exalted above the centre of the world. This is what the apostle means when he says that God has highly exalted our Lord Jesus Christ, signifying by this word the exaltation both of his dwelling and his condition above all things, which comprehends his resurrection, his ascension, and his seat at the right hand of the Father.

And the second description which he gives of the glorification of our Lord, adding that "God has given him a name which is above every name," relates to the same. It is wonderful that the greater part of commentators find a difficulty in so plain a word. For some understand this name given to the Lord of the name of Jesus, as if he had only had that in consequence of his humiliation, and as if he had not borne it from his infancy, and during all the days of his flesh. Others make it relate to the name of "Son of God," and I acknowledge that the resurrection of the Lord brought this very quality into clearness; from whence the apostle says at the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans, 1:4, that he was openly declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead; and elsewhere, Acts 13:13, he particularly applies to this period the passage in the second Psalm, "Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee," because it was then principally that it appeared that Jesus was the Son of God. But if the infirmity of his flesh prevented the generality of men from acknowledging this quality before his resurrection, it cannot be denied that the Father had given him this name a long time before, when he had called from heaven "that he was his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased," Matthew 17:5, and commanded us thenceforth to hear him. Who does not see that the holy apostle does not here mean words and syllables; but that, by a method of speaking common to all languages, and particularly to that of the Scriptures, by the name he means dignity, quality, and glory? It is also clear that the use of names and titles is to explain the quality of persons. It is manifestly thus that the apostle uses it in Ephesians 1:20–21, in a passage where he is treating the same subject, saying God has made "Jesus Christ sit at his right hand in the

heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come;" where you see he places the principalities, powers, might, and dominion in the rank of the names above which Jesus Christ was exalted. Now it is clear and certain, by many other passages, that the "principalities, powers, might, and dominion" are the different orders of the holy angels, according to the different degrees either of the glory or of the ministries with which the Lord hath honoured them; so that these other names which he adds are also in like manner the other dignities established by God, whether in this present world, or in that for which we are looking; in which there will be incomparably higher than in this, because sin, which has tarnished this world, having no place in the other, the goodness of God will be communicated then to his creatures much more freely and fully, and in a more illustrious manner, than it now is. When the apostle then says "that God has given Jesus Christ a name which is above every name," he simply means that he has established him in a dignity which surpasses the glory of all creatures, high, low, present, and future; and that of so many illustrious and venerable names by which the grandeur is expressed of things elevated into some dignity, whether in earth or in heaven, there is not one that can represent to us that which the Father has given to Jesus Christ, in consequence of his obedience. The names of princes, kings, monarchs, with those of cherubim and seraphim, thrones and powers, are all infinitely below his. His is an entirely new name, which has never been borne by man or angel. There is nothing in the universe equal or comparable to his glory. 62

For, no longer to keep you in suspense, this dignity, my brethren, that Christ received at his entrance into heaven, after his sufferings and conflicts, is the dignity, the glory, and the authority of God himself. It is his quality, his state, his empire. It is the office of Head of the church, and sovereign Judge of the universe, titles which belong to God only, and can be ascribed to no one else. Our Lord also had the same meaning, when he said to the apostles after his resurrection, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, and make disciples of all nations, and, lo, I am with you, even to the end of the world." Again, it is what St Peter meant in his first exhortation to the Jews, when he said to them that "God had made," that is to say, ordered and established, "this Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." It is the name which was then given him, above every name, to be "the Christ," "the Lord."

And it is this that St Paul explains again in another way, speaking to the Athenians, and saying "that God had appointed him the Judge of the whole world." All these expressions have the same meaning as that which the church has drawn from the Scripture, and which she usually employs to signify this mystery, saying that Jesus was "seated on the right hand of God." But you will say to me, that as the Lord Jesus is the true and eternal God, blessed for ever with the Father, had he not this dignity and glory before and daring his humiliation? If he had it not, how was he God? If otherwise, how can it be said that the Father gave it him after his resurrection only? Dear brethren, I reply, that Jesus Christ was in truth the Almighty God, and the Lord of glory, before his humiliation. These qualities were

his before all time, as he possesses them by his nature, having received them from the Father, by his eternal and incomprehensible generation. Here, however, the question is not that of his original and essential dignity, or even of his Divinity, but that of his office; of that which he had being Mediator, not of that which he possessed as being Son of God simply; of that power which the Father has given him as being Son of man, as he himself says in St John, because he is the Christ and the Mediator of the church. And this power is nothing else than the right and authority to save the world, to found the church, and to preserve it against the gates of hell, to raise up and judge the human race, and to establish afterwards a second universe, where righteousness and immortality should dwell for ever. Jesus was only invested with this great and magnificent right after having completed the work of his humiliation; and if from time to time he has performed some of its functions, it has only been by dispensation, and in virtue of the faith that he had pledged, to satisfy exactly all the required conditions for being installed into this great and Divine office of expiating the sins of the world, by a perfect sacrifice, and to support all the trials by which he should be tempted. This is the reason why he did not till then bear in his flesh the ensigns of this glorious dignity. He only took them at his resurrection, which was as it were the day of his consecration and of his coronation. Truly do I confess, that to execute the authority that he then received an infinite wisdom and power is necessary; and had he not already had such, God, who never gives the title without the qualification, nor an office without a capacity for it, would doubtless have communicated it to him. But being the Almighty God, there was no need in this respect, but to deliver to him the name and right, with which being provided, he displayed in the sight of men and angels this power of his Divinity, which till then, as it were, had been hidden under the veil of the infirmities which were necessary for our salvation. And as to his human nature, which, that he might obtain it, had been clothed at his conception with the form and weakness of our poor flesh, God then (as we have before said) filled it with glory, and gave it all the excellence of which it was susceptible, while dwelling within the limits of its true being. I add this expressly to exclude the vain imaginations of those who, under pretence of glorifying the flesh of the Lord, would destroy and annihilate it, declaring that by the resurrection it received the incommunicable properties of Divinity, that is to say, omnipresence and such like.

II. But it is now time to come to the second and last part of this text, in which the apostle describes the rights and privileges of this sovereign name which the Son of God received; "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." He lays before us two rights which the dignity of the Lord has legitimately acquired for him: the first is the adoration of his name; and the second the confession and acknowledgment of his dignity. To every dignity established by God in the world an honour is due proportioned to their respective excellence. As then the Father has exalted Jesus Christ to a sovereign and truly Divine dignity, it is evident that we owe him a supreme honour, and that species of worship properly due to the Deity,

which we usually call adoration. And the Lord has taught us this himself: "The Father has committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father," John 5:22–23. And this duty is now so necessary since the manifestation of Christ, that he adds, "He who honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who hath sent him." It is precisely this kind of honour that the apostle here means in saying "that every knee should bow at the name of Jesus," as appears from the passage in Isaiah, from whence he quoted this sentence. For it is the God adored by ancient Israel who spoke in these words, "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear," Isaiah 45:23. The apostle refers this saying to Jesus Christ here and in Romans 14, an evident proof that the Son is the true and eternal God who spoke by the ancient prophets, and that the same honour and the same adoration which were formerly paid to the Father by the Israelites also belong to the Son. I confess that to bow the knee is only the sign, the outward and bodily symbol of that adoration, which really consists in submission, and in the affections of the mind. But these words are commonly used here and elsewhere for the adoration itself; it being clear that the heavenly things, that is to say, the angels, which the apostle enumerates among those who render this honour to Jesus Christ, have properly speaking no knee. And from this form of expression we may gather that, to yield to God and to his Christ the honour that is due, we must honour them not only with the heart, but also with that exterior inclination of our body, which you know, that when the Lord distinguishes his true servants from idolaters, he expressly attributes this mark to them, that they had not bowed their knees to Baal. Such then is the honour due to Jesus Christ the Mediator, namely, supreme adoration and Divine worship. (63)

As to those who owe him this, the apostle describes them to us in these words, "the things that are in heaven, and in the earth, and under the earth;" by which you perceive he includes all the creatures in the world, of whatever quality or condition they may be, who are endowed with reason, and capable of knowing and serving God. It is a very usual method in Scripture to divide them into three orders, the heavenly, the earthly, and those that are under the earth; as at the beginning of the law, where God, forbidding to worship any image of any sort, says, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth," Exodus 20:4. And in Revelation 5:3, "And no man in heaven, or in earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon." And in verse 13, where the subject still is of glorifying God and his Son, "I heard every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Now, in my opinion, the words of St Paul may be taken in two ways, both good and appropriate: first, By understanding them generally of all things, animate and inanimate, seen or unseen; and by interpreting them thus, that every knee should bow at the name of Jesus, of the things that are in heaven, and in the earth, and under the earth; to

signify that there is no creature in the whole circumference of the universe which is not subject to him, which does not submit to his will, and yield him the same obedience as to God, according to what he said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." For we must not consider it strange that the words "bow the knee" may be applied to inanimate things, to signify the subjection and obedience which they yield to the Lord, moving or resting, acting or ceasing to act, according to the laws of his will; as there is nothing more usual than in the Psalms and other parts of Scripture to speak thus, where the actions and qualities of living and reasonable beings are attributed to such things as are inanimate; and it is in truth a very elegant and beautiful figure. Thus St John, in that part of the Revelation which we have just quoted, makes every living thing praise and glorify the Lord. Secondly, The words of the apostle may also be restricted to persons endowed with reason, and capable of serving God; and it is in this sense that our Bibles have taken them in the translation, "that every knee should bow, of *those* which are in heaven," and not of the *things* which are in heaven. Understanding them thus, it may be asked who those are whom the apostle means. Is it not we, who, being on the earth, ought to bow the knee to the Lord? Our adversaries of Rome, who never dare to speak of places under the earth without thinking of their purgatory, do not fail to make this passage relate to it, wishing that by "those who are under the earth" we should understand those pretended spirits which they keep in prison till they are purified. But nothing can force us to come to that interpretation. For who will here prevent our understanding, with some of the ancient fathers, by those who are in heaven, all the angels generally; by those who are on the earth, living men; and by those who are under the earth, the dead? (Theodoret.) Or, with others, to take those who are in the heavens for the good angels and just men made perfect, those who are on earth for men, and those who are under the earth for the devils? As to the dead, it is evident that they will also bow the knee at the name of Jesus, and will one day appear before his throne to be judged. And as to devils, however opposed their wills may be to it, still they render homage and obedience to the Son of God, and tremble at his word. But perhaps it would be most suitable to explain this text by the first method, where this pretended difficulty has no place. For the remainder, it is clear enough from what we have said before, that by the name of Jesus the apostle means his majesty, and his person invested with the glory and sovereign dignity that the Father gave him; as it is usual in Scripture to use the name of God in that sense in many places where it says, "Bless and praise the name of God;" and it is a childish error to make it relate precisely to the word Jesus itself, as our adversaries understand it, who are accustomed to uncover themselves every time they pronounce the name of Jesus. In the first place, we must pay attention to the words of the apostle, who says, "bow the knee," and not, uncover yourself. Besides, if it be the words, the sound and the syllables, that they venerate, it is an inexcusable superstition. If it be the person signified by this name, then why do they not uncover themselves in the same way when they hear the name of Christ, of God, of our Lord, which mean the same thing? Assuredly we can neither think nor speak of the Lord Jesus with too much reverence, and God forbid that we

should blaspheme any of the true honours that are paid to him. We only reprove superstition and will worship, which the Lord neither ordered nor expected from his servants. The true honour that we owe him is to adore him and to serve him, to obey him and glorify him in spirit and in truth.

To this the second homage relates, which the apostle adds, saying, "And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." These words may be understood either generally, of the confession of all reasonable creatures, who ought to acknowledge him for their sovereign Lord; (for the angels also have their tongues and their language, that is to say, their manner of expressing the thoughts of their minds, and of communicating them, and being understood by one another;) or at any rate to restrict these words to the human race, as saying that there is neither people nor nation upon earth that ought not to serve the Lord Jesus, and acknowledge him for what he is, the Christ of God, the Lord and Redeemer of men. Since the division of languages, the nations have (as you know) been distinguished by their language, each people having its own peculiar dialect, and not understood by others. To confess that Jesus is the Lord, is to recognise the Divine and sovereign dignity in which the Father has placed him. This is what the name "Lord" signifies, and we must even remark that it is precisely the word that the Greeks have used to express the peculiar and incommunicable name of God, that is to say, "the Eternal," as our Bibles have well translated it. And from this we may gather two things: the first, (64) That Jesus Christ is the true God, the Eternal, the Creator and Preserver of the world; and that those are unworthy to be called Christians who do not serve him in this quality. The other is, That it is not enough to believe that he is the Lord; we must also confess it with the tongue, and make an open profession of it before men; according to what the apostle declares, Romans 10:9–10, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

The apostle finally adds, that this subjection of all creatures to Jesus Christ, and the confession that they make of his grandeur and dignity, "is to the glory of God." Undoubtedly all the works of God manifest his glory to us; but there is no one which so magnificently proclaim it as the redemption of Jesus Christ. This is the reason he avows, "I have glorified thee upon earth." His other works show us but the smallest part of his glory. The Lord Jesus has discovered to us the highest and most Divine mysteries; showing us that his goodness, his power, his justice, his mercy, and his wisdom, are infinitely greater than men or angels could ever have conceived: so that it is not possible to see and believe what Jesus has revealed to us without being wrapped in admiration, without blessing and glorifying him as a God, most perfectly and most supremely good, wise, and powerful. Or should it appear that the apostle simply speaks in this text of the subjection and honour which all creatures owe to Jesus Christ, and not of that which they really yield him, still it is his intention to include this point also, and to place before our eyes, not only the end, but also the effect and the event of this gift which the Father has made to the Son of his sovereign dignity; that is to say, that this great name which

he has given him shall cause him to be obeyed and acknowledged in all the world, and shall finally draw from all his subjects that adoration and service which they owe him. This, indeed, commenced from the time of the apostle, the sceptre of this Divine and crucified Saviour having so prospered in the hands of his ministers, that his name was already great from east to west; and since then it has prospered more and more, ruining the dominion of Satan, abolishing error and the false religions of mankind, putting down idolatry, confounding the demons, and finally, constraining all the habitable world to bow beneath his yoke, to adore his cross, and to confess, in all the variety of its languages, that this Jesus, manifested in the flesh, received and treated with so much ignominy and opprobrium upon earth, the stumbling-block of the Jew, the scorn of the Gentile, is, nevertheless, in reality the Lord, the true and eternal God, the Son and the Christ of the Father, the King of the universe, the Father of eternity. This work continues still by the grace of the Lord, and shall continue to the end of time; and then it will be entirely fulfilled. Hence the apostle, in the 14th chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, makes this prophecy of Isaiah relate to the last judgment, that every knee should bow to the Lord, and that every tongue should give him praise. For in this great and illustrious day, the heavens, the earth, and the deep, all things terrestrial, celestial, and below the earth, shall submit to the power of Jesus, and every one yield him that homage of which he is capable. The heavens and the elements shall be changed at his word. The deep shall yield up the dead that have been concealed in its caverns. Angels shall encompass his throne with profound respect; men, both dead and living, shall all appear before his tribunal, and after having worshipped him and confessed that he is Lord, shall receive from his mouth the sentence either of life or death.

Such are the rights and effects of this great name, which the Father has given to the Son as the price of his obedience. Let us yield ourselves then, dear brethren, in good time to his power. Let us kiss the Son, whom God has given to be our Lord and Master. Let us adore his name; let us bow our knees and our hearts before him. Let us confess that he is Lord. Let us believe it in our heart, and proclaim with our mouth; and if we acknowledge him in this dignity, let us yield him a faithful and constant obedience. May his will be the only rule, and his glory the sole desire, of our lives. Let us leave other men to run after the foolish and perishable objects of their desires, some worshipping one thing, and some another, according to their vain imaginations. As for us, my brethren, may the name of Jesus be our portion; may it be our fear and our dread. Let us have no desire in our minds which does not bow in reverence to him, no interest in our lives which does not yield to his glory. Far from us be the extravagance of those who are ashamed of Jesus Christ and of his gospel. O wretch! are you ashamed of a name which is above every name? Are you ashamed of a name which all the universe adores, and before which the devils and hell tremble? On the contrary, let us make it our greatest glory. May the profession of this name be our dress and our ornament. Let the marks of it be engraven on every part of our life; let us make our children, and all those who are most dear to us, wear its livery. Under the protection and safeguard of this name we have nothing to fear. Earth and hell fear it; and there is no name,

quality, or dignity which is not under it. The kings and monarchs of the world, their ministers, their people, their armies, and their states, their laws, their wills, and their desires, depend on our Jesus, and are in his keeping. The devils are in his chains, and cannot take a step without his permission. Christians, of what are you afraid, since you have the honour to belong to so powerful a Master? It would be too unfeeling if you were to doubt his love after so many testimonies of it as he has given you. Live, then, securely under his holy hand, and have no other fear than that of displeasing him. And as the apostle informs you that it is through humility that he is exalted into this great glory, follow his footsteps, and humble yourselves as he did, renouncing your own interests whenever the will of God, and the good of your neighbours, shall require it. For humility is the true road to glory, and pride is that of shame; and there is no shorter way of being exalted than to humble yourself, nor of being abased than to exalt yourself. If we will humble ourselves with the Lord, the Father will exalt us with him. This abounding glory has also been given him for our sakes, and lie will keep it faithfully for us, crowning us with it in that day when, having finished our course and the work of our humiliation, he will transport us into his heavenly kingdom, there to dwell and reign for ever with him and his holy angels. Amen.

Preached at Charenton,
Sunday, *2nd December* 1640.

65

SERMON XI.

Verse 12.

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Dear brethren, as you see in the world that neither trees nor animals attain at once to their highest point of excellence, but arrive at it little by little, by different stages, as by so many degrees, advancing and growing with time until they have acquired the entire and legitimate form of their being; so is it with believers in the church, God, the author of nature and of grace, having in his infinite wisdom established a similar order for the perfection of these two kinds of things. From the gospel, which he sheds in our hearts as the seed of our regeneration, he first brings out a heavenly and spiritual creature indeed, but nevertheless, still rough and unpolished. And then by the power of his Spirit, with which he quickens it, he strips it by degrees of the weaknesses of infancy, supplying each part with its needful strength, and enlarging them into their legitimate size; confirming its temperature, improving its judgment, illuminating its faith, warming its charity, hardening its patience, assuring its hope; until, having passed through all the variety of its stages, the believer shall finally arrive at the measure of the perfect stature which is in Jesus Christ. This arrangement of the Lord in the work of our salvation is the groundwork of the exhortation formerly made by the apostle Paul to the Philippians, and which he addresses to us today in the verse that we have just read, "to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." When the tree is once planted, nature, without stopping, labours incessantly at that perfection which she has commenced, spurring and hastening it on, until she has clothed it with leaves, and crowned it with flowers and fruits, and ornamented it with all the beauty belonging to its kind: she does the same also in every animal; when once they are born into the world, without losing a moment of time, she employs herself in forming, and polishing, and completing their being. In the same way, my brethren, it is very reasonable, that having received from the Lord the commencements of spiritual life, and as it were the rudiments of that Divine nature of which he has made us partakers, we should not stop there, but should employ ourselves night and day in perfecting so excellent a work, improving every

moment of our time to this purpose, and incessantly adding some new trait of beauty to what we before possessed; until we are truly divine and heavenly men, fellow citizens with the saints, like unto the angels, brethren and heirs with Christ, and the first-fruits of all his creatures. This is what the apostle here asks from the Philippians, as well as from all other believers. And, that we may correctly understand the sense of these words, we will examine them briefly, if it please the Lord, as there is not one which is not to be noted. And, for your comfort, we will divide this examination into two articles, of which the first shall be the preface which the apostle makes use of before bringing forward his exhortation, in these words, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence the second shall be the exhortation itself of the apostle, in these words, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

I. The whole preface is full of motives and reasons for inducing the Philippians to do what he exhorts them. The first word, "Wherefore," which unites this verse with the preceding ones, brings before our eyes what the apostle had just said to us of the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ, deducing from thence that we ought to conduct ourselves, in the work of our salvation, with the same humility, patience, and constancy of which he gave us the example in the days of his flesh, and aspire to the fellowship of his glory by the fellowship of his holiness. This discourse contains two parts; of which the apostle explains the one, and takes the other for granted. What he takes for granted is, that Jesus Christ is the pattern of our life; and that, in virtue of the union which conjoins us with him, the likeness of his whole conduct ought to shine forth in us, in such a way that each of us may be like a portrait, a living and animated representation of this sovereign Lord. He is our Root and our Vine, and the arms and the branches have the same life and being as the trunk which bears them. He is our Master and our Head; in every society he who is such ought to be the mould and pattern of the manners of his subjects. He is our Father, and it is the glory of a child to resemble him who brought him into the world. From whence we derive this right, which is very beneficial to us, to be able (as the apostle here does) to argue from the Lord to ourselves, and to say, not only for the duties, but also for the conditions and circumstances of life, The Lord Jesus was obedient, humble, and patient; he was gentle and kind; he pardoned his enemies; he endured their insults and their abuse without returning them: we then must do the same. And besides, he was aided, blessed, and comforted in all his sorrows, and was waited on by angels; he was crowned with the highest glory after his conflicts. Assuredly then God will treat us in the same way, whatever the world and hell may do against our salvation. The other point which the apostle has expressly touched upon in the preceding text is, that the Son of God humbled himself and took the form of a servant, and was obedient even unto the death of the cross; pointing out to us in these words the constancy of the Lord in the execution of the work which the Father had given him to do. He never stopped in so difficult a career, but ran even unto the end, persevering in humble obedience, however fearful were the temptations with which he was surrounded; teaching,

instructing, rebuking, exhorting, and calling men to salvation by his words, his knowledge, and the miracles of his life; enduring the insults of the Jews; bearing their malice; and omitting nothing, however painful or unworthy, until all was fulfilled; as he himself exclaimed at the end of his course. Undoubtedly, as we are called to form our lives after his example, (as the apostle sets forth, and we have shown you,) it is then evident that we all ought to employ ourselves in our salvation with fear and trembling, that is to say, (as we afterwards hear,) work with deep humility, and a firm, unwearied perseverance, to fulfil the work of grace that God has condescended to begin in us. ‘

The love which the apostle here testifies to the Philippians, calling them his “beloved,” is a second motive to induce them to receive his exhortation with respect, and to obey it with care. It was not a stranger who spoke to them, or a person to whom they were indifferent. It was a master, or, to speak more properly, a father, who burned with love for them; who had more anxiety for their welfare than ever any father had for the interest of his children. He had begotten them by the gospel, and, to maintain the work of God in them, had cheerfully suffered
66 grievous persecutions; and even now in the midst of his captivity, although his own troubles seemed to excuse his thinking of them, yet so great was the desire he felt for their salvation, that he thought of them night and day; and his bonds could not prevent his writing this Epistle to them full of testimonies of his affection. He describes it all in this little word, calling them his well-beloved. As if he had said, If you have any regard to the consolation of a man who always loves you and cares for you; if you still remember my care, the sorrows through which I have passed, and the blood I have shed for you; beloved, finish what I have begun. May my absence neither change nor diminish any thing in this great work which my presence began and carried on among you. This gentle manner, employed here and elsewhere by the apostle, should serve as a lesson to ministers of the gospel, to teach them, in the first place, to have such a cordial affection for their flocks, that they may in truth call them their dear and well#beloved brethren; and secondly, to banish from their teaching that harshness and severity, more suitable to tyrants and barbarians, than to the servants of Jesus Christ, the Prince of peace, the Master of humility, the Pattern of kindness. He desires, I acknowledge, that we should draw and attach his disciples; but with the chains of love and the cords of humanity, which to be gentle and agreeable do not cease to be strong, and force minds without wounding them.

It is to the same method we must apply the testimony that the apostle here bears to the Philippians, saying, in the third place, that they had always been obedient. For there is nothing which so easily enters into our hearts as praise; and every one being naturally desirous to obtain it, a stronger motive cannot be applied, nor one which penetrates with more gentleness and efficacy. And do not imagine that this was flattery, like the flatteries with which the children of this world gratify one another, rather through civility than truth. Such vanity had no place in so holy a mouth as that of the apostle. He praises them because they were indeed praiseworthy, and had yielded to the gospel of the Lord, and to the preaching of his ministers, that obedience of which he here speaks. For, in the first place, they had

received the word of God with faith, and embraced the yoke of Christ as the only way of salvation. And not satisfied with that good beginning, they had continued in that profession, living holily and courageously in it, notwithstanding the afflictions it had drawn both upon their master and themselves. This is the reason why he does not simply say *that they have obeyed*, but *that they have always obeyed*, that is to say, constantly, from the time of the apostle's entry among them, without in any way relaxing in their zeal. For the rest, this obedience must be understood not of the severity of the law, as if these believers had never sinned in any particular of their duty since their conversion to the Lord, for our life, while we bear this mortal flesh, is not capable of such perfection; but according to the kindness and justice of the gospel, meaning that they had continued firm in the profession of godliness, and in a studious, serious, and sincere practice of charity, and of all the other virtues which it commands; "obeying from the heart," as the apostle elsewhere says, that is to say, in truth, with zeal and without hypocrisy, "that form of doctrine which had been intrusted to them." And from hence it appears, contrary to the harshness of some morose minds, that we may and ought to praise the piety of believers, and to celebrate with honour the obedience they yield to God. I confess, that as regards the Lord, their virtue deserves nothing, and that in fulfilling their duties they have done nothing for him, but for themselves alone, as the psalmist sings in Psalm 16:2–3, "My goodness is nothing to thee, but to the saints that dwell upon the earth." But this does not prevent us on our side from being obliged to acknowledge it, and to praise its excellence; and that as the Lord, through the abundance of his goodness, will one day crown them in the heavens with his blessedness and glory, we ought here below to adorn them with our praises, that we may recommend them to men, and thereby show the consideration in which we hold them. And in truth, however little we may consider them, we shall find them very deserving of our admiration. For, not to wander from my subject, was it not in the Philippians a virtue to be admired, and truly worthy of being celebrated by the pen of the apostle, that they had at that time, amidst the confusions of paganism, acknowledged the truth of God, renounced the idolatry, religion, and manners of their fathers and of their country, to embrace the name and yoke of Jesus Christ? to have had the courage to persevere in it, and to render that constant obedience to the Crucified which he expected from them, notwithstanding the shame of his cross, the threats and punishments of their enemies, and the inclinations of their own flesh? Certainly if there ever has been any thing praiseworthy among men, it must be confessed to be this obedience. Thus you see, that besides the example of the apostle, the reason of the things themselves obliges us to praise believers. But in doing so we must observe these two conditions: the first, That the praise we give them be founded in reason and truth; that is to say, that we neither praise them, nor the things they possess, if they be not praiseworthy; nor for those that are praiseworthy, if they have them not. For to do otherwise, instead of rendering them a good service, would be to do them a very ill one; serving as pillows of security to lull them to sleep in their vices. From this it appears (I would remark in passing) how false and pernicious is the praise that the Romanists usually give

to the obedience of their devotees, who receive from their hands, with closed eyes, all that they present to them under the name of apostolic tradition, stifling the light of their own sense and reason to place themselves under the yoke of these people. I acknowledge that in religion obedience is needful and praiseworthy; but it must be that which we render to God and his institutions, such as was that of the Philippians here celebrated by the apostle, and in general that of all the Lord's sheep, who follow his voice, and are obedient to the instructions of their Pastor, who hear his word and believe it. But not to discern the word of men from his, and to take as doctrine all that is offered to us under that name, without examination, without comparing it with the canonical Scriptures, as did formerly those of Berea, whose diligence is praised in the Acts, certainly is rather stupidity than docility; it is to mock the truth of the Lord under pretence of respecting his authority; it is to betray his salvation, instead of confirming it. But it is not enough that the praise be true, it ought also to be suitable, that is to say, as to time and place where it may profit, as this which the apostle here gives to the Philippians. For what could he say more suitable to engage them more and more in godliness, which is his only design in this text, than to allege the obedience which they had hitherto yielded to the gospel? Who cannot see that to praise them thus for the past was to encourage them for the future? You are already solemnly pledged to perseverance, says he to them. This beautiful and noble obedience, which you have so constantly yielded to Jesus Christ from the first period of your conversion, is a warrant for your fidelity
67 to us, and to yourselves an obligation to continue in it to the end. Henceforth you can neither turn from it, nor even look back, without covering yourselves with opprobrium. Continue then, in the name of God, and crown these good beginnings with a happy end. He urges the Romans by a similar reason, when, to incite them to the study of sanctification, he alleges that salvation is nearer to them than when they believed, Romans 13:11. In like manner, he magnifies the crime of slothfulness in the Galatians, who had allowed themselves to be seduced by false apostles, by this consideration, that they had formerly embraced the gospel with much zeal and ardour: "You did run well; who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Galatians 5:7; 3:3.

After having praised the Philippians for the obedience they had yielded him, the apostle adds, in the fourth place, "Not only as in my presence, but now much more in my absence." By which he warns them not to do as some, who had been retained for a time in their duty by the presence of certain persons of respectability, but who allow themselves to be led into debauchery as soon as they are at a distance from them. St Paul elsewhere calls the obedience of such people "eye-service and men-pleasers," Ephesians 6:6. Nature itself has imprinted the sentiment on our hearts, that sin is a filthy thing, and unworthy of us; however strong may be our inclination, we dare not commit it except in secret. It fears the light, and the eyes of other men; above all, of those who are holy and serious, apprehending their censure, and being ashamed of appearing in their presence. Hence the Stoics, one of the most famous sects of the ancient pagan philosophers, order their disciples to choose one of their

most esteemed sages, as a Socrates, or a Cato, and to take him as a witness, and an arbiter of their lives, looking on him as present at all their actions, that from respect to him they may form their lives to honesty and justice, and drive from them vice and debauchery. But although this modesty may be useful to repress the unholy actions of our lusts, it must be acknowledged to be a weak and feeble guardian of our minds, and that those who only refrain from evil and do not apply themselves to good are not Christians. The true Christian hates the evil and loves the good for themselves. He respects the eyes of God, and not those of men; so that in whatever place you may put him, were it in the most separate, the most solitary, and the darkest corner of the world, it will not induce him to be more indulgent to his passions. This is the disposition which St Paul here desires for his Philippians, that they should not obey only as in his presence; that they should every where alike embrace the study of holiness, whether he were present among them or not, always remembering that it is God that they serve, and not Paul; that it is to this supreme Majesty, who is present at all our actions, that we must be acceptable, and not only to his servants. He also adds, that they should be much more careful now in his absence; for whilst he was present he exhorted and warned them continually of their duty, he discovered to them the ambushes of the enemy, he led them (so to speak) by the hand, and rendered them a thousand kind services, of which they might consequently discharge themselves towards him. Now that his absence deprived them of such a salutary help, were they not therefore bound to redouble their solicitude, to be upon their guard with more attention than ever, and to seek from their own vigilance the guidance of their lives, without resting in any degree upon another? as a sick person ought much rather to take care of himself in the absence than in the presence of his physician; and as good soldiers never give themselves more trouble or more attention than when the absence of their officers leaves them entirely charged with all the guidance of their corps.

II. But let us now consider what this care was which the apostle here demands from the Philippians, and from all other believers; he explains it in the second part of our text in these words, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Upon which we have two points to consider: first, The thing itself the apostle commands, "to work out our own salvation;" and secondly, The manner in which he wishes us to do it, "with fear and trembling." As to the first, there is no one in the church who does not know what the apostle means by "our salvation;" it is that blessed and immortal life which the Lord Jesus obtained for us by his death, and which he communicates to us by his Spirit, of which we enjoy the first# fruits in this world, and its perfection and fulness in the other. The Scripture does not only call it *life*, but *salvation*, because God does not simply give us happiness; he saves us first, and delivers us from the evil in which we were by nature. The blessing which the law promised to those who fulfilled it is simply called *life;* for the law delivers no one from sin, neither lifts man from the sorrow into which he had fallen; but acting as if he were in a state of innocence, rewards the obedience which he shall have yielded to it with immortality; hence that which it promises him is only called life, and not salvation. But in Jesus Christ we are first drawn from that miserable

state into which sin had reduced us, absolved from our crimes, and freed from the curse, then clothed with light, and peace, and holiness, and glory. This is why the gift of Jesus Christ is called *salvation*, and not simply *life;* salvation, as you see, signifying life given, not simply to a creature, but to a miserable creature, such as we are by nature. The apostle then desires that we should apply ourselves to this salvation, to this new life which Jesus Christ communicates to us, by delivering us from death. The word Κατεργαζεσθαι, which we have translated "to apply oneself to," properly signifies to do, to work, to labour, and is taken in two ways in the Scripture; sometimes to express to polish, form, and fashion a rough and raw thing, as when a carpenter cuts and polishes wood, and a mason stones, which they desire to employ in their work; and in this sense we may say that God makes us when he creates us in his Son, stripping us of this vile and miserable form of sinners and slaves of Satan, in which we are born, and giving us another, holy and glorious, by which we become; his children, precious and lively stones, and fit to enter into the building of his temple, from vile and dead stones, which we were by nature. The other, more common, signification of this word is, to accomplish, perfect, and finish a thing already commenced, to execute it and guide it to its end; as when the apostle says, in Romans 7:18, that "to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not;" and when he says besides, in Romans 4, it "worketh wrath," because it completes in us the feeling of the wrath of God against sin, which without is weak and languid, the light of nature alone without the law only exciting and beginning it in us. St Paul in these two places uses precisely the same word which he has here employed, and this sense suits it well: "*Work out your salvation;*" meaning, accomplish that which is begun in you; labour incessantly to complete this fine work, and to bring it to its perfection, and, as our Bibles interpret it, employ yourselves on it, that your whole occupation may be in the things necessary to this great salvation to which you are called. It (68) is in substance the same exhortation that St Peter gives to believers, 2 Peter 1:5–6, where, having spoken of salvation, he says, "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." This is what our Lord calls to "labour for that bread which endureth to everlasting life," John 6:27; and in Matthew 16:24, to "seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness and again in another place, to take up the cross, and to follow him without looking back; and in St Jude 20, to build up ourselves on our most holy faith. It is as St Paul will say to us presently, "I follow on, that I may apprehend. Forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ," Philippians 3:12–14. But the adversaries of our doctrine touching the grace of God elevate themselves in this place, and misuse this passage altogether; in the first place, to establish free-will; and secondly, to prove the merit of our works. As to the first, To what purpose (say they) would St Paul exhort us to work out our own salvation if we were not able to do so, and if we had not the necessary strength? But this objection is absurd, seeing that the apostle

speaks here to believers made free by the grace of Jesus Christ; whereas our dispute is with men who are in a state of nature, in the chains of sin. For it is of those of whom we say, that they can neither understand the things of God, nor submit to his will. We readily confess that those who have received the Spirit from on high can embrace the things of God, yea, they embrace them in truth, and persevere in them to the end, according to the doctrine of the Lord, Every one that has heard and has learned of the Father cometh unto him, and remaineth in him, John 6:45. We simply say, that all the strength by which they believe and persevere is a gift of Divine grace, and not an effect or production of their own. And as to those who are still in the corruption of nature, their inability to do good is no reason why they may not and ought not to be exhorted, not to *persevere*, (which the apostle here demands,) but to *begin*, because it is a helplessness entirely founded in the malice of their hearts; they cannot believe, because they seek the glory of the world, John 5:44. For we every day exhort those to sobriety and righteousness who have contracted so confirmed a habit of drunkenness and theft, that philosophy itself acknowledges that it is not possible they should abstain from these vices; and yet, under that pretence, nobody accuses such as exhort them of absurdity, or those who punish them of injustice.

As to merit in our works, neither can our adversaries found that on this passage. It is true that believers work out their salvation; that is to say, (as we have shown,) they labour at those things which belong to the kingdom of God. They believe; they pray; they watch; they take heed to themselves; they resist temptation; they practise works of charity, righteousness, and patience; in a word, they walk in the paths of the Lord. It is certain that believers do these things, and it is still further certain that in doing them they work out or accomplish their salvation; that they progress towards the end of their calling; they build up themselves, as St Jude teaches; yea, they save themselves, as the apostle says, when speaking to Timothy, that in doing his duty he will both save himself and them that hear him, 1 Timothy 4:16; that is what the apostle here says, and with that we agree. But he does not say, either that believers do the things by the power of their own free#will, and not by the virtue of the grace of God alone; on the contrary, he adds in the following verse, "that God works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure;" or that this endeavour or labour of believers merits salvation; on the contrary, he elsewhere protests that our sufferings are not to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us, and that the life eternal with which God will reward our race is a gift of his grace, and alms from his mercy. It must then be considered as one thing to merit salvation, and another to enter into the possession of it. The first belongs alone to Jesus Christ, the second to believers. For there is no one but the Lord who has obtained life at the price of his blood, having satisfied the Father's justice by his sufferings, and obtained the privilege of immortality; by reason of which he alone is called our Saviour; this name, as well as that of Mediator, Redeemer, and Intercessor, belongs to him alone. But as to the possession of the salvation acquired by him, it belongs to all those who believe in his word. It is very true that even in this respect it is the Lord who does the business. For being as incapable of conducting ourselves in this

state as of acquiring it, God gives us strength and power to do it by his Spirit; in consequence of which we act as the instruments of his hand, and are said to work out, or to complete, our salvation, because by faith, by the practice of holiness, and by perseverance, we enter into the possession of eternal life, acquired for us only by the merit of our Lord. This has been well explained by an author whom our adversaries reckon among their fathers, (Bernard on Free-will,) that our good works are the path, and not the cause, of the heavenly kingdom. It may then be concluded, that the apostle commanding us in this place to employ ourselves on our own salvation, to work it out and to finish it, does not take for granted any power of free-will in us, nor any merit in our works, but simply means, that in consequence of, and by the efficacy of, this merciful grace, with which God has freely favoured us, we should incessantly labour, each in his calling, to accomplish the work of godliness, watching and praying, renouncing the world more and more, and all its vain lusts, and daily growing in faith, hope, and charity, in patience, and in all those other spiritual graces necessary to arrive at the entire enjoyment of that precious and glorious inheritance which the Lord Jesus has acquired for us by his death, assured by his resurrection, and promised in his word.

I now come to the manner in which he desires that we should acquit ourselves of this duty, that is to say, "with fear and trembling," which is the second and last point that we have to consider in this discourse. Those of the Romish communion teaching, as you know, that the believer ought always to doubt of his salvation, not being able, as they hold, to have a certain assurance of being now in the grace of God, and much less of persevering in it constantly for the future, wrest this passage to their error, and pretend that the apostle, by this "fear and trembling" which he directs, means doubt and mistrust, and wishes us to be in a perpetual apprehension of falling from salvation, without being certain that God loves us, or that we shall ever arrive at salvation. I will not here largely refute this doctrine, nor show you how contrary it is to Scripture, which teaches us in a thousand places both the certainty of the salvation of the elect, and the testimony borne by the Holy Spirit to their adoption, and the confidence they should take from it, being certain, with the apostle, that neither death, nor life, nor any other thing, should ever separate them from the love of God in Jesus Christ. How insulting is it to God
69 that we should be unwilling to assure ourselves of his mercy towards each of us, which is the highest glory that we can ascribe to his goodness! how destructive of that comfort of believers, which, in the midst of the miseries among which they live according to the flesh, is all founded on the feeling of the grace of God in Christ Jesus! and to what feelings of horror and apprehension must such doubts necessarily give rise, when viewed with reference to what they must endure if they shall be eternally lost! To minds thus disposed it is impossible that one single spark of contentment should remain, much less that they should possess that peace of God which passes all understanding, or that unspeakable and glorious joy which the apostles attribute to the true children of God, as a necessary consequence of their, adoption. And finally, how does such a doctrine clash with the theology of Rome itself, which, setting forth that grace is received into the hearts of men by

the voluntary motions of their pretended free-will, here evidently contradicts itself, adding, that none can be certain if he has this grace or not, as if we can knowingly and voluntarily receive a thing into our minds without knowing whether we have received it or not! But I leave for the present all this controversy, and will content myself with simply showing that this passage in no wise favours their error; and, that we may well understand it, I maintain that the"fear and trembling" here recommended by the apostle signifies neither doubt nor mistrust, (which ought to be strangers to souls justified by the blood of Christ, and sanctified by his Spirit,) but a very deep humility, accompanied by a supreme reverence for God, giving him all the glory of our salvation, without attributing any part of it to ourselves; a disposition of mind which we affirm ought to be in every true believer, according to the doctrine of the Scriptures. And it is a remarkable circumstance, that this exposition was brought forward in the Council of Trent itself, as history tells us; such admirable methods has the providence of God for causing his truth to shine even in the midst of the thickest darkness. That we must thus take the text of the apostle is proved in many ways. First, By the terms themselves which he uses, *fear and trembling*, which are never employed in the New Testament to express doubt or mistrust, but always every where to signify humility and reverence; as in the Epistle to the Ephesians, 6:5, where St Paul commands servants "to obey their masters with fear and trembling," who does not see that he means not with doubt and mistrust, (which would be very unsuitable, and contrary to what he adds, "in simplicity of heart, as unto Christ,") but with humility and reverence? and when he praises the Corinthians, "that they had received Titus with fear and trembling that is to say, with the respect due to him, and not with distrust, which would have been contrary to their duty; and when he says to the same believers "that he has been among them in fear and trembling," 1 Corinthians 2:3, he signifies not that he had doubted them, that he had been afraid of them, (for this meaning would be absurd and ridiculous,) but the humility, gentleness, and simplicity of his conversation among them. These are the only three passages, besides our text, in which we meet with this manner of speaking in the whole of the New Testament, all of which imply humility and reverence, and not doubt or mistrust. Who can argue that, in this fourth passage, we must not take these words in the same sense? I prove it, in the second place, By the second Psalm, from whence this manner of speaking is evidently drawn, where the prophet, treating a similar subject, says, "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." Undoubtedly this great joy, this exultation with which he accompanies the fear and trembling of believers, is incompatible with doubt, uncertainty, and mistrust; but agrees very well with humility and reverence to God. Let us then say that both the psalmist, and St Paul, who has borrowed these words from him, by the fear and trembling which he directs, intends humility and reverence, and not doubt and uncertainty. The same appears again from what the apostle, in Romans 11, opposes to the fear which he recommends to us; which is not assurance, but pride; "Be not high-minded, but fear," verse 20; an evident sign that the fear which he approves in us is. reverence and humility, the reverse of pride, and not doubt or uncertainty,

the opposite of assurance. But what need is there to travel beyond this text to establish its meaning? Its connexion even with what precedes and what follows it sufficiently explains it to us. For the apostle draws this exhortation from the example of Jesus Christ, as we have already shown. Christ humbled himself, and was exalted; for which reason occupy yourselves about your own salvation with fear and trembling. This conclusion, to be good and right, ought to follow the nature of its principle, and draw nothing from it but what is really in it. Now in this example of the Lord, from which it is deduced, we see a very deep and most admirable humility, with an extreme reverence and obedience towards the Father, as the apostle divinely represents to us in it. But of doubt, uncertainty, or mistrust, neither does the apostle remark any thing, nor in reality is there any. For who can say, without blasphemy, that the Son of God either doubted or was uncertain of his victory? Since, then, from this example the fear and trembling are drawn which the apostle recommends to us, it must necessarily be acknowledged that this fear and trembling are humility and reverence, which clearly appears, as the origin of this reasoning, and not doubt or mistrust, which has no place in it.

Finally, that which follows no less establishes it than that which preceded it: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Why? "Because (he adds) it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Undoubtedly this great and admirable grace of the Lord, which thus deigns to accomplish his work in us, leads us truly to conclude that we ought to walk before him with extreme humility and reverence; but not at all that we should doubt our salvation; on the contrary, we should rather conclude that we ought to have a firm and assured hope of it. As then this reason is that which the apostle alleges for the fear and trembling with which we must work out our salvation, let us conclude that it is humility and reverence towards God which he recommends to us, and not doubt or uncertainty, as our adversaries pretend. For this fear consists in two things: first, in a profound humility; and secondly, in a perfect reverence towards God. The humility which proceeds from the consciousness of our own weakness, the worthlessness of our nature, and the dangers which surround us, produces in us a continual solicitude to employ all the means necessary to salvation, and particularly an attention to bind ourselves wholly to the Lord, hoping nothing from ourselves, and expecting all from him; as you see in an infant, who, the more knowledge it has of its own weakness and the danger in which it finds itself, the more closely it will cling to its mother. Reverence towards God produces also the same effect, and gives rise in our hearts to a greater knowledge of his goodness and supreme majesty than of our own sin and misery. For who is he whose respect for so great a
70 God does not lead him to the study and practice of that which is agreeable to him? Such was the disposition of our apostle. He was assured of his own salvation, as he so clearly testifies in a thousand places, that our adversaries themselves are obliged to acknowledge it, and to except him from among the number of doubters; yet he did not cease to feel much solicitude, and to take wonderful care of all the means which are prescribed for us to arrive at the heavenly kingdom; as he declares, both in the third chapter of this Epistle, and in 1 Corinthians 9:26–27, where he declares

that he runs, and fights, and wrestles, and brings his body into subjection, so that after having preached to others, he himself may not be a castaway. He recommends to us what he practised himself,—assurance without security, and labour without pride. He does not wish that the goodness of God should render us cowards, or that our labour should render us presumptuous. Satan deceives some by making them believe that there is no need to withstand vice, or to give themselves much trouble; and he puffs up others, and intoxicates them with a good opinion of themselves, turning their own virtue into poison to them, and their confidence into ruin. By the first means he destroys that large number of carnal Christians of which the world is full, and who have nothing of Jesus Christ but the name and the profession. By the second he condemns Pharisaical minds, proud and puffed up with the presumption of their righteousness and of their deserts, under whatever period or garb they may live. The apostle calls to the first, "Work out your own salvation," and adds for the second, "with fear and trembling." Dear brethren, it is not sufficient to remark these vices in others, or even to listen to what St Paul directs us against them; we must watch ourselves, and unceasingly practise the holy exhortation of this great minister of the Lord. May this heavenly voice of his resound in our ears and in our hearts night and day, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." May it hasten us, and not give us any moment of repose; may it awaken our minds, and keep them entirely occupied on this Divine care. Let us receive nothing that is contrary to it. Let us shut our ears to the gentle but pernicious songs of the world, which invite us to its vile pleasures, and its useless pastimes, and to the miserable exercise of its laborious vanity. Let us not listen either to the necessities or the desires of carnal nature, or of our family. Let us leave the dead to bury their dead, and the children of this mortal world to amuse themselves with mortal and perishable things. Let us follow Jesus Christ, and remember the salvation to which he calls us, and for which he consecrated himself for us, and of which he has already given us an earnest. It is our task and our work. It is the vineyard into which he has sent us, the talent that he has committed to us. Let us every morning attend to this work; let us examine it every evening. Let us hold that day lost in which we have made no progress in it. If any of the qualities necessary to this salvation are wanting to you, such as charity, patience, chastity, or liberality, labour, watch, and pray till you have received them from Heaven. If what you have is weak and in a bad state, quit it not till it has regained its proper form. And here do not allege any excuse. You cannot have a good one here, where the question is one of salvation; that is to say, of your supreme happiness. You know what happened to Lot's wife. For only having looked behind her, she was changed into a pillar of salt. Let us always have before our eyes this sad and memorable monument of the just vengeance of God against those who do his work deceitfully.

But, beloved brethren, the obedience that you have hitherto yielded him, in embracing and keeping the profession of his gospel, in spite of the temptations which surround you, makes us hope better things of you. God forbid that you should lose the fruit of such excellent perseverance; and that negligence should ruin a work which you have so gloriously begun, and so courageously followed,

in the midst of so many stumbling-blocks. The greatest difficulties are overcome. You have broken through the hinderances which keep back so many miserable wretches at the entrance,—the shame of the world, and the lusts of the flesh. You have rejected the temptations which have ruined a large number, bringing them back again into the slavery of superstition. You have left Egypt and the Red Sea behind you, and have crossed a good part of the desert. Henceforth you behold that blessed land which the Lord has promised you. You are on its frontier, and have but the Jordan to cross. In the name of God, finish happily this good journey. May your strength increase in proportion as your task diminishes. Do in godliness what heavy things do in nature, which quicken their motions the nearer they approach their place of rest. Employ yourselves more than ever on your salvation, as you were never before so near it; but may it be with fear and trembling, with true humility and a holy reverence towards the Lord. If you have made some progress in this design, you have wherewith to rejoice before God, but nothing of which to be proud in yourselves. Look upon your obedience, your faith, and your perseverance as the works of his goodness, and not as the victory of your strength. May your submission and your reverence arise from it, and not a good opinion of yourselves. The more blessings you possess, the greater respect, and gratitude, and modesty you owe him; for in truth you have nothing that you have not received from his liberal hand. Behold, dear brethren, what is required of us by this holy and glorious pattern of the obedience and humiliation of Jesus Christ, which the apostle has placed before our eyes, and from which he drew the exhortation which has been addressed to us this day. If we imitate his constancy, his perseverance, his humility, in the course of our calling, he will crown us in the end with a glory similar to his own, according to his holy and faithful promise, "To him that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power such as I have received from my Father, and he shall sit with me on my throne," Revelation 2:26–27; 3:21. The Lord give us this grace; and to him, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the true and only God blessed for ever, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Preached at Charenton,
Sunday, 13*th January* 1641.

SERMON XII.

Verse 13.

For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Dear brethren, to deliver us from the death into which we had fallen, and to restore us to the life we had lost, two things were necessary: one beyond ourselves, namely, the satisfaction of God's justice; the other within ourselves, namely, faith and repentance. For as sin, of which we are guilty, had shut up our entrance into the house of God, and had, as it were, tied the hands of his beneficence, it is clear that whatever disposition we might have had towards him, it was not possible that we should obtain from him either pardon or life, if, in the first place, his justice was not satisfied, and our crime expiated. So that a propitiatory sacrifice was absolutely necessary for us to appease the wrath of God, and gain his favour, by blotting out sin, which had set him at variance with us. But as, on the other hand, it is neither suitable nor possible that an unbelieving or impenitent creature should enjoy the salvation of God, you perceive that, in order to attain it, besides that propitiation which removes hinderances from without, repentance and faith are necessary to bring us into a state to receive the grace of our Sovereign. The gospel clearly teaches both these things, when it says that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John 3:16. As to the first cause of salvation, the Scripture shows that God alone is its author, who, moved by his infinite goodness, has entirely prepared, procured, and accomplished the satisfaction of his justice, and the purchase of immortality, by sending his Son, the great and precious gift of his grace. No one has arisen among Christians who does not acknowledge it, or at least does not pretend to do so. Those who make man capable of expiating sin, of satisfying the justice, and of meriting the grace of God, are ashamed of their own doctrine, and willing that the Lord should have entirely the glory of our redemption. But as to the other part, that is to say, faith and holiness, however clearly and expressly the Scripture gives all the praise to God, yet many in different ages have attempted, and many are still trying, to give a part of it to man. They rightly confess that it is God who presents to us, in the first instance, the testimonies of his favour, and the instructions of his love, whether in the books

71

of his word or by the mouth of his ministers; that he solicits and addresses us by his providence; without which means it would be no more possible for us to believe than for a man to see an object which is not before his eyes, as the apostle observes, Romans 10:14, "How can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" But this is all that these people assign to God in the production of our faith and sanctification. And if some of them add to it a few rays of his grace, by which he accompanies within what he addresses to us from without, it is only to arrange the objects which are presented to us, and to offer them to us in a brighter light, or to advise and simply invite us to embrace them, and not effectually to imprint them in our hearts; pretending that it is our will which effects the chief, nay, the whole, receiving or rejecting the operations of God, by its own motions, at pleasure, without grace necessarily having any thing to do with it. But the holy apostle, whose writings we are explaining, teaches us a very different doctrine, condemning every where this presumption, and constantly giving to God the entire glory of our salvation, in all the parts of which it consists. Among the texts in which he establishes this excellent truth, this which we have just read is without doubt one of the most illustrious on which to found the exhortation he made in the preceding verse, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, that is to say, (as we have already explained in its place,) with deep and sincere humility; he takes from us every pretext for our vanity, and boldly pronounces that it is to God alone that we owe all that we are in Jesus Christ: "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

That we may truly understand the meaning of this doctrine of the apostle, we must, in the first place, consider, What is this "to will and to do," of which he speaks; secondly, How God produces it in us efficaciously; and in the third and last place, What is that "good pleasure" according to which it is produced. Thus we shall have three things to discuss in this discourse, trusting in the Lord's help. The first, the effect of the grace of God in believers; it is "to will and to do." The second, the operation of God in putting this willing and doing in us; it is a work with power. And the third, the motive which leads the Lord so to work in us; it is "his good pleasure."

I. To begin then with the first point, the effect of the grace of God in believers. It would appear that the apostle here takes "to will" for the internal dispositions of our souls in the things that regard piety and salvation; and "to do" as the external execution of these resolutions, and the good works which proceed from them without; so that, for example, the design of believing and loving the gospel is "to will," and its confession "to do." But as piety has its principal seat within us, according to the apostle's declaration, that "the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," Romans 14:17, all depending on the interior fixedness of the soul, the outward works and actions being either good or bad according to the quality of the heart, from whence they spring; it is better to understand "in us," (the division which St Paul here makes,) as distributing all things that regard piety into two parts, one of which he calls "to will," and the other

"to do." For it is clear that in the mind itself there are certain actions and dispositions which may be called energy and perfection, and others simply the will. To understand it better, we must consider what even the wise men of this world have remarked, that the human will (which is the origin of all moral actions) has two kinds of movement. The first a weak and doubtful one, which is rather a wish or a desire than a firm and settled will, when we would indeed wish to do a thing, but when in reality we do it not. The other an entire and complete action of the will, firmly fixed upon an object, and in consequence using all the power it possesses to accomplish it. Of the first sort we simply say that *they wish*, but of the second we say *they will* indeed. You every day see in common life examples of this difference. A merchant wishes to preserve the cargo of his vessel, labouring at sea in a great tempest; but nevertheless he does not will it, the fear of perishing himself making him resolve to throw out with his own hands that which is most precious to him. Among corrupt people, how many are there who really wish to keep in the path of duty, and fail in it with regret, carried away by the violence of their passions; and who, like that woman of whom the poets speak, see and approve the better part, and nevertheless follow the worse! But those who are not troubled with such passions, or who, having fought and conquered them, continue in the practice of honesty and justice, those, I say, do not simply wish the good, but they also will it in truth. These diversities in the will proceed from the different disposition of the understanding, which is the guide of all its movements. For when we judge absolutely that a thing is good and salutary for us, we also will it absolutely. If the understanding only judges it to be doubtfully and imperfectly good, the will is only led to it feebly and languidly,. Now in piety, which perfects and enriches nature, but does not destroy it, these diversities and differences of the will also appear. For (72) there are some who are only touched with the beauty of the gospel, and the blessings which it promises, to the degree of simply wishing that they could embrace it. But seeing that to do so they must deprive themselves of the sweets and pleasures of life, and expose themselves to the hatred of men, they stop at wishing, without going further. Such is the will of those who are usually called *Nicodemuses*, who would indeed wish to make a profession of the truth, and would do so, if it were compatible with the repose and peace of the world; but they do not *will* it. For if they will it, why do they not do it? They can allege no other reason than the feebleness of their will. Such was the disposition of him who, offering to follow the Lord, went away sad, when he heard that he must give up his riches; and of those who, having received the seed of life with joy, withered as soon as the heat of persecution had blown upon them; and of those again, who having conceived Jesus Christ in their hearts, have not strength to give him birth, nor to show their fruit without, by bringing it into the light of life. But that noble merchant of the gospel who, having known the inestimable value of the heavenly pearl, sold all that he had to buy it, had a true and perfect will; and Paul likewise, who, as soon as he was acquainted with the glory and excellence of Jesus Christ, renounced all to embrace it, following him thenceforth with as much ardour as he had before evinced in persecuting him; and finally, all those who give up the world and its vanities, to

make an open and constant profession of the way of God. The apostle says of all such in general, "they will live godly in Christ Jesus," 2 Timothy 3:12. Those only who in truth live so, are they who will to live in this sense, it being evident that such as have only simple wishes, and who are content with saying, "I wish I could live so," are free from the persecution the apostle says shall come upon all those who "will to live." It is then the first motion of the will, trembling and led to love and to desire godliness, that he here calls "the will;" and it is the second when it fixes upon this design, and embraces it with a firm and resolute affection, which he calls "to do." This is the true perfection of the will. The first of these motions is only the beginning of its operation; the second is its operation and its work completed. And that it must thus be taken, appears from other passages, where he employs the same words in this sense; as in Romans 7, where he describes the conflict of a man troubled between the love of good and the desire of evil: "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not where by "to will" he means those weak and vain desires of doing good, but which perform it not, whilst, on the contrary, he calls "to perform" a full and entire will, followed by its effect. In the Epistle to the Galatians, he also expresses it by a similar word, where, speaking of the wrestling of the flesh and of the Spirit, he says, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would," Galatians 5:17. Here again he opposes "to do" with "to will;" that is to say, a firm and constant temper of the will, which is always followed by its effect, to those light and weak desires by which good is rather wished than willed. It is in my opinion exactly this which he means by "the will and the race," when, arguing on the causes of our vocation to salvation, he concludes, "that it is neither of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," Romans 9:16; as if he would say, that it is neither the wishes nor the first motions of man, nor his firmest resolutions, nor the works which proceed from them, which are the causes of his vocation; but the grace and mercy of the Lord alone. And thus, in these three passages, under the words "to do," and "to run," he understands, with the firmness and perfection of the will, all the affections and works which depend on it, and by which it is shown: so does he in our text. And the reason is evident. For as a firm and settled will necessarily produces its effects, and it is not possible for it to exist without them, it is clear that whoever speaks of such a will speaks also of all its effects. Perhaps it may happen in other things that such a will may not execute what it wishes to do, because what it wishes may depend on others, or may be taken out of its power. But in religion, what is willed cannot be resisted, provided it be firmly and constantly willed; for religion only demands from us those things which we can execute. For example, it does not require us to give alms if we have not the means of so doing; nor to preach the gospel if we have not the gifts necessary for preaching; nor to hear if we are deaf, nor to speak if we are dumb. In these respects the intention will be accounted to us for the deed. This is why the apostle, in a passage on which we have before remarked, says, "those that will live godly," to signify those who do so live; as it is not possible that a man should have a fixed and settled will so to live without living

so indeed. From whence it appears that in these words, "to will and to do," are entirely comprised every part of godliness, without any exception, all the movements that we make for the kingdom of God, and all the duties we perform to arrive at it. "To will" signifies the first emotions and the first affections of the soul towards godliness, which are the commencements of our salvation; God raising these first emotions within us by the first rays that he causes to shine in our hearts. Man, hearing the happiness that the gospel promises him, and seeing the beauty, the justice, and the excellence of the means which it sets before him that he may attain it, is attracted by it, and turns his will towards it, desiring to have a share in such a rich treasure, and to place himself in the road that leads to it. The other words, "to do," signify, in the first place, the resolution that we take to believe and embrace godliness, the lively and ardent love of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of his kingdom; and secondly, all the holy emotions of a will thus disposed, the courage to suffer in so glorious a cause, the contempt for the vanities of earth, disgust at its pleasures, works of charity to our neighbours, temperance in the conduct of our life, and all those works which flow from this Divine source, with perseverance and a final accomplishment of our salvation. There is nothing good or praiseworthy in the life of believers, whether of those who begin or of those who finish, there is nothing in the infancy of the one, nor in the riper years of the other, which does not relate either "to will" or "to do." These two words comprise all the efforts and all the success of their piety; its beginnings, its progress, its perseverance, and its end; its conflicts, its victories, and its triumphs.

This shows how empty is the presumption of those who divide the glory of our course in the faith between God and ourselves; freely granting that God works in them the beginnings of salvation, but pretending that, after having received the first tokens of his grace, they are afterwards the authors of the rest, which they express by a word full of vanity, saying that they co-operate with God, making themselves, by these means, companions of the Godhead in this work. The apostle here throws down all this project of their pride, pronouncing, gloriously, that "it is God which works in them to will and to do," the progress and the end, as well as the beginning. (73) If there be any thing else in them besides to will and to do, I am content that they should attribute it to themselves. But since these words comprehend all, who does not see that it is wronging the apostle to give man some part of a work which he attributes entirely to God? This same Lord that brings us out of Egypt preserves us in the desert, and introduces us into Canaan. As he has given us the intention to follow his Christ, so also has he given us the strength to do so. Our progress, as well as our beginning, is the work of his grace alone; and our perseverance no less so than our progress.

II. Let us now consider how he gives us this "to will and to do," of which he is the sole author. The apostle explains it by a remarkable term, saying "that he produces both the one and the other in us with power." This word,[1] in the language of the Holy Scriptures, signifies a powerful and efficacious action, which,

1 Ἐνεργεῖν

surmounting all resistance, and throwing down every impediment, succeeds in its design, and executes what it has undertaken. Hence the Greek interpreters have used it in Isaiah 41:4, to express that all-powerful work of God by which he created all things, giving them being by an infinite power, whose efficacy nothing could stop: "Who (says the prophet) hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning?" And St Paul employs it in a similar way, to signify the action of that all-powerful and insurmountable virtue by which Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, saying that it is the action or energy that God displayed with power when he raised him from the dead, Ephesians1:20; and in the same chapter he expresses also by this word the action by which God executes his decrees powerfully and infallibly, "that we were predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," verse 11. And St Matthew, in like manner, to express the action by which Divine power does and executes his miracles, in setting before us the opinion that Herod had conceived of Jesus Christ, makes him say, "It is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works are wrought by him," Matthew 14:2. It is then the same term which the holy apostle here employs to express the action by which God gives us "to will and to do," saying that "he works in us with power," as it has been well translated in our Bibles. From which it appears that this action of the grace of God on us, when he regenerates us in his Son Jesus Christ, is not a moral suasion, by which he invites us to believe in him, or a naked and simple proposal of the means which should draw us to do so, having sometimes its effect, and sometimes not, according to the different inclinations of human wills; but a strong work, sweet and agreeable, it is true, but powerful and invincible, which is always certainly and infallibly followed by its effect; so that it is impossible that the soul in which it is displayed should not have henceforth "to will and to do." I acknowledge that God also calls unbelievers and sinners to faith and repentance, addressing them by his word, and declaring his will; and that with respect to some he goes still further, enlightening them within by some rays of his light, and spreading in their hearts some power of his Spirit, even to the production of this "will" of which we have spoken above. And I confess that all this work of God remains often, nay, always, destitute of its last true and legitimate effect, that is to say, of the real and entire conversion of the sinner, by the hardness of men, and not by the defect of the revelation of God. But the question here is not of the kind of calling common to reprobates, hypocrites, and unbelievers; but of that which God directs to his elect, and by which he converts them to himself. For it is that which the apostle here means, as he is speaking to people who have in them "to will and to do," which belongs alone to true believers. The Scripture never calls the action of God on those who reject his voice an *energy*, or an *efficacious work*. This word is only suitable to the action by which he converts his elect; from whence it clearly follows that it is always efficacious. This is the reason why the Scripture calls it elsewhere a creation, as when David prays the Lord "to create in him a clean heart," Psalm 51:12; and when St Paul says "that we are the work of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Ephesians 2:10. Creation (as every one will acknowledge) is a work

whose effect cannot be frustrated, it is infallibly brought into being. Undoubtedly since the work by which God converts us is a creation, it is then a certain and infallible power. The greater part of the other terms of which the Holy Spirit makes use, to signify this work of God in us, takes this truth for granted, as when he calls it a resurrection, a regeneration, a new life; it being clear that when God displays the power necessary to raise, regenerate, and quicken, it is impossible that the subject on which he has displayed it should not be raised and brought to life. And in truth, what could hinder the effect of this Divine work? Could it be the rebellion of our will? But how, seeing that the apostle declares, that God produces the will in us, that is to say, he makes us willing, unwilling as we were? Could it be the powerlessness to do what we would wish? But the same apostle says that God also works in us "to do." Assuredly then it is not possible that this work of his should remain without its effect. It is not that he does not meet within us great resistance to his work, and that error, malice, passion, pride, a host of lusts, or, to speak more properly, of demons, are not opposed to his will. But there is no strength which he does not conquer, or resistance that he does not surmount, or strong hold that he does not destroy, or pride that he does not throw down, or counsel that he does not dissipate, or thoughts that he does not lead captive, or lust that he does not bring under his yoke. When he hardens the wicked by his just decree, the apostle testifies "that none can resist his will," Romans 9:19. Who will believe that he has less power to soften than to harden? or that the hand of his righteousness should be more powerful on the vessels of his wrath than that of his grace on those of his mercy? If this work of God had not this insurmountable and certain efficacy, what would be more cold and less reasonable than the rich and magnificent expressions which the apostle gives us, saying "that God has displayed, on us who believe the exceeding greatness of his power, according to the working of his mighty power?" Ephesians 1:19. Of what use are these great works, if God only simply shows us the objects of his truth, without really softening our hearts to receive them? Or where is the man of sound judgment who would thus speak of a philosopher, and say "that he had displayed on us the exceeding greatness of his pow er, under pretence that he had taught us to live well?" But from hence it still further appears, that we contribute nothing to the work of our new birth, and that all those pretended powers which some attribute to our own free-will are but fictions and chimeras. They wish that the will of man should be the queen and mistress of his movements; and that, supposing that God has done every thing on his side, that he has enlightened the understanding, that he has manifested forth his judgments in the world, that he has displayed all his strength and power, still that this shall be without any effect, putting neither "to will nor to do" into man; that man still has, after all this, the power in his will to reject grace, and to live in sin or not. Certainly if it be so, the apostle is wrong in saying that God works with power in us both "to will and to do." At this rate he has done neither the one nor the other. It is to the empire of our will that we owe it, and not to the work or efficacy of Divine grace. And what need was there that God should act so nobly towards us, and that he should display all the glory of his power, even that by which he raises the dead and creates the

74

worlds, to work nothing in us? all his work not having, according to these people, any power or efficacy on our hearts, for fear of violating their natural liberty. Besides this passage which is so clear, there is hardly one in Scripture, treating on this subject, which does not confound this error, and show us that the work of God on believers does not, by any means, leave their will in this pretended indifference and liberty to determine. As when it says, that God circumcises our hearts; that he takes away our hearts of stone, and gives us hearts of flesh; and that he puts his law within us, and writes it in our hearts; that he converts us to himself; that he delivers us from the power of darkness, and translates us into the kingdom of his dear Son, Colossians 1:13; that he gives us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and enlightens the eyes of our understanding, Ephesians 1:18; that as the light shined in darkness, so has it shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:6–7; that he draws us to himself, John 6:44; that he grafts us by his power into the good olive tree, Romans 11:23; that he opens our hearts, Acts 16:14; that those who were dead in trespasses and sins he has quickened in his Son, Ephesians 2:1, 5–6; and similar modes of speaking, which all explain, as you see, with wonderful emphasis, a very powerful and efficacious work, and which assuredly produces its effect, without leaving it in doubt, or putting it off to the action of any other cause whatever. And not here to insist upon it any more, I will only finally add, that our Lord also shows it clearly to us in John 6:44–45, where, after having said that none can come to him except the Father draw him, he adds, that whoever has heard the Father, and has learnt of him, comes to him. The language of the first proves to us that man has no power in himself, even to will or to do any thing that regards godliness, none ever converting himself to Jesus Christ, unless God draws him. And the second shows us that this work, by which God draws us to his Son, is so powerful that none can resist it, all those on whom it is displayed coming to him, which would be false if it happened (as our adversaries pretend) that any of those whom God has taught should remain out of Christ for having rejected the calling and teaching of God by his own will.

But we must briefly answer some of the most specious objections which they bring against a doctrine so clearly founded on Scripture. In the first place, they say that if it be God who works in us to will and to do, in the way that we have set forth, it will consequently be he who wills and who believes in us, and not we in him, in the same way as some of the most extravagant heretics have held, that it is not properly the sun that shines, or the fire that burns, but God who shines in the one and burns in the other. To which I reply, that this objection has only been dictated to them by the violence of their inclinations. They themselves acknowledge that God enlightens the understandings of men in the knowledge of himself, by a work which is necessarily efficacious, and which man cannot resist, so that it is not possible that he upon whom it is displayed should not know it. And, nevertheless, for all that, they do not say that it is not the enlightened man that knows God, but God who knows himself in him. Wherefore, then, should we not likewise say, that though God certainly and infallibly converts our will, still it is not he who wills and who believes, but ourselves who will and who believe in

consequence of his operation? Our works in religion are one thing, the operation of the cause which produces them another. Those are ours, these are of God only. We believe, we repent, we know the Lord, and we love him; we leave the things that are behind, and press on to those which are before; we persevere; we finish our course: these are the works of the believing man, and not of God. But it is the Lord who, by the power and merciful operation of his Spirit, puts our minds in a state to act thus, enlightening them in such a way that we see, softening them so that they are converted, drawing them so that they follow, creating and quickening so that they live. They add, in the second place, that by this method we change men into stocks and stones, depriving them of their liberty and will, without which they are not men. I acknowledge that we take from them that vain and imaginary power that they give them of being able, without any reason, to turn themselves to one or the other of two contrary sides, which is but a fiction of their mind, devoid of foundation either in Scripture or in real reason. But I deny that the action of the grace of God, such as the apostle describes, and such as we declare it to be; injures either the will or the true liberty of man. It does not injure his will; on the contrary, it enriches it; it makes him embrace God and heaven, eternal and glorious objects, instead of the world and its goods, mean, vain, and perishable things; it renders him zealous and persevering, instead of slothful and flighty, as he was before. Can there be any thing more ridiculous than to accuse a work of God of ruining our will which works in us both to will and to do? which makes us will more powerfully, more nobly, and more firmly than ever? But neither does it deprive man of his true and legitimate liberty. For the liberty of man does not lie in the power which they attribute to it of embracing good or evil indiscriminately. At this rate God would not be free, seeing that his will is firmly fixed on good, nor the mind of Jesus Christ, nor those of the glorified saints, nor the spirits of the blessed angels, who all confess cannot be inclined to evil; nor, on the other hand, demons nor men, whether hardened in this world, or damned in the other, who all acknowledge cannot embrace the good. What sort of liberty then must that be which man would lose in making use of it? ceasing to be free at the very instant that he would use his liberty. For as the will loses this indifference every time that it wills something, resolving or retracting the part it should embrace, if it be in indifference that its liberty consists, it is evident that it must lose it every time it uses it. But the true liberty of rational nature consists in its following and embracing that which is good; not that it should be ignorant of it, like plants and animals, or that it should exercise no choice, as those who are under constraint, but that it should incline to that which it knows and judges to be best and most expedient, being led to will by its own judgment, and not by a blind instinct, or by a foreign power. Now God in no way thwarts this order and privilege of our nature in working in us to will and (75) to do. For he does not lead us into the plan of salvation either in spite of ourselves, or by bringing us up in the fellowship of his Son as stones, or pieces of wood, or as slaves, who are made to do and suffer by the rod things that they hate in their hearts. But he leads us in a manner suitable to our nature, and by an action so gentle, yet so powerful, enlightens our understandings, and forms in them by the

hand of his Spirit a firm and solid knowledge of his truth, and in consequence by this light drawing our wills and affections to his love, efficaciously, but agreeably; invincibly, but without constraint. And as the Scripture shows us the inevitable efficacy of this his work, in saying that he creates us; that he quickens us; that he draws us; that he brings us under the yoke of his Son; that he vanquishes and subdues us; that he leads us captive: it also testifies to us its gentleness, when it says, in many places, that he teaches us; that he persuades or draws us gently, John 6:45; that he leads us, and speaks kindly to us, Hosea 2:14; that he gives us counsel in the night season, Psalm 16:7; and that our hearts say unto us from him, "Seek ye my face," Psalm 27:8; that he opens our ears morning by morning, that we may hear as those who are well taught; that he opens our ear in such a way that we are not rebellious, neither go backward; that he draws us, but with the cords of a man, Hosea 2:4; that he binds us, but with the bonds of love; that he constrains us, but that it is by the love of Christ; that he is stronger than we, and has prevailed, but it is by his Divine attractions, Jeremiah 20:7. Thus you see that the objections of error against truth are empty.

Let us then conclude, with the apostle, that it is God which efficaciously works in us to will and to do. And certainly if it were otherwise, if the effect of the efforts of his grace depended entirely on our will, we must then acknowledge that his providence would be imperfect, as at this rate the motions of our wills would be beyond his government and out of his power. It must then be said that he did not certainly foresee, either the future motions of our wills, or the effects which depended on them, as according to this supposition they are all doubtful and uncertain until the will has determined, and it is clear that of a thing uncertain in itself the knowledge cannot be certain. We must then deify the will of man, as this opinion makes him supreme and independent with respect to God himself. We must then abolish the use of the greater part of the exhortations, prayers, and thanksgivings, that is to say, the principal part of religion. For of what use are exhortations, if all the light that they throw into the understanding has no effect upon the will, and leaves it as undecided as it was at the beginning, all its motions depending on its own caprice, and not on any reason? And if it is not the hand of God, but the blind impetuosity of the will, which decides for good, how and wherefore shall we pray the Lord to turn us from evil, and incline and soften us towards good? Or how and why shall we give him thanks that he has sanctified and separated us from those who perish? and how shall we give him, with the ancient church in one of the collects, the praise "of having forced our wills, rebels as we were, to turn to him?" Undoubtedly it is a lie to praise him for that which he has not done; and it is folly to ask that of him which he neither will nor can do for us. If we will then preserve faith in the providence, foreknowledge, and sovereignty of God; if we will entirely retain the holy and salutary use of exhortations, prayers, and thanksgivings; let us fly and reject this arrogant error, and humbly give God the glory of having efficaciously worked in us both to will and to do.

III. That nothing may be wanting to our blessedness, let us add, with the apostle, that the Lord has done it according to his good pleasure, that, this is the

only motive which induced him to bestow upon us so much good. The actions of God on his creatures are of two kinds. Of some, the reason appears in the subjects themselves on which he displays them; and others not. For example, the faith of the repenting sinner is the reason for which he justifies and saves him; the unbelief of the impenitent is the reason for which he condemns him. When these are spoken of, there is no need to allege the good pleasure of God, the reason of his work being seen in the thing itself. Thus you will not find that the apostle has recourse to it, when he treats of the justification of man. But when we do not see in the things any cause which has moved God to treat them as he does, there we are forced to adore his judgments, and to believe that he does it because it is his will. As when we consider that, of all the people of the world, he chose Israel, who were in nothing better or more excellent than others, we are obliged to come to this, that he acted thus because it was his good pleasure. It is this good pleasure that the apostle here alleges as the reason of the grace that God gives us, in working in us both to will and to do. And elsewhere in treating of this mystery, he speaks again to the same effect, when he says he has "predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will," Ephesians 1:5. And our Lord in like manner, "Thou hast (says he to his Father) hidden these things," the mysteries of his gospel, "from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight," Matthew 11:25. And it is this same good pleasure the apostle means, when, speaking of the illumination of the Gentiles in the gospel, he says, "that God would make known to them what is the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is in Christ," Colossians 1:27; and St James likewise, when he says, "that God of his own will hath begotten us by the word of his truth, that we might be the first-fruits of his creatures," James 1:18. From which it follows, in the first place, that it is not the consideration of any thing that is in us which moved the Lord to call us and convert us to the knowledge of himself. And thus it entirely crushes the presumption of those who found this election and preference of believers, either on their merit of *congruity*, as they call it, or on the disposition of their heart, subdued, softened, and prepared by affliction, before the period of their calling, or upon the good use of their free-will, foreseen by the Lord in the light of his foreknowledge. For if God called men to himself for any one of these reasons, there could be no cause for assigning it to his good pleasure. The reason for which he would have given them his grace, rather than to others, would have been quite evident; there being no one who will deny that he who merits ought to be preferred to him who does not; and that he who is dejected and humbled, to him who remains haughty and proud; and he whose will is inclined to good, to him who has not been stopped in his love of evil. But from hence again appears, in the second place, the truth which we have previously declared, namely, that the effect of the work of God in us does not in any way depend on the movements of our will. For if it were so, it would produce in us to will and to do not according to the good pleasure of God, as the apostle says, but according to our own. But here the adversaries arise, and pretend that if it be the good pleasure of God alone which distinguishes those whom he calls from those whom he does not

call, at this rate there will be accepting of persons; giving unequally to objects that are equal, converting one sinner and not another. To which I reply, that this by no means follows. For he does what he will with his own; and owing nothing to any, gives to him whom he pleases without injustice. As when among a great number of poor, we give alms to some, and not to others, he to whom we do give them has reason to thank us, and he to whom we do not give them has no right to complain. We have satisfied one, but we have done no wrong to another, because we owed nothing to either. Thus is it with the Lord in respect to men. Criminals and sinners, they all deserve death, and were he to leave all in the perdition in which he finds them, none could accuse him either of injustice or rigour. Those whom he snatches from this gulf are bound to acknowledge that he does them a wonderful favour. Those to whom he does not give similar grace cannot without injustice impute their misery to him; and so much the more, that he does not entirely forsake them, but presents them his word, invites and calls them to himself, and receives them if they listen to him. When instead of yielding him so right and reasonable a duty, they proudly reject all his exhortations and warnings, scoff at his voice, insult his servants, abhor piety, and give themselves up to vice, of whom can they complain but of themselves, who knowingly and willingly precipitate themselves into perdition by their rebellion against so good and powerful a Lord? I acknowledge that if he had not displayed on us the work of his marvellous grace, by which he worked in us both to will and to do, we should have valued it no more than others; and I acknowledge further, that had he been pleased to act in them as in us, he had worked in their hearts to will and to do as well as in ours. But still I maintain, that although the grace that he has given us is the cause of our salvation, it is not right to say, that because he has deprived them of it is, properly speaking, the cause of their perdition. It is their sin and their wickedness. They feel it so in themselves, and will one day publicly acknowledge it to their shame. For what other power leads them to rebel against God, than that of their own evil lusts? What violence plunges them into vice, but that of their own passions? Who is it shuts the eyes and ears of their minds, if it be not the love of the world and the flesh? But if you desire still further to enter into the mystery of God, and if, throwing down the respect due to the counsels of such supreme Majesty, you require, at all hazards, that I should tell you why he acts so with some that he has gained and persuaded, and in another way with others that he has not so persuaded; I will say to you, with St Augustine, that I have but two things to reply thereupon: the one, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Romans 11:33; and the other, "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid," Romans 9:14. If this answer does not content you, seek some more learned persons, but take care that instead of knowledge you do not find presumption.

This is where I shall end, dear brethren, after having briefly touched on the principal lessons that we have drawn from the doctrine of the apostle for our edification. He teaches us that God is the sole author of our conversion, working in us with power both to will and to do according to his good pleasure. You

then, Christian souls, who have had the courage to embrace the gospel, and the happiness of enjoying this holy light, which sows even in this world peace and joy in our hearts, and in the other will crown us with glory and immortality, see with what warmth you ought to love the author of such a great and marvellous blessing. He has not only given to you, as to others, a body, mind, will, and earthly life, with every thing necessary to support it here below. He has not only drawn you from those depths of error in which idolaters live. He has not only caused his word to sound in your ears, and presented his light to your eyes. He has done much more than that. Extending from heaven that same hand which created the universe, and raised Jesus Christ from the dead, he has enlightened your understandings, and softened your wills; and planted the cross of his Son in your hearts, opening them at the preaching of his ministers, and himself producing with power this "to will and to do" which you ask. What then henceforth should these understandings, enlightened with the light of God, think or meditate upon, but upon his wonders and his mysteries? What ought these wills, freed by the hand of the Lord, henceforth to love, but the goodness of their great Liberator?

And what consolation, what joy, and what assurance ought you to have for the future! You carry the work of God in your bosom, the labour of his hand, the production of his Spirit, the inviolable seal of your salvation. What can you refuse to him who has lavished on you so many wonders, who has so many efforts and exploits of his power which he does in spite of yourselves in your favour still to add to those of which the interior of your heart is the subject and the witness? But, believers, if I command your gratitude and joy, I do not permit presumption. Look at the gifts of God; consider with delight what he has done for you and in you; but do not become proud of them. Believe that of all these gifts that you enjoy there is not a single one but what is an alms of God. Believe that it is he who has worked in you both to will and to do; both the smallest sparks of piety, and the noblest conflicts that you have endured for it; that in this respect there is nothing in you either great or small that does not come from him, that does not call upon you to bow the head, and walk before him with fear and trembling. Beware also of the security of those who flatter themselves and are satisfied that they are the children of God, under the pretence that they make a profession of being so. None are his children but those whom he has begotten, in whom he has put his Spirit and life, and in whom (as the apostle says) he has worked to will and to do. He does not only say, to will, he adds, to do. Those transient emotions of piety you sometimes feel arising in your hearts, and which disappear as it were almost in the same instant, are not the whole work of God in his faithful people; he brings their wills into the obedience of his Son. He crucifies their flesh; he suppresses, or, to speak more properly, he mortifies, their lusts and passions. Judge with what right you pretend to be creatures of God in Jesus Christ, you who, instead of his will, only fulfil that of the flesh and of the world; you who are enticed by the vanities of earth and the follies of time, as slaves, into the most infamous exercise of your most miserable slavery. One sighs after gold and silver; another after the sinful lusts of the flesh. One runs after ambition; another serves some other idol. And is that,

Christians, the will that God works with power in the hearts of his children? Is this the fixed will that he gives them, so constant, so firm, and always followed by its effects? Is this all the success of the great efforts of his Spirit, and of the power which he displays on his own? But how is it that you do not perceive that these
77 are rather the productions of Satan than the works of God? And how is it that you do not tremble at seeing the enemy so powerful in you, master of your wills, and absolute tyrant of your hearts, which he fills with his desires, and acts there with the same efficacy as in the children of disobedience? In the name of God, forsake your error, awake from this great stupefaction; drive from your hearts such unjust and dishonest inclinations. Receive in them the will of God, which alone is good, salutary, and holy. Pray to him that he would display his all-powerful hand upon you, that he would extinguish the fire of the enemy, that he would create a pure heart and renew a right spirit within you, and that he would work with power in you both to will and to do according to his good pleasure. Amen.

Preached at Charenton,
Sunday, 10*th February* 1641.

SERMON XIII.

Verse 14–15.

Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless,[1] *the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life.*

Dear brethren, among all the Christian virtues, there is hardly one that is more necessary or more useful than humility; and if you will seriously consider its nature, you will find that it is either the mother or nurse of all the others. It works in us patience in adversity, and modesty in prosperity. It disposes us more powerfully to obey God and love men. It preserves in our souls both the light of faith and the fire of love. It plants in them the peace of heaven and tranquillity of mind. It both founds and preserves the hopes of the world to come, and defends us against the temptation of that which now is. It covers us like a large buckler, so that neither Satan nor the world can obtain any advantage over us. As by humility Jesus Christ obtained eternal salvation, so also by it do we enter upon and possess it. This heavenly virtue presides over all this miraculous work. It governs its beginning, its progress, and its end. This is the reason why the holy apostle recommends it with so much care to the Philippians, and through them to all other believers. You have herein before seen the exertions he has made to plant it in our souls, proposing it to us in Jesus Christ our Saviour, both as a most perfect example, and as an unheard-of reward; and adding still, in the last text that we have discoursed upon, a very powerful reason drawn from this, that all the good that is in us, whether to undertake or to execute the plan of godliness, is a gift and a work of the pure grace of God, which works in us with power both to will and to do according to his good pleasure. Now after having established humility among the Philippians, he makes it act, representing to them in the verses that you have heard some of its duties, and concluding this doctrine by a beautiful and magnificent exhortation to the pursuit of a rare and singular holiness worthy of the name they bore, and of the end for which God had created them in his Son. The duties which he recommends to them as necessarily flowing from humility are contained in

1 Er. "without reproach and simple."

these words, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless;" and the general exhortation to holiness which he adds is comprised in these, "that ye may be children of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life." We will examine all this in this discourse, if it please the Lord. And, that we may proceed regularly, we will consider, in the first place, the prohibition which he gives us against murmuring and disputing; secondly, the commandment which he adds to it, to be holy, and without reproach; and, in the third and last place, the reasons with which he enforces this exhortation, drawn both from our character as children of God, and from the office to which the Lord has consecrated us as lights of the world.

I. He commands us then at the beginning to "do all things without murmurings and disputings," where it is evident that by the "all things" of which he speaks, he means those things which regard religion, and the obedience that we owe to God, the whole of the Christian life; desiring that we should serve the Lord and edify our neighbours cheerfully and willingly, without any thought arising in our heart, or any word coming out of our mouth, either contrary to a heavenly disposition, or to the good and usefulness of men. For the flesh with which we are clothed, loving naturally its thoughts, its ease, and its convenience, it often happens that when the duties of Christianity oppose it, it objects, either secretly or openly; so that although the authority of God forces us to obey him, yet we only do so by constraint, complaining of our condition, and of the judgment which condemns us to it. This resistance takes place sometimes solely in our hearts, secretly thwarting the work of God, without bursting out into a formal opposition to his will; sometimes it goes further, and even doubts the truth or justice of the duties which it prescribes to us. St Paul here calls the first *murmuring*, and the second *disputing*, and banishes both from the life of true believers, as the plague and ruin of piety, a commencement of disobedience, and a seed of rebellion. Besides, I would extend them generally to all complainings and disputings, whether against God or men. Against God, when we have the boldness to call in question, and to find fault either with the doctrine that he has given us, as if it contained something false, or with his providence in the guidance of our life, as if it were unjust or unreasonable. Against men, when we judge them, their morals and their actions, rashly and inconsiderately, condemning them without cause, opposing them, and even coming to debatings and quarrellings with them. St Paul, in 1 Corinthians 10, sets before us an example of the first kind of murmuring drawn from the ancient Israelites, who murmured so many times in the wilderness against the Lord and his servants, foolishly blaming the counsel of God and his conduct, and insultingly complaining of the way in which he treated them, as if he had done them a great injury in delivering them from Egypt, and leading them to Canaan: "Wherefore hath he brought us into this land (say they) to fall by the sword; were it not better for us to return into Egypt?" Numbers 14:3. It appeared to them an injustice to detain them so long in that frightful wilderness where they were wandering, and to expose them to so many dangers and battles, before permitting them to enter

into the Promised Land. And although, in reading their history, we cannot help detesting their presumptuous fury, and their ingratitude, still we must acknowledge that we ourselves often fall into their murmurings. For how many Christians are there who are displeased with the Lord's ways in the guidance of their lives! who will freely say to him, like some of his ancient people, Wherefore dost thou treat us so sadly in this wilderness? Wherefore dost thou feed us with such poor and light bread? Why dost thou provide so little for us? We are in continual fears, in the midst of serpents and venomous creatures, surrounded on all sides with the swords of our enemies. What is the use of this heavy cross under which we groan? Would it not be better if thou wert to lead us to the inheritance that thou hast promised us by a pleasant and agreeable road, strewed with flowers, and abounding with pleasures? To these general murmurs each adds his own peculiar complaint; one asking God the reason of the poverty into which he is plunged; another, of the sicknesses wherewith he is afflicted: some, of the persecutions they endure; others, of the ill success of their designs: one, of the death of his children; another, of their life: one, of sterility; another, of fecundity: and all pretending that if there be not injustice, at any rate there is no reason for his treating them thus; and that if it were not necessary, at least it would have been more suitably ordered otherwise. 78

It often happens also that we murmur against the truth of God, whether for the things themselves which are set forth, or for the manner in which they are taught. Such was the murmur of the people of Capernaum, of whom St John tells us in his Gospel; who, offended because the Lord declared that he is the bread that came down from heaven, said, "Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" John 6:42. Some among his own disciples allowed themselves to be carried away with the same fault: "This is a hard saying, (say they,) who can hear it?" John 6:60. Thus we every day see people who murmur; some, against the predestination of God, which the apostle teaches us; others, against the incarnation, or the propitiation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and against divers other articles of his wholesome doctrine. From hence arise the blasphemies, the heresies, the schisms, and the rebellions of men. Murmuring is the grain from whence spring all these miseries. They first induce doubt and irresolution, then debate and dispute, afterwards, aided by passion, bring all kinds of evil into the world. And as it is a crime full of horror, which attacks the majesty of God, and insults it in its tenderest part, it rarely remains unpunished. You know how he formerly chastised in a fearful manner the murmurs of the ancient people, causing them to be destroyed of the destroyer; as St Paul expressly remarks, 1 Corinthians 10:10. At this time, under the New Testament, it is still more severe against this species of sin, as we have less cause to commit it. Thus those who murmur are often left to a reprobate mind, God giving them up to a spirit of folly, error, and seduction, which either precipitates them into atheism, or into superstition, or into some other of those frightful abysses in which the wicked perish. Let us then fly, beloved brethren, let us fly from so dangerous and so deadly a plague; let us fly from the presence and the breath of those who are infected with it. May it never happen to us either to utter or to listen to any murmur against the truth, or against the

providence of our good God. Let us adore all the mysteries both of his word and of his judgments with profound submission.

To keep us from this fault, in the first place, let us meditate on his word with extreme care, separating diligently the truth which it presents from that which men have added to it of their own imagina? tion. For I acknowledge that there are a great many things which the world would pass for the word of God, against which murmuring is just and complaint lawful, as they oppose, not merely the flesh and its interests, but right reason and true piety. But when once it appears to us that a doctrine is truly and really taught in the word of God, then we must receive it with respect. Murmuring is no longer permitted. If the flesh be opposed to it, let us stifle its thoughts and slay its motions. If reason alleges that she does not understand it, that she finds nothing in her own knowledge by which it can be proved; let us remember how weak our reason is, and in how many natural things, the most common and usual, she is at a loss. Let us establish the belief of the Divinity of the Scriptures in our hearts by a continual meditation of the arguments that God has given us in the wonders of their disposition, of their subject, of their order, and of their style; in the predictions which he has scattered here and there; in the knowledge of the holiness, of the miracles, and of the truth of the prophets and apostles, who are its writers; and finally, in the effects that this heavenly doctrine has produced, and that it still produces every day on the earth, creating and preserving there a new people, in spite of the efforts of Satan and the world. This thought will easily repress all our murmurings. For when God speaks, it is for man to listen, and to submit his mind to the voice of so glorious a Majesty. And as to his providence in the guidance of our life, if we have well understood the teachings of his word, neither shall we find any thing to say against it. I will not allege to you here that the potter does what he will with his clay, and that we are infinitely more beneath God than the clay is beneath the potter. But I will say, that even to examine these things by the rules of gentleness and equity, there is no father whose goodness and tenderness towards his children does not permit him to use whatever we may find harsh in the conduct of the Lord towards us. For I would ask, Does the father wrong his child when he chastises him? when he tries him? when he fashions him to true worthiness by hard and laborious exercises? when he keeps him from wine and dice, and all the other instruments of debauchery? Where is the sensible man who does not see, that this rigour in a father of which the child complains is in truth kindness and goodness, that it is the chief of his favours, and the most valuable of all his attentions? And why then do you find it strange that God, the eternal Father of our spirits, to make us good people, worthy of his name and heaven, should cause us to undergo his discipline? Even if we had no inclination to vice, still it would be suitable for his glory and our praise, to make our virtue appear and shine, which can only do so in those conflicts and trials which weary us. But being full of evil habits, of pride, luxury, and effeminacy, having a nature so prone to debauchery, that the slightest opportunity tempts it, and the least prosperity renders it insupportable, have we any right to complain that God takes from us the allurements and food of our vices? Believers, consider the troubles that

your crimes deserve. Consider the inclination that you have for sin. Examine the fruits of afflictions, modesty, repentance, disgust with the world, and the desire of heaven; their utility in forwarding the glory of Jesus Christ, in edifying men, and in assuring your own commendation; and, far from murmuring against God, you will thank him for having treated you in such a way, and you will acknowledge that nothing more just, nothing more excellent or more Divine, could be devised, than the conduct which he employs towards his people. If in the circumstances of your 79
life, or in those of your brethren, something should occur, the reason of which you do not perceive, remember that though you may be ignorant of it, you are not on that account to say that there is none. Allow that God is wiser than you, and that there is something in his ways which is above your comprehension. Have at least as much deference for this supreme Monarch as you every day yield to the counsels of the kings and princes of the earth, whose orders you often respect, although you cannot penetrate into their reason. But the apostle means that we should use this modesty likewise towards our brethren, and not only towards God; that we should have for them also equity and respect; that we should not hastily condemn their proceedings. Let us consider, that we shall be judged ourselves as we have judged others; that we should not put all on the same level in their differences with us; that we should endure their weaknesses even in the faith, being truly but infirmities without murmuring, without complaining of them; like some who move heaven and earth about things indifferent, who trouble weak consciences with endless questions and debates, and who are possessed of such a morbid sensibility, that they thunder at and anathematize all errors equally. I say the same in civil life, in which we ought to conduct ourselves towards men, whether within or without the church, with gentleness and patience. If it sometimes appear that they yield to us or to others less friendship or respect than they ought, if even occasionally instead of good they render us evil offices, it is expedient that we regard them in the most favourable light, not imputing it as a crime, but as a last alternative; and even then we must do it in so temperate a manner, that in showing them their fault, and prosecuting our right, we may neither fall into murmurings nor disputings. And this is principally required in that which regards either our superiors in the state or in the church, or at any rate our equals. For it is chiefly in our conduct towards those that murmurings and disputings or quarrellings take place. As, for example, if it happen that the magistrates issue some order which offends us, or that a pastor in the church does not preach or conduct himself to our liking. It is in this and similar subjects that the apostle forbids us to murmur. But as for those who are subject to us, you see clearly that the remonstrances and complaints that we make of their faults, and the resistance that we oppose to them, cannot be called murmurs; neither can the lawsuits, by which we prosecute our rights modestly and in a Christian-like manner before the tribunals of our superiors, whether ecclesiastics or secular, against those who desire unjustly and obstinately to violate them.

II. But after having forbidden us to murmur or to dispute, the apostle adds, "that ye may be without reproach, and simple?' In which you see he directs two things:

the one, that we should be without reproach, or blameless; and the other, that we should be simple. The first of these directions obliges us to a perfect honesty, justice, gentleness, and equity in our whole conversation, so that none may have occasion to complain of us, or to accuse us of having failed in any of the duties of charity or meekness of which we make profession. This is the testimony the Holy Spirit bears to Zacharias and to Elisabeth his wife, "that they were both righteous before God, walking in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blameless," Luke 1:6. It is true, that in this place the apostle principally regards our conduct towards our neighbour, opposing the duty which he requires of us, to the murmurings and disputings from which arise the greater part of those complaints men make to us, and reproaches which they cast upon us. He desires, then, that we should so conduct ourselves towards them that they should have nothing to find fault with in our manners; that superiors should receive honour and submission from us; inferiors, care, watchfulness, and love; equals, affection and cordial friendship; the poor, the aid of charity; the afflicted, the soothings of compassion; those who oblige us, gratitude; those who insult us, meekness; the old, respect; the young, concord; the learned, docility; the ignorant, instruction; the infirm, support; those who are without, the attractions of piety; those who are within, the intercourse of union; and all in general, purity of actions, honesty of words, gentleness of mind, courage and vigour in adversity, modesty and propriety in prosperity, a soul uncorrupted by sensuality and inflexible to the passions, a firm and unshaken innocence, which delights in doing good to all, without ever offending any. This is what the apostle demands of you, O Christian. He only desires that you should not give any just cause of reproach. As to events, he does not require you to be warned against them; that is to say, he does not mean that men should not blame you. It is enough for him that your life should not give them any occasion to do so, and that if they rebuke or hate you, you may truly say with the psalmist, that they do it without a cause, Psalm 35:19. It is very true, that the picture of this holy and innocent life, which he asks of you, is so beautiful and agreeable, that it naturally pleases all men, that it softens their passions, gains their friendship, and often draws from the greatest enemies approbation and praise. Witness the language that the pagans formerly held respecting believers: "Such a one is a virtuous man, although he is a Christian," as we read in an ancient author.[1] But nevertheless the malignity of men is so great, that we cannot always promise ourselves success from our innocence. Sometimes it makes them angry, and renders our cause suspected. You know of how many crimes the Jews formerly charged our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince and Pattern of all holiness. His apostles were treated by many in the same way, and the bonds in which St Paul himself was, when he wrote this Epistle, had been prepared for him only by the calumnies of that unhappy nation. We ought not to hope for better treatment either from Satan or the world, which are not improved by having grown older. But this will be enough, both for their conviction and our consolation, that we live in such a way that they can only reproach us with evil

1 Tertullian.

by a falsehood. Would to God that we were in these circumstances. It would be easy for us to despise the detractions of the world. But, dear brethren, it must be acknowledged, to our shame, the faults of many among us exceed the reproaches that are east upon them, and the impurity of their morals deserves still more blame than the world gives them. In the name of God, and as his glory and our salvation is dear to us, let us wash out these spots from our conversation, and let us render them henceforth so clean before heaven and earth, that none may blame us without falsehood, nor rebuke us without manifest injustice.

To this goodness and blameless innocence the apostle adds simplicity, the badge of Christianity, which the Lord commanded his disciples in these excellent words, "Be ye harmless as doves, and wise as serpents," Matthew 10:16; and of which he proposed the innocence of a little child, as a fit emblem, in declaring that if we are not changed, and do not become like little children, we shall not enter into his kingdom, Matthew 18:2–3. The word ἀκέραιοι, here employed by the apostle to express this grace probably means sincere; that is to say, pure, not mixed, not sophisticated, that is entirely of one kind, without the true and natural constitution having been altered by the admixture of any thing foreign to it. And it appears that, to set forth this simplicity and sincerity, God formerly forbade his ancient people to plant a vineyard with different kinds of plants, and to unite under the same yoke animals of different species, and to clothe themselves with a cloth of linen and woollen mixed together, to teach us by the enigma of these figures that he hates a mind and life double and variegated, in the composition of which enters vice and virtue, good and evil, piety and superstition. He wishes us to be entirely Christians, and that there should be nothing strange in the whole range of our conversation; that the outside and the inside should be of the same nature, the one exactly corresponding to the other; that the form, colour, and substance of our lives should be simple, and not mixed. And although this virtue is very extended, it may, nevertheless, be referred to four principal heads: in the first place, that we should be without hypocrisy before God, acknowledging and confessing ourselves such in his presence as we are in truth, without lessening the good which there is, without also hiding interior defects and the secret disgrace of our souls with the paint and false colouring of our artifices, imitating thé coarse fraud of our first father, who, having renounced the naked simplicity in which he had been formed, wished to disguise himself before that sovereign Majesty by covering himself with fig leaves. It is also one of the features of Christian simplicity not to counterfeit before men, any more than before God, giving up frauds, pretences, and dissimulations, crooked and equivocal ways, which the people of the world use, to make their neighbours believe of them the contrary of what they really are. In the third place, simplicity comprehends under it, or at least certainly draws after it, gentleness and meekness of mind; it is not easily irritated, or if irritation should sometimes arise, it is soon appeased, and in reality loses the remembrance of the offences that have been committed against it. Finally, simplicity is exempt from curiosity; it only employs itself on its own business; and, entirely turned within, does not observe very carefully what passes without, from whence it is neither suspicious

80

nor distrustful. When, then, the apostle orders us to be simple, he forbids all these vices, and commends all those virtues that are opposed to them. He desires that we should be Christians indeed, walking sincerely and boldly according to our profession, having in the heart, and in every part and action of our life, that same Christ and that same gospel which we have in the lips and on the tongue. And what follows shows this very clearly, when he adds, "That ye may be children of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life."

III. In the latter part of this text, the apostle, continuing his exhortation to the Philippians, sets before them many reasons which compel them to the holiness which he asks from them. I acknowledge (says he) that this innocence, and integrity, and simplicity, without rebuke, to which I call you, are things rare and unheard of upon earth, and far above the ability of men. But then you are not men of this world. Your origin is not from the earth. You are the children of God, and lights of the world. As your origin and end are above the earth, so should your life be also. It ought to bear in all its parts the marks of its author, and. the qualities necessary for the purpose for which he gave it you. In saying to them, then, "that ye may be the children of God, without rebuke," he shows them what ought to be their manner of life, that is to say, holy and heavenly; and for the same end sets before them a reason which compels them, namely, their extraction and their quality. To speak correctly, the Father has no other Son than our Lord Jesus Christ, begotten from all eternity, of the same substance and the same nature as himself, almighty and eternal God, all-wise and infinite, as himself. But the Scripture also attributes, figuratively, this title of "children of God" to those among men to whom this great and glorious Lord has deigned in some measure to communicate his Divine nature, by the work of his heavenly Spirit, forming in their minds, by the light that he there sheds, some features of that holiness, peace, and supreme joy in which blessedness consists, and destining them to his most blessed immortality, of which he gives them here the pledges and first-fruits, reserving for them its substance and its fulness in another world. All those to whom he has given these rich gifts of his grace have the honour to be called, in his Scriptures, "his children, his heirs, his brethren, and co-heirs with him." As St John tells us, that Jesus Christ has given to all those who believe in his name the right to become children of God, as to those who are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, John 1:12–13. As, then, the Philippians had received the gospel of the Lord, and believed in his name, they were children of God. This is what the apostle recalled to them.

But he does not simply say, that they may be children of God. He adds, "without rebuke," or without blame, and without reproach; for that is the meaning of the Greek word which he uses. Why did he add this word? Does he mean to say that there are two sorts of children of God, some blamable, others not? God forbid, beloved brethren. The glory of this great name only belongs to those whose lives are irreproachable, and whose morals are pure and unblamable. But although in truth this praise only belongs to children of God, there are still a great many

people who call themselves children of God, who make profession of being so, and have the appearance, the language, and other exterior marks of it, who, with all this, do not cease to lead a shameful and scandalous life, full of debauchery and vice. It is to separate us from these that the apostle commands us to be children of God, without rebuke and without reproach; as if he had said, not bastards, or counterfeits, but true and legitimate children, worthy of this glorious title, and whom none can reproach with any of those evil qualities which are incompatible with the truth of this name. "That ye may be children of God, without rebuke, and without reproach." Be in truth what you make profession of being. That your life may not supply your accusers with any proof against your language, nor any just and reasonable reproach against the dignity you take that may compel you to renounce it. For as you see that in the world art counterfeits precious stones and drugs, exchanging them for others of little value, which they pass off for good by favour of some apparent resemblance which they have to the true; so also in the church there has always been found a number of cheats, who, deceiving themselves and others, take the colour and form of the children of God, although in reality they are not so. And as there are certain means by which adulterated goods, such as the gold and stones of alchemy, are discerned from the true; so also in religion there are marks and certain proofs whereby those may be known who have only the name of children of God from those who are so in reality. Those who sustain (81) these trials, and in whom are really found all these marks, are they whom the apostle here very elegantly calls "children of God, without rebuke;" those whom the crucible cannot make to blush; those in whom neither the calumny nor the cunning of the enemy can find any thing to lay hold of; such as the Scripture sets forth in a Job, who confounded all the artifices of Satan, and justified most fully by his trials the glorious testimony which God had condescended to bear to him with his own mouth. And here, dear brethren, it is not needful that I should enlarge upon or set forth these divine and inimitable marks of the true children of God. Their name sufficiently shows you in what they consist: in a serious and constant imitation of him whose children they are; in real charity towards men, in kindness, holiness, and purity; in fleeing from all pursuits likely to displease our heavenly Father; and in studying and practising his will, according to the doctrine of St John, "All that is born of God overcometh the world;" and, "Whosoever is born of God doth not sin, because the seed of God remaineth in him," 1 John 5:4; 3:9. From which it appears that when the apostle here wishes that we may be the children of God, without rebuke, he calls us by these words to a peculiar sanctification; as if he directed us to renounce all the filth and impurity of vice, all the meannesses and vanities of the world, to lead henceforth a spiritual and heavenly life, that may be full of that purity and innocence, that zeal and charity, which are found in heaven, the holy and blessed kingdom of our eternal Father.

But besides the form of this sanctification, the name of "children of God," he also proposes motives and reasons for it. For as this name warns us that we so closely belong to this supreme Lord, is it not reasonable that we should imitate him with all our powers, and that we should show forth the fruits of his Spirit, and the

marks of his blood, in all the actions of our life? Where is the man, the offspring of a noble and illustrious father, whose soul is not roused by the remembrance of his birth, and animated with thoughts worthy of his extraction? And does not this incomparable favour that God has done us still more incite us to this feeling? For from slaves of the devil we see ourselves, by his kindness, become children of the supreme God. What a heart we must have if the consideration of such a high privilege does not affect us! But that blessed immortality which this glorious name promises us, ought also to excite us forcibly to run with all our strength towards this Divine end of our calling, and to employ us night and day on sanctification, without which, whatever the flesh may promise or hope, no one shall ever see the Lord.

In the following words the apostle puts still another consideration before the eyes of these Philippians, which ought not less to influence their love and their study of a spiritual life; it is that they were "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." He, doubtless, borrowed this expression from the song of Moses, where they are found in the Greek version, when the prophet, inveighing against the infidelity of the Israelites, that they have corrupted themselves towards the Lord, calls them "a crooked and perverse generation," Deuteronomy 32:3. He applies these words to the Gentiles and to the Jews, among whom then lived the faithful of Philippi. From which we may learn, in the first place, what is the condition of men who are out of Jesus Christ; they are (says the apostle) "a crooked and perverse generation," which have nothing right or simple either in their religion or morals, whose whole life is only a confused labyrinth, entangled in a thousand windings, without issue, without guide, and without any light. Judge from this, in passing, what a situation men are in by their natural strength, and that it is to the Spirit of God alone to which ought to be attributed the glory of all that is correct and wise in us. From this you may also see what is the situation of the church whilst sojourning here below. She subsists, like these Philippian Christians, surrounded by a multitude of enemies. It is a Lot in Sodom, an ark of Noah in the deluge, the Hebrew children in the furnace of Babylon, a little island beaten on all sides by a great and infinite sea. It is true that the church is not always equally mixed with this crooked generation; it is true that she has. some times more elbow-room, the nation in which she dwells being either favourable to her doctrine, or less enemies to it than were the fellow countrymen of the Philippians. But however it may be, there are always many hypocrites and sensual and unregenerate people in those very places where profession is made of its creed? What the apostle here says to the Philippians is suitable, in some measure, to all Christians, according to what the oracle has predicted of Jesus Christ, that he shall reign in the midst of his enemies. But as we have to thank God that he has so favoured us as to separate us from the generation of this world; so ought we to take heed that we have nothing in common with its manners, faithfully keeping ourselves unpolluted in the midst of its corruption. And as naturalists say that there are rivers which run through lakes without mingling their waters with them, may we flow together in this world without uniting in its ways, preserving all the colour, strength, and substance of

our Divine source; may we be truly that people of God, of which Balaam formerly said, "They shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations;" always strangers in the world, although living on the earth, and breathing its air; floating in the midst of its waters without being confounded with them; walking in its fires without being burnt; constantly remaining upright, perfect, sincere, and unrebukable in the midst of all its obliquities and perversities. This mixed state of our existence obliges us to do so, my brethren. For as you see in the world that things contract and concentrate all their powers, uniting them that they may preserve the qualities and perfections of their nature, when they are surrounded by their opposites, which is what the schools of philosophy call "antiperistasis," so should we also do in religion. When we find ourselves enclosed and besieged on all sides by the adversaries of our profession, it is then that we must more than ever draw into ourselves, collecting all the strength we have to oppose the enemy, to maintain our faith and our holiness entire against the violence of contrary examples; let it still more shine forth, the more it is pressed down. But besides our preservation, the consideration of other men compels us to do so, God having thus mingled and dispersed us in the midst of a perverse generation, that we may gain some, and straighten its crooked ways by the efforts of our piety; or at least, if the children of this world do not amend, that we may one day serve to convict them of having despised the riches of Divine grace which we would offer them.

And this is the third reason that the apostle places before us, representing the service that we ought to render to the children of this world: "Among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." Some take these words for a commandment, and read them thus; "Shine ye among them as lights." But both comes to the same meaning. For it is clear that in the main the apostle sets before us the dignity and the destiny of believers by a brilliant simile, saying (82) that they are lights or luminaries of the world, and that therefore their office is to shine among men. The comparison may have been drawn either from artificial lights, which men light that they may shine during the darkness of the night, and especially of those that are placed on light-houses to guide vessels which are sailing on the sea, in showing them the port, and pointing out their course; or from the luminaries of nature which God has placed in order in the heavens, the moon and the stars; and this last meaning is plainer and more magnificent, and even, in my opinion, more in accordance with the words of the apostle, who says, "shine as lights in the world;" consequently rather meaning the lights of the world than those of our houses. The Lord had from the beginning used this comparison, when, speaking to the father of the faithful, he told him that his posterity should be as the stars of heaven; having by that, besides the multitude of his children, signified also their quality and their excellence. Thus you see that the world is, as it were, the emblem or portrait of the church. In the world God has placed the sun, to be there the inexhaustible source of visible light. In the church he has placed the Lord Jesus, the fountain of all intellectual light, the Sun of righteousness, and the Light of the world. Besides the sun, God created the moon and the stars in the universe, that, during the darkness of the night, they might console the world by their brightness.

The whole body of the church in general is as a mystical moon, which, during the absence of its sun, sheds its light upon the earth. Each of the faithful, in particular, is as a star; they are, in truth, of divers forms and magnitudes, but nevertheless all shining according to the measure of grace that has been given to them. And as, according to the very probable opinion of the most learned mathematicians, all those stars which are nearest to the earth, that is to say the planets, borrow from the sun all the light they have; thus, also, the church collectively, and believers individually, have all their brilliancy, their life, and their glory from Jesus Christ alone, their great Sun, in whom dwells bodily all the fulness of knowledge and wisdom.

From this it appears how great is the dignity of believers. For as among all material bodies there are none comparable to the stars of heaven in beauty and perfection; so, of all men, believers are, without doubt, the happiest and the best gifted. Christians! rejoice in the glory to which the Lord has raised you, and possess it with extreme content in the midst of the troubles and agitations of this world. But do not forget the service and the edification that you owe to the world. As the stars of heaven do not shine for themselves, nor hide their light, but communicate it liberally to all parts of the universe, sending it from the hignest heavens to the lowest and most distant regions, piercing, by the power of their rays, into all these great spaces which are between us and them; do also the same, O holy and mystical stars of Jesus Christ. Shed all around you the rays of the faith and holiness that he has communicated to you. Share them with men. May the innocence and kindness of your life continually enlighten the darkness of their ignorance, and give them the means of seeing salvation, and being led into it. This is precisely what the apostle means, when he says that you shine in the midst of a perverse generation as lights in the world. And this, is what the Lord had already commanded his disciples, saying to them, "Men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house. So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," Matthew 5:15–16. But the apostle, to explain this more clearly, after having called believers "lights," adds, "holding forth the word of life." The word which he uses[1] does not simply mean to have a thing in possession, but rather to hold it forth, to show it, and to present it to others. He means, then, that as the stars have not only in themselves this beautiful and lively light with which God has clothed them, but present it and show it to other creatures that they may enjoy it, and that this is what makes them lights and luminaries of the world; so also Christians ought not only to have, and faithfully keep in themselves, this heavenly truth that Jesus Christ has given them, but also to show it forth, and place it before the eyes of other men, that they may be enlightened with the knowledge of God, and be, by these means, the true lights of the human race.

As to the stars of the world, the light that they shed here below only enlightens the living; it does not give life; or if it contributes any thing to life, all its power

1 Ἐπιχειν.

only serves to the support of earthly and animal life; whilst the light of believers is capable of quickening the dead, and of communicating to them true life, alone worthy of this glorious and immortal name. For the light that they hold forth is, as the apostle says, "the word of life." It is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ that he means; and he gives it this name in the same sense as St Peter had already said, speaking to the Lord, "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life," John 6:68, to distinguish this wholesome doctrine from the learning of the wise of this world, more capable of wearying man than of edifying him; and with the law of Moses, which, considered in itself, was the ministration of death. Whereas the gospel of Christ being received into our hearts by faith, brings there, as a living and eternal light, consolation and joy, the love of God and of our neighbour, and finally, that life and that immortality which are therein brought to light. Judge from hence, believers, how desirous those are of the salvation of Christian people who hide from them this holy word of life, and, far from giving it to them that they may hold it forth and present it to all, as the apostle here says, are not even willing that they should either see it or read it, making them believe that it is a word of death, capable of killing them by its obscurities and pretended difficulties, whilst this holy man of God assures us that it is the word of life, the only light that is capable of enlightening and quickening men. God be for ever blessed, who has condescended to rekindle this Divine light among us, driving away and dissipating, by the strength of its light, that darkness and those thick mists of abuses and errors with which ignorance and superstition have filled the world. Let us rejoice in its light. Let us listen to and diligently study this holy word of life. Let us learn all its secrets. Let us love it as our sole advantage over others; let us impress it on our memories, and lodge it in our understandings. May it be the usual subject of our thoughts and of our conversation. But above all, may it be the rule of our affections, and the guide of our life; may it govern it in every way, and be absolutely obeyed. For it is nothing to hear and to speak of it if we do not receive it with faith; if it do not penetrate our souls, and change all their dispositions, conforming them to the image of the Lord. Without this effect, the knowledge that we have of it will turn to our condemnation. For it is to offend God to take, his holy word of life into an (83) impious or profane mouth; added to which, it is to lessen its effect upon other men. For how can you expect that they should have faith in what you say, if your life testifies that you do not believe it yourself? If, then, you have any desire either for your own salvation, or for the improvement of others, beloved brethren, obey the commandment of the apostle; reject the works of darkness; clothe yourselves with the armour of light, Romans 13:14. Be truly children of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Shine among the people of the world as the lights of the world, holding forth, and presenting to all, the word of life. It is the praise and the title of true believers.

Such, in primitive times, was the church of Jesus Christ, clothed with the Sun, and shining in every place where it dwelt with a wholesome light. Its associations were like a great torch, throwing on all sides, as it were, so many living rays of words and holy works, full of honesty, righteousness, temperance, modesty, and

charity. Thus it pierced, in a short time, the darkness of paganism, thick and frightful as it was; it dissipated error; it disclosed the horrors of hell; it confounded devils, and forced the world to worship that same truth that it had so long and so cruelly persecuted. The light of the saints lives contributed more to his work than their miracles. Such also was this new people whom God formed, in the time of our fathers, by the power of his gospel. They were truly the lights of the world, in whom shone the pure light of knowledge and holiness. There was so much brilliancy in their manners, that it was immediately acknowledged wherever they showed themselves. The gravity, gentleness, and courtesy of their words, seasoned with the salt of grace, and free from all the oaths and filth with which the people of the world filled the whole of their discourse; the openness, sincerity, and candour of their conversation, void of all malice; the love that they had one for another, the sobriety of their repasts, the modesty of their dress, the good nurture of their families, the abundance of their alms, the strictness of their lives, quite retired into the service of Heaven, without taking any part in the excesses or the vanities and pastimes of the world; their zeal for the glory of the Lord: all these things, I say, distinguished them from the rest of mankind, and made them sparkle and shine among them as the stars of the firmament in the darkness of night. But, O grief! the deceits of the enemy have, by degrees, stripped us of this glorious and brilliant appearance. He has tarnished, by different artifices, the brightness of our light, and has covered us with the darkness of vice. He has taken from us the marks which separated us from the world, and, so to speak, has snatched us from heaven where we shone, and has cast us down into the dust, and plunged us in the mire. Our manners are no longer illustrious or remarkable. In them are as many or more spots than in the lives of the people of the world. We run hastily into all their excesses. We amuse ourselves, and are foolish like them. The same avarice, the same ambition, the same cupidity occupy the one as the other. Our discourses, our designs are as earthly and as low as theirs. Murmurings and disputings, fraud, injustice, and perfidy, take place as well amongst us as them. Even in these holy assemblies our corruption is felt; that respectful modesty which formerly shone there has evidently relaxed, and is giving place to contempt, talking, and ridicule. Dear brethren, how can we, after so unworthy a change, be still called the children of God, and lights of the world? By what right can we take the glory of so high a title? Who does not see, that, having lost the thing, we have also lost the name? Notwithstanding which, consider, I pray you, the consequence of this loss. Your eternal salvation is concerned in it, none having a share in that blessed life who are not children of God; none can shine in heaven in the kingdom of glory who have not first shone here in the kingdom of grace. And do not imagine that this only relates to the ministers of the gospel. St Paul here speaks of all believers. Of whatever order you may be, if you wish to be members of Jesus Christ, you must be a star and a light of the world. Let us, then, turn our hearts towards this great Sun of righteousness; let us open our minds to him, and beseech him most humbly to rekindle there his extinguished lights, faith, love, zeal, righteousness, and holiness; so that, filled with his light, we may edify our neighbours; and after having shone

here below in the midst of a perverse generation, we may one day shine above in the heavens with angels and saints. Amen.

Preached at Charenton,
Sunday, 17*th March*, 1641.

SERMON XIV.

Verse 16–18.

That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Yea, and if I be offered[1] *upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.*

Dear brethren, there is so close a union between the ministers of the gospel, and the churches which they build up in the Lord, that their joys and sorrows are in common. And as in the world a fine and fruitful flock is the riches of the shepherd, an honest and well conducted family the joy and honour of the father, a happy and flourishing state the strength and glory of the prince; so also in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, a holy and blessed church, abounding in the fruits of righteousness, is the crown, the joy, and the triumph of its pastors. This is the reason why the apostle St Paul, having in the preceding verses powerfully exhorted the Philippians, whom he had built up and instructed in the. Lord, to a purity and holiness of life, worthy of their heavenly calling, represents to them the fruits that will spring from it; "Be ye without rebuke, simple and unreprovable, children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, shining as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life he now adds, "that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." It is as if he had said to them, Do not be astonished that I so warmly and carefully press you to live holily, and in agreement with the rules of the gospel. Besides the love that I bear you, and that makes me desire your happiness, it also concerns my own interest. Your piety is my honour, and your holiness my glory. You are the field from whence, in the day of the appearing of the Lord Jesus, I hope to reap the praise which I look for as the reward of my labour. Then, to show them how much he prized and desired that glory, he declares to them in the following words, that to acquire it he was ready cheerfully to shed his blood, and to crown with his death the other labours of his sacred ministry: "Yea, and if I be poured forth upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all." And that this declaration might not grieve them, he adds, that if the Lord permitted it to be so, they would also in truth have a great cause of consolation and rejoicing: "For

84

1 French, "poured forth."

the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me," Thus we have three points of which to treat in this discourse, that by the help of God we may give you an entire explanation of this text. In the first place, Of the glory that would accrue to the apostle from the piety and holiness of the Philippians; secondly, Of his free and cheerful resolution to die for the building up of their faith; and, in the third and last place, Of the joy that they ought to have in themselves when the Lord should call him to martyrdom.

I. As to the first point, the apostle does not simply say that it would turn to his glory that the church of the Philippians should live well and holily; he says more, that he should glory in it, which seems contrary, at first sight, to what he elsewhere forbids, viz. that believers should glory in any thing but the Lord. But I reply, that it is also in the Lord that he hopes and professes here to glory. For although we cannot without injustice and without vanity boast of the least thing which relates to the kingdom of God, nor attribute any part to ourselves without offending the Lord; yet, after having humbled ourselves under his feet, and having acknowledged that all we are is by his pure grace alone, as well as all that we have done in him, it is not forbidden, it is even commanded, us to behold with admiration, to celebrate and to represent with joy, the works of his goodness in us, looking at them in ourselves, and showing them to others, as the fruits of his mercy and of his power, and not as the effects of our own courage. It is thus that the apostle teaches us elsewhere, that we should rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, and even in tribulations, receiving them as so many seals of our glory; whilst they produce patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, which maketh not ashamed. It is in this sense that the perseverance and progress of the disciples of St Paul in piety gave him cause for rejoicing. In fact, he often thus rejoices in his Epistles, alleging the success of his labour as so many illustrious and glorious marks of his Divine vocation, and of the power which the Lord had designed to display in him to the furtherance of his kingdom, and to the salvation of men; as when he says in the Epistle to the Romans, that he hath whereof to glory in Jesus Christ for the things which belong to God, afterwards setting out the magnificent effects of his sacred ministry: "For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ," Romans 15:18–19. And elsewhere, in the same manner, he draws proofs of his apostleship from the great success of his labours among the Corinthians: "Are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet, doubtless, I am to you, for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. Mine answer to them that do examine me is this," 1 Corinthians 9:1–3. And it is in this sense, and for this same reason, that he afterwards calls the Philippians his joy and crown, that is to say, the subject and matter of his joy and glory that he had before God and his saints, of being the apostle and minister of Christ, a thousand times greater and more illustrious glory than all the crowns of the earth. Thus you see that the apostle then rejoiced of the fruit of his painful labours, gathering from their success great

and ineffable content, which he did not hide, but showed it and communicated it freely to others whenever the occasion required it. This is what he calls to "rejoice." In truth he had every reason in the world to do so. For what can one picture to oneself more delightful or more glorious than to have freely preached the gospel of Jesus Christ in all the universe? If it be an exploit worthy of being crowned with public gratitude and praise to have saved a citizen from death, as the most virtuous of all people formerly judged; what, then, ought to be the crown and the glory of the apostle, who had delivered, not one or two men, but churches and nations, and, if one may so speak, an entire world, not simply from death, but from hell, from the darkness of ignorance, from the slavery of idolatry, and from the curse of God? not to preserve them in mortal and perishable life, but to put them in possession of the blessing of a happy immortality? not with arms and by shedding the blood of others, but by holy and pure preaching, which by saving some did not injure others, which, to preserve the citizen, did not wound the enemy? True it is, that the world did not acknowledge this glory; that the greater part of the Jews and Gentiles, blinded by the rage of their malice, turned this honour into shame, disgracing, in every possible way, both the design and the work of the apostle. But their fury did not prevent this holy man from experiencing his happiness, and from that time rejoicing in his glory in the secrecy of his conscience, and in the judgment of believers.

Nor does he stop at the fruits that he drew from it in this world. He looked much further. For he does not simply say, Live well, that I may rejoice; he adds, "in the day of Christ." We usually call, in the church, the day in which Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, "the day of the Lord;" and it appears also that St John means thus in the Apocalypse, when he says "that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," Revelation 1:21. But the Scripture both here and elsewhere much oftener uses these words in another sense, meaning the day of the last judgment to which the Lord Jesus will come from heaven in the glory of the Father to judge both the quick and dead, as we have before remarked, (Sermon I. p. 13,) where we proved to you that this method of speaking is drawn from the Old Testament, which usually calls the day of the Lord, as you may see in many places in the prophets, the time in which God will display his judgments on men, both in delivering his church, and in punishing the wicked. For though he dispenses and governs all parts of time, and though, properly speaking, there is no day which is not his, nevertheless, those destined for the execution of his judgments belong to him in a peculiar manner. If we look at the exterior of things, it appears as if he abandoned other times to disorder and confusion, leaving it in the power of Satan to dispose of and abuse them to the execution of his pernicious designs, from whence it arises that our Lord Jesus Christ calls them the hour of the wicked: "This is your hour, and the power of darkness," said he to the Jews, Luke 22:53, speaking of the time they were about putting him to death. But when God comes to display his arm, confounding his enemies, and consoling his children by some grand and illustrious act of his providence, constraining the most obstinate to acknowledge that it is the work of his hand, then it is truly his day, his time, set apart and employed for his work. And

as there shines in all judgment some representation of this proceeding of God, it hence arises that when the word "day" is used in connexion with any judge who manifests his authority, justice, and power in the exercise of his office, it is taken simply to mean judgment; as when St Paul says in the First to Corinthians, "that it is a small thing for him to be judged of man's day," chapter 4:3; that is to say, by the judgment of men, as our Bibles have translated it. Perhaps from this has arisen that method of speaking common in our language, calling "the great days" the time of judgment, which the prince appoints in this kingdom by the parliaments, which he sends sometimes extraordinarily into the provinces. Now because of all the judgments that the Lord Jesus displays in the world, exercising in different ways the power which the Father has given him in seating him at his right hand, there is none so remarkable or so illustrious as the last, when coming from heaven with his angels in supreme and incomprehensible glory, he will make all men appear before his throne, and will give to every one according to his works; from whence it arises that the great day destined for the execution of this by the certain and immutable counsel of God, is particularly called the day of Christ on account of its excellence: and it is for the same reason that it is sometimes simply called "that day;" as when St Paul prays God would grant to Onesiphorus "to find mercy of the Lord in that day," that is to say, in the last day, 2 Timothy 1:18; and again, in 2 Thessalonians 1:10, he in like manner says, "that the Lord in *that* day shall be admired in all that believe;" and some excellent expositors take in the same sense the phrase, "that *the day* shall declare every man's work," 1 Corinthians 3:13. It is in this great day, then, that the apostle wishes to rejoice at the success of his labour in the church of the Philippians. It is then that he expects the fruit of their obedience to his word; and he speaks of it also to the Corinthians and Thessalonians in the same manner: "You are our glory (says he to the former) in the day of the Lord Jesus," 2 Corinthians 1:14; and to the latter, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" 1 Thessalonians 2:19. It is not, as we have already noticed, that he does not rejoice in the days of his flesh at the fruit of his labour, the conversion and piety of these fine and flourishing churches planted and increased by the efficacy of his preaching, giving him, doubtless, even then an extreme satisfaction of mind. But he puts it off to the last day, because he here comprehends in it their perseverance in holiness, over which he could not then rejoice or glory, seeing that he could not have an entire and firm assurance of their state for the future. The conversion of the Galatians had been to him in the beginning a subject of joy and triumph. Their error had since changed his satisfaction into anxiety, and his hope to fear, when he saw them quitting the good road and following the seduction of false apostles. This, then, was a sly goad to stir up the Philippians to constancy and perseverance in the faith; as if he said, Do in such a manner that I may rejoice and glory in your piety, not here only, where every thing is changeable, but also in the great day of Christ; that the good beginnings which I have seen and still see among you may be persevered in and crowned with constancy; that time may cause no change in them, if it be not for the better; so that when the Lord shall appear, after our combats are ended, I

85

may then also have cause to say with joy, to your glory and mine, that I have not laboured in vain. Preserve this crown whole and inviolable for me to the end of the world; so that in no time to come shall accidents or trials either wither, tarnish, or diminish its beauty and glory.

But besides this reason, the apostle has thus used it, according to his usual style, always to carry us back to the last day, because then will be the final and complete perfection of our life and glory. Till then there is always something to say about our happiness. Here the flesh, the world, and our infirmities oppose our comfort. Even in heaven itself, where our souls will be received at their parting from this valley of tears, we shall not have the full and complete satisfaction of our desires; this poor flesh, which is a part of our being, remaining in ruin under the empire of corruption and worms; and a part of our company still fighting on the earth. But in that great day of the Lord, our whole nature and our whole brotherhood being fully and completely delivered both from evil and fear, our joy and glory will be perfect in every respect. Nothing will then be wanting to it. All our desires will be entirely satisfied. As in that great day the works of believers will be produced and displayed before the eyes of heaven and earth, their alms, their love, even the smallest fruit of their piety, we cannot doubt but that the troubles and the successes of those of them who served the gospel will also appear in that supreme light. St Paul teaches us this expressly, when speaking of them particularly, he says, that they shall receive the reward of their work, 1 Corinthians 3:14; "and then shall every man have praise of God," 1 Corinthians 4:5. And Daniel had already foretold long before St Paul, "that those who turn many to righteousness shall shine," in that happy time, "as the stars for ever and ever," Daniel 12:3. How admirable and how great will then be the glory of this great apostle, when, accompanied by so many millions of believers that he had formerly begotten by the gospel, he shall present himself before the throne of his Master, saying, with the prophet, "Behold, I and the children whom thou hast given me!" This is the fruit of the talent that thou committedst to me. It is the production of the grace that thou bestowedst upon me. What will be the joy of his heart to see himself thus miraculously multiplied! What will be the satisfaction of his disciples thus to promote his glory! And how great will be their common delight to hear the Son of God praise the preaching of the one, and the obedience of the others, all being together received into the heavenly Jerusalem with the blessings and applause of men and angels! That is exactly what the apostle means when he says, that he shall rejoice in the day of the Lord "that he has not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." You know that he often compares the life and plans of believers, and particularly of the ministers of the gospel, to a race; so that he here means by this race, and the labour of which he speaks, the trouble that he had taken, and still took daily, to instruct, teach, and admonish the Philippians in the doctrine of salvation, and all the functions of his apostleship towards them. It is true that the praise of the servants of Jesus Christ does not properly depend on the success of their labours. For if they acquit themselves faithfully in their office, their reward is certain from God, in whatever manner men may receive their preaching, as the Lord expressly declares to them in Ezekiel, "If thou warn the wicked of his

way to turn from it, if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity: but thou hast delivered thy soul," chapter 33:9. The God of glory judges things by the event, which is not in our power. He sees our hearts, he looks at our affection; he considers our labour, and if it has been lawful, he does not fail to crown it, though the wickedness of man, and such other things which are without us, may have hindered its effect. We shall never, in this respect, have served him in vain. Our labour and our race have always their certain reward. Nevertheless, if you turn your eyes upon those to whom our ministry is addressed, if you consider the design that we have to gain them to Jesus Christ, and to lead them to his eternal salvation; one cannot deny that in this sense we have run and laboured in vain, if our labour have not produced in them that faith and sanctification which we desire. And as it is not possible that we should not be wearied with this bad success, either frustrating the fruit of our labours, or secretly opposing them; so, on the contrary, it is evident that the happy success of our ministry is a singular blessing, and a crown of honour, so much the more glorious and illustrious in proportion as our labour has been great and more abundant. 86

It is then in this meaning, and in this respect, that the apostle here desires "to rejoice in the day of Christ that he has neither run nor laboured in vain." Believers, let us all lift up our hearts, after his example, to the day of the Lord. Let us extend our thoughts thither. Let us leave the things that are seen, which are perishable, and all of which time will destroy one after another. If we desire glory, (which is a desire natural to all men,) let us seek that which will remain unmoved to the great day of the Lord, and which will then be made manifest, whatever efforts the world may make to annihilate it. All the glory of the children of this world will perish, and the praise that we give to their discoveries and their mighty acts shall end with the earth. There will be no mention of them in the day of the Lord, the day-spring and commencement of eternity. If we wish to have a share in it, if we desire to be praised by the mouth of the King of glory, let us labour for the advancement of his kingdom. He will not say any thing, either of our buildings or of our wars, of our government or of our books, or of the other works of our vanity; and, far from rejoicing in them, we shall be ashamed, and only reap from them regret and confusion. Christ will only reward in the light of this august and venerable assembly the works of piety. They will for ever preserve their grace and lustre, and we shall obtain by them on that day a truly immortal glory. May the ministers of the gospel be occupied in them more than others, and may they be warmed with an ardent desire for this real honour; may they employ every moment of their lives to edify, by words and good examples, those believers who are committed to them; remembering that all those souls whom they shall gather to the Lord shall be so many trophies of their labour which shall endure to eternity, and after the ruin of the world and its elements, shall for ever publish their praise in the Jerusalem that is above.

But, dear brethren, as their glory depends on your piety, the love and respect that you owe them compel you to contribute to it as much as possible. The apostle here clearly shows it to you, wishing, among the other reasons that should lead

the Philippians to holiness, they should also have an eye to his praise, and that they should persevere in faith and piety, so that he might rejoice in the day of the Lord that he had neither run nor laboured in vain. In that the gratitude of flocks towards their pastors consists. I acknowledge that they are obliged to provide for their support, and, for the spiritual things which they have received from their hands, to communicate to them temporal things, according to the command of the Lord, that those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel. But the first point of your gratitude is, that heartily obeying our preaching, you may give us this satisfaction in this world, and that glory in the other, of being able to say that we have not laboured in vain. If you do not soothe our troubles with this fruit, you are guilty of ingratitude; just as we call ungrateful that earth which, disobedient to the culture of the labourer, receives the grain that he casts into it without yielding him its fruit. If, then, this painful exercise of the offices with which God has honoured us among you, if our labour and diligence to acquit ourselves of them with a good conscience, be any consideration to you, dear brethren, profit by it. Receive this incorruptible seed of the gospel that we sow in your hearts with faith and obedience. May it germinate there and fructify abundantly, and faithfully yield to the Lord the glory which belongs to him, and to us the praise we wait for. May all your life be crowned with the piety and love that we preach to you, so that to our common joy we may one day both of us appear without confusion before the Lord at his last judgment, and bear away together the praise of not having run in vain. I say the same to those children who have the happiness to possess fathers and mothers careful of their instruction. Young people, the principal gratitude that you owe for their care is to live well, and to shine forth in the midst of the world as holy lights, so that you may be one day before the Lord a crown of blessing and honour to those who so tenderly love you, and that they may then have the satisfaction of rejoicing in presence of heaven and earth, that the labour which they employed in your cultivation has not been useless.

II. But it is time to come to the second part of our text, in which the apostle, to show the Philippians how highly he estimated that glory that he had just asked from them, declares, that if it be necessary to seal with his own blood the preaching of the gospel he had declared to them, and add his death to the labours of his painful race, he would do so willingly, cheerfully, and without regret; which he expresses in rich, figurative, and excellent language, as usual, "That if even I be poured forth on the service and sacrifice of your faith, I may joy, and rejoice with you all." In the first place, he compares himself to a priest, and sets before us the conversion of the Philippians to the faith of the gospel, brought about by his preaching, and their piety as its consequence, under the image of a sacrifice. He speaks in the same way in the Epistle to the Romans, where he says that he "is the minister of Christ to the Gentiles, ministering to the sacrifice of the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost," chapter 15:16. In this mystical sacrifice the apostle was the high priest; the gospel was, as it were, the knife with which he spiritually immolated his victims. The Philippians converted to Jesus Christ were his victims; for as also the ancient

priests consecrated to God the victims that they offered, so also the apostle, and all the faithful preachers of the gospel, lead and offer to the Lord those to whom they preach the word with effect. Besides, as the priests of old put their victims to death, so now do the ministers of the gospel in some manner immolate men who receive their preaching, making them die to the world and the flesh, drawing out of their hearts vain affections and lusts, in which their life consisted. And as for the ancient victims, they remained purely and simply dead, without receiving from the hand of the priest any kind of life instead of that of which he had deprived them. But it is not so with the men whom the ministers of the Lord immolate with the sword of his gospel. For instead of this miserable, earthly, and carnal life which they take from them, they clothe them with another that is holy and Divine, and infinitely happier than that which they have lost, changing them by this mystical sacrifice from children of Adam into children of God, from old and perishing creatures into new and heavenly men. Besides this difference, there is still another, between this evangelical sacrifice and that of the ancient victims. For whereas those poor animals which they immolated, destitute as they were of reason and intellect, suffered death simply, without any act on their part taking place; now the victims of Jesus Christ are only immolated when they knowingly and willingly receive the stroke of the gospel. Thus you see that the apostle here expressly mentions the faith of the Philippians, as it was through that they had been offered to God. From whence again a third difference arises between these two kinds of victims. For whereas the ancient victims remained entirely deprived of their being, without obtaining any new one; men now offered to God by the gospel, besides being made by it new, living, and immortal creatures, become also themselves priests, to offer themselves henceforth to God, by a true faith, presenting their bodies to him in sacrifice, lively, holy, and acceptable, which is their reasonable service, as the apostle says, Romans 12:1; whence also St Peter calls them all "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," 1 Peter 2:5. And this is the reason that the Scripture honours with the name of sacrifices, all those actions of their spiritual life which they practise in faith, as their alms-giving, their repentance, their patience, their hymns, their prayers, and such like. St Paul comprehends here, in my opinion, all those spiritual oblations under the name of sacrifice and service of faith of the Philippians; first of all that which he had himself done at the beginning, converting them, and presenting them to the Lord; and, secondly, all the works of piety and charity that these believers had offered, and still offered every day to God in the faith of his gospel. He considers all that as the sacrifice of a single victim, immolated at the beginning by his hand; and since elevating continually before God upon the altar of his grace, Jesus Christ our Lord, where he had placed them, the perfumes, the sweet and agreeable odours of prayer and alms-giving, of patience and other Christian virtues.

87

He calls it "the sacrifice and service of their faith," because this whole oblation depends on faith, and is only done by it; neither our persons nor our actions being capable of pleasing God without faith. He calls it our service or liturgy, in the same sense as he names it a sacrifice, because it is the function of the ministry to which

we have been consecrated by the faith of the gospel. And as formerly the ministry of the Levitical priesthood was to present to God many earthly offerings upon their typical altar; so also now the worship and the service to which we are called is, to offer continually our bodies and our minds to God, with all the fruits that they are capable of bearing, in the name and on the cross of Jesus Christ, our true and heavenly altar.

The apostle then says, that if he be poured forth on the sacrifice of the faith of the Philippians, he shall be joyful and contented. To understand this completely, we must be aware, in the second place, besides what we have said before, that the ancients in their sacrifices did not offer their victims to God simply and alone, but were accustomed to pour over them some liquor, such as wine or oil. As to the pagans, it appears in a thousand places in their writings which still remain that they did the same. And as to the Israelites, Moses expressly commands them to throw upon each of the two lambs of their daily sacrifice a little fine flour mingled with beaten oil, and to pour over it a certain quantity of wine, Exodus 29:40. The word here used by the apostle is precisely that which he employs to signify such pourings and effusions. From whence it appears what is its meaning. For continuing the metaphor begun and drawn from the sacrifices, he compares his death, and the pouring out of his blood in consequence of it, on account of the faith of the Philippians and of the gospel that he had preached to them, to that pouring forth which was done on the victims which had been immolated. If I am poured out, if my blood is shed on the sacrifice of your faith, so that nothing is wanting to this divine oblation, I am ready cheerfully to suffer death on such a good account. And that such was his intention, besides all the circumstances of the text evidently showing it, still further appears by what we read in the Second Epistle to Timothy, where, speaking of his approaching martyrdom, he employs the very same word which he here uses, in the same sense: "As for me, I am now ready to be poured forth;" to which he, adds, as if to explain it more clearly, "and the time of my departure is at hand," 2 Timothy 4:6. And the reason of this metaphor is evident. For, in the first place, as this part of the ancient sacrifices was made by pouring out some liquor, so also this part of the evangelical service of St Paul, that is to say, his martyrdom, must be, and was indeed, made by the shedding of his blood; so that in all the functions of his sacred ministry, there is not one that has a closer resemblance to the scattering or pouring out which was done upon the ancient sacrifices. And more, as this pouring out of the liquor upon the victim was the seal of its consecration, so also the death of the apostle was the crown of his ministry, and the authentic and solemn confirmation of his whole doctrine, which would increase and establish the faith of the Philippians and other believers, and be more and more the means of consecrating their spiritual service to the Lord. Now although he does not say certainly that he shall be poured out on the sacrifice of his preaching, but speaks of it doubtfully and conditionally, simply saying that if it should happen he should rejoice at it; nevertheless, he signifies pretty clearly that he was of that opinion, that he should some day glorify the Lord by martyrdom. Besides the rage of his enemies, and his firm resolution to continue constantly

to preach the gospel, making him thus believe, it may be that he had had besides some warning of it from the Lord, like that which he had given to St Peter, telling him, after his resurrection, by what death he should glorify God, as St John relates at the end of his Gospel. The effect answered to it precisely; for although God delivered him from his first bonds, according to the assurance that he had given the Philippians in two places in this Epistle, he, nevertheless, permitted that some years after he should be again made prisoner and executed in the city of Rome; and the punishment was precisely such as he had signified in this place; that is to say, a death in which his blood should be shed, to serve as an aspersion upon the sacrifice of his preaching, all the ancient historians of the church unanimously testifying that he was beheaded by the command of Nero.

But whatever might be the hour and manner in which God should be pleased to dispose of him, he testifies here that he was quite resolved and ready to suffer martyrdom, not only without regret and apprehension, but even with joy. If that should be, (says he,) "I joy, and rejoice with you all." You see, believers, what a change the gospel of Jesus Christ has made in the nature of things. Death is to other men a subject of fear and horror, as the ruin of their being, and the end of all their enjoyments. To the apostle and to the true disciples of Jesus Christ it is an agreeable object; a subject of joy; as being, by the blessing of their Lord, the crown of their perfection, their entrance to immortality, and the first day of their triumph. But the apostle does not only rejoice in it for himself, regarding his own pouring forth as the last of his painful services, as the end of his labour, and the beginning of his rest and glory; he also rejoices in it for the Philippians and for other believers. For that is what he means when he says, "I rejoice with you all;" because in truth this last part of his. ministry ought to be very useful to them in sealing and confirming their faith by such an illustrious teaching of celestial truth. For if his bonds had served to such a great furtherance of the gospel, as he said before, how much more efficacious would his death be for the same purpose! (88)

III. But he goes still further, and wishes that the Philippians should feel the same disposition with regard to his martyrdom; that they should rejoice at it when it should happen, as a good and happy event: "You also, (says he to them in the following verse,) for the same cause, joy, and rejoice with me." But how is it, O thou holy apostle, that thou desir est that the Philippians should rejoite in such a time of mourning? and that the loss of so good, so admirable, and so affectionate a master should not be to them a cause of sorrow? Would it not be to change them into rocks, and to deprive them of all feeling, to compel them to such a strange duty? Thou thyself in another place hast permitted the mourning and tears of believers for the death of their neighbours; only forbidding them to afflict themselves after the manner of the Gentiles, who have no hope, 1 Thessalonians 4:13. And we read in Acts 8:2, that the disciples made great mourning for Stephen, the first martyr of Jesus Christ. Dear brethren, the command that the apostle here gives the Philippians is not opposed to the duties and feelings of humanity. He does not absolutely forbid them to weep and to regret his death. He simply wishes that if his absence is painful to them, the fruit of his sacrifice may be sweet to them; that they

should not be so attached to their own interest as not to consider his; that sorrow for his loss should not so fill their minds, that feeling for his happiness, and the joy for his victory, should not also have a place. He desires that they should feel as they ought the effect and usefulness of his death, the weight and authority that it would give to his preaching, and the value of it to the church, gaining some, and establishing others in the fellowship of Jesus Christ. This is what he means when he tells them to rejoice at it. But he also wishes that the benefit that he himself should derive from it should touch them, and console them for his loss; that they should see the victory that it gave him over all his enemies, the glory that his death should obtain for him, the rest and felicity in which it would place him. This is the meaning of the last words of the text, "you also rejoice with me." From which we have, finally, to collect briefly the principal instruction that the apostle here gives us.

In the first place, he shows us what are the sacrifice and lawful service of the ministers of the Lord Jesus in the church. It is not to offer animals to God, as the children of Aaron did formerly; neither to present him with bread and wine, or (as they do in the communion of Rome) the flesh and blood of his Son under the appearance of bread and wine. Neither Paul nor any other of the sacred authors teaches us any where that the Saviour had instituted, or that his disciples had practised, any thing of the kind. The true sacrifice of the servants of Jesus Christ is to preach the gospel, to convert men to their Master by the power of his word; to make them die to the world and the flesh, that they may live according to the Spirit; to plunge this Divine sword into them, even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; to present them to God as so many living sacrifices, holy, pure, and reasonable. But if there be any question of a propitiatory sacrifice to expiate sin, and to satisfy the justice of the Father, both this same apostle and the whole Scripture of the New Testament teach us that Jesus Christ has offered that once upon the cross, so that to undertake to offer another would evidently be to accuse his of insufficiency. After so perfect an oblation, it only remains for us to rejoice in it, to apply the fruits of it to ourselves; and that, in gratitude for so excellent a benefit, we should continually present, by Jesus Christ, "the calves of our lips," as the prophet calls our thanksgivings, and the fruits of a truly evangelical and spiritual life.

This is what the apostle teaches us in the second place, calling the conversion and sanctification of the Philippians, the sacrifice and service of their faith. Remember then, believers, that having been sacrificed to God by the gospel which you nave received into your hearts, you have, at the same time, been invested with a new dignity, and have been made altogether victims and priests of the Lord. You are henceforth a sacerdotal nation. You are all in Jesus Christ the ministers of the living God. Have ever before your eyes the excellence of such a high office. Keep yourselves holy and unpolluted. Flee all soil and filth; touch none of those things which are dead and profane. Exercise that holy office with which God has honoured you with care and fidelity. Present him every day a pure and chaste body, a mind full of faith and good thoughts, an innocent soul, bowels of mercies, a

mouth dedicated to his praise, lips purified by his Divine fire, incorruptible hands, honest eyes, and a Christian conversation. Present to him, on the poor members of his Son, the altars that he has left us on earth, the offerings of your charity in abundance, and with joy. Consecrate your goods to his service; employ and use them but for him. Dedicate to him the vigour of your youth, the prudence and experience of your old age; all the periods and moments of your life. And, to sum up all in few words, may the thoughts and affections of your hearts, the words of your mouths, and the actions of your body, be so many sacrifices set apart and offered to the Lord. This, my brethren, is the service, the liturgy (as the apostle calls it) to which the faith of the gospel constrains us.

Still it is not enough that we should consecrate our life to God. Death, which is its end and final part, must also be employed in the same use. And this the example of the apostle teaches us here, in the third place; all of us ought to have a disposition similar to his, and to be ready to suffer death cheerfully, and to shed our blood with joy upon the service of his faith, as an effusion, or pouring forth, agreeable to the Lord, if he should call us to it. It is the seal, the crown, and the perfection of the sacrifice of the Christian, by which he confirms and ratifies all the other parts of his service, by which he glorifies God and edifies men in the highest and best manner possible. I acknowledge that the example of the apostle particularly concerns the ministers of the Lord, as those who ought always to be ready to sign with their blood the truths they have preached with their mouths. But in reality there is no Christian who is not bound to the same thing. For we are all soldiers of the Lord 89
Jesus. We have all sworn to him the oath of fidelity; and entering into fellowship with him, we have sworn to contend even to blood for his gospel. And what can be more just than to die for the glory of him who made no difficulty in dying for our salvation? And if we do not find this disposition in ourselves, let us blame our own cowardice, and the imperfection of our faith. We every day see men of the world cheerfully sacrifice their life to an empty idol, which they falsely call honour; and there is not one of them who would not willingly meet his rival every time that the laws of this unjust and imaginary rule of their own vanity calls upon them so to do, without the menaces both of the justice of God or man being capable of preventing them, and they consider them as cowards and deprived of honour who would draw back. Christians! shall we not have for the service of God, and for a true and solid glory, the same courage that they have for an empty imagination? But all our cowardice arises from the weakness of our faith. If we were firmly persuaded that Jesus Christ will crown with glory and immortality all those who suffer for his name, we should embrace such opportunities with joy. We should fly to them as the first Christians did formerly, and acknowledge that it is the highest honour that could ever happen to us to shed our blood in so good a cause, and the issue of which is so undoubtedly blessed.

But the example of the apostle ought to extend still further than martyrdom. All are not called to shed their blood. But there are none who are not called to die. Prepare yourself then in general, O Christian! for that death which is inevitable, from whatever hand it may come, whether by nature or by the hand of men, with

a steady, cheerful, and rejoicing mind. Lay down your life willingly, and resign it cheerfully into the hand of God when he shall demand it from you. Let him not take it from you by force and in spite of you, as from a faithless trustee; but let him rather receive it as a sacrifice that you yourselves present with thanksgivings. Remember, even in this time of extremity, the honour of your priesthood, of the obedience that you owe to God, and the edification that you are bound to afford to your neighbours. Do not allow yourselves to be surprised by the fancies of ignorance and error, which paint death to us as the chief of evils. Think that the Lord Jesus has deprived it of its sting, and spoiled it of all it had of sorrow. Henceforth it cannot hurt you. It will perfect instead of destroying you. It delivers you from a rough and troublesome combat, and places you in a blessed peace. It only takes earth from you to give you heaven, and merely removes you from the company of men that you may enjoy that of Jesus Christ and his saints. But as the apostle instructs us by his example to die with joy, he also commands us to support the death of our brethren with patience, and to put away from amongst us that obstinate mourning, and those inconsolable tears, which weakness and ignorance shed upon their graves. It is to insult a martyr of Jesus Christ to weep for his death. It is to injure his sacrifice, and to pollute his triumph. Are you sorry because he has overcome the world, and confounded all the efforts of the enemy? Rejoice in it, says the apostle, and rejoice with him. Indeed there is much more cause to congratulate than to pity him. He has finished his sacrifice, he has glorified his Lord, he has been faithful to him to his last sigh. He has confirmed the gospel, and testified to its truth. The angels have seen it with joy, and have accompanied his victory with their applause. Jesus Christ has accepted his burnt-offering, and, receiving his soul into heaven, has crowned him with his glory. Who does not see, that if we love the Lord, and the servant that he has consecrated to himself, we ought to rejoice in his happiness? Thus we read that in the first ages of Christianity the interments of the martyrs were rather triumphs than funerals. All of them resounded with praises, and hymns, and thanksgivings, as is particularly mentioned in the book of the Passion of St Cyprian. My dear brethren, these same reasons oblige us to support, in like manner, the death of other believers; for although not martyrs, they are, nevertheless, those who have died in the Lord, and have changed their earthly tabernacle for a heavenly habitation. Every species of death of his beloved ones is precious in the eyes of the Lord, Psalm 116:15. Do not weep for him who is most blessed, who sins no more, who rejoices in God, who is in the harbour of salvation, free from the agitations and tempests of life. And if you regret the loss of his conversation, let the consideration of his well-being soften your sorrow with the hope of one day meeting him again in the kingdom of God. For thus we must take these kinds of affliction, and all others, for occasions of lifting our hearts towards heaven, and in good time to set our affairs in order, faithfully employing the life and death both of ourselves and others to the glory of the Lord, waiting for his great day, when he will wipe away all tears, and will give us the fruits of our faith and hope in the eternal possession of his blessed glory. To him, with the Father and

the Holy Spirit, the true and only God, eternally blessed, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Preached at Charenton,
Sunday, 21st April, 1641.

SERMON XV.

Verse 19–24.

But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

What the apostle here says, that the care of all the churches was continually upon him, 2 Corinthians 11:28, appears in all his Epistles, but is especially discoverable in this to the Philippians. For although his sad condition when in Rome, a captive in the prison of Nero, and in danger of his life, might seem to exclude every other care, nevertheless, the affection which he bore to that dear flock pressed so heavily on his holy mind, that his own danger could not prevent his thinking of their safety. He thought of them under the tribunal itself, which was about to judge his life, and is in more trouble about their salvation than his own safety. They had sent him Epaphroditus, their pastor, to wait upon him in his necessity; and this good minister of God acquitted himself of that office towards him with all the love and fidelity in his power. But the holy apostle, fearing that his absence might be injurious to them, sent him back to them, as we 90 hear at the end of this chapter, preferring to be without his attentions and good offices than to deprive this church of them. He is not satisfied with doing this, he accompanies it with this beautiful Epistle, in which he gives them salutary advice against all kinds of errors, and arms their faith, and establishes their consolation, with an inconceivable diligence and ardour. Still all this does not suffice his affection. He wishes to send Timothy to them, that is to say, his right hand and his other half, that he might assure their salvation by the presence of such an excellent servant of God; and, after all, to go and see them himself as soon as he should be at liberty, the love that he bore them not being satisfied with any thing short of that. This, my brethren, is what he promises them in the text, where, cutting the thread of the exhortations that he had given them in the preceding verses, he

declares, "But I hope to send Timothy unto you shortly;" as if he had said, It is not necessary for me to enlarge any more in these instructions, having the intention of sending them, on the earliest day, another living epistle, that is to say, his dear Timothy, who was very able to improve them in every thing necessary for their edification and consolation. He then adds the reasons which had induced him to choose him rather than any other for this employment, which were drawn from his incomparable zeal and fidelity in the work of the Lord, proved by long and tried, experience: "For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, and not the things that are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me." And, finally, he gives them hope that he shall see them himself at an early day: "But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly." Thus we have, by God's help, to treat of three points in this discourse: the promise of sending Timothy; his recommendation and praise; and the assurance of the apostle's arrival among the Philippians.

I. The promise of sending Timothy. Their church, newly planted by St Paul, like a young plant still tender and weak, had need of support, and so much the more so on account of the attacks of enemies, who did all in their power to ruin it. It flourished in the midst of the thorns and briers of infidelity, whilst the cruelty of the Jews and pagans was likely to stifle it easily if it were not assisted. This occasioned Paul's anxiety, fearing every moment lest Satan, who never sleeps, should pull up, or at least shake, these new plants of the Lord. The account that he had received from Epaphroditus redoubled his fears that evil workers, the teachers of circumcision, who, in these early times, troubled the greater part of the flocks of Jesus Christ, had also attacked that of the Philippians. It is then to soothe his own trouble, and to strengthen these believers, that, not contented with sending Epaphroditus back to them, he promises to make Timothy soon follow him, one of the most celebrated ministers of the Lord, known in Asia and in Europe by the great services which he had rendered to the gospel; so that the hope of such considerable assistance should support and strengthen them; in like manner, you see a place acquires new courage and vigour to resist the enemy who keeps it in a state of siege, when its prince gives it the hope of very soon sending it powerful aid. "But I trust in the Lord to send Timothy unto you shortly, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state." He here sets before us two things: the sending of Timothy, and the object or reason of so sending him. On the first we have to remark that he does not simply and absolutely say, I will send Timothy to you, but, I hope to send him to you, and still more modifies his hope by adding, "I hope in the Lord Jesus." As the actions, and even the words, of the apostle ought to serve as examples and instruction for us, let us learn from these, my brethren, what they clearly signify, that we should never be entirely certain about things to come, of which God has given us no assurance: this I expressly add, to exclude from this proposition the things that the Lord has promised in his word, as the continuance of his grace, and the inheritance of his glory. Of these St Paul in many places

speaks with entire confidence, being fully persuaded that nothing shall be able to separate him from the love of the Lord; and we can and ought, after his example, to be certain also of the promise of God, that none shall ever pluck us from his hand; and that he will bring us out of all our temptations, making it as certain as if it was performing or already accomplished. As to other things, of which we have not the promise in the Divine word, such as the circumstances and events of our common life, we may hope for them, as the apostle does in this place, but not be certain of them, all their success depending on the will of God, of which we have not the knowledge. The issue of things does not always depend on their disposition and appearance. A moment often changes their order, and overturns all the opinions which the reason of men had formed of them; God, the sovereign Lord and Ruler of the world, having reserved to himself the right of turning them, as seemeth to him good. It is to rob him of what belongs to him, to take for granted the certain issue of things to come. Our life itself, the foundation of all our actions, is not assured to us; and there is no person in the world, however healthy and vigorous he may be, who can be certain of living another day. How many do we every day see who, an hour previous to that fatal moment, were perfectly well! This is the reason why the apostle St James rebukes justly the rashness of those who dispose of the future as if they were masters of it, who say, "To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain. Whereas (he says) ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that." St Paul loved the church of the Philippians, he saw that it had still need of his ministry, and knew that Jesus Christ had thereunto called him. This disposition made him judge that God, for the good of believers, would preserve him still alive, and draw him out of those sad bonds which then held him, that he might edify those believers as much by sending Timothy to them as by his own presence. From hence, then, he expects that the Lord will dispose of him in that way. But knowing how deep are the judgments of God, and how much higher are his ways and thoughts than ours, often ordering things quite contrary to our reason and expectations, he does not feel entirely certain of what however seemed to him probable, and remits all to the providence of the Lord, reposing humbly under his shadow. Dear brethren, let us imitate his modesty, and, with a humility similar to his, let us leave the future in the hand of God, only disposing of it under his good pleasure, without fixing upon any thing with so much certainty as not to be ready to submit to a contrary issue, in case that the sovereign Lord has been pleased to order otherwise than we wished or hoped; let us acquiesce quietly in his counsel, and after having resigned
(91) all our thoughts, hopes, and deliberations to him, let its always add the clause that our Lord and Master has taught us, "Thy will be done." Not what I will, but what thou wilt.

We must also remark what the apostle says, "that he trusted in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to the Philippians. By these words he evidently gives to Jesus Christ the empire of the universe, and the providence which governs the issue of all

the things which pass in it, according to what he had previously said, that he was highly exalted, and that his name was above every name, and that there is nothing in heaven, or in earth, or under the earth, which does not bow the knee before him. For as it is of the Lord Jesus that he hopes to send Timothy, and so to console the Philippians, it is clear that it is on him that all the events necessary to do so depend. He was in the bonds of Nero, the most powerful monarch then on earth, and the most opposed to the doctrine of the truth; so that, looking at the thing as a man, there was no great appearance that he should get out of his chains into liberty. But to the power of this tyrant he opposes that of his Christ, knowing that he held in his hand the hearts both of this lion and of all other similar beasts, to bend them as he pleased. He knew that, however great might be the rage and confusion of men, yet Jesus was their Master; that he governed all their actions; and that, however high and powerful they might be, all their works depended on his will. And from thence it necessarily follows that Jesus is the true and eternal God, of the same essence with the Father; the government of thé world, and the guidance of all that passes in it, requiring infinite wisdom and power, such as cannot be but in a similarly infinite nature, that is to say, one truly Divine and eternal. Hence not Christians only, but even pagans, and all men generally, refer the disposition of the future to God, saying, in their usual language, "If it please God," If God wills, and, With the good pleasure of God; recognising, as it were, by the secret teaching of nature herself, that this providence and disposition of things can only belong to a Divine Being. How then can we adequately express our astonishment at the blindness, shall I call it, or at the fury, of those who, granting to the Lord Jesus the guidance of the universe, the inspection of the hearts of men, and the government of all their affairs, yet refuse him the name and glory of a true and eternal Divinity? As for us, beloved brethren, who know that this administration of the world, and this supreme Providence over all that happens in it, is the highest and chiefest part of that glory which belongs to God, which he gives not to another, let us worship our Jesus in all assurance, as this belongs to him. Let us serve him as a supreme and eternal Divinity. Let us on his power and goodness confidently build our faith and hope, and let us make the issue of all our thoughts and desires depend entirely on his will. Let us implore his help in all our designs, great and small. Let us be certain that there is nothing so difficult that we cannot do in him, and nothing so easy that we can do without him. Such was the disposition of St Paul in regard to sending Timothy to the Philippians, "he hoped to do so in the Lord."

Let us now see what was the object he had in view in sending him: "I hope to send him to you shortly, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state." It is certain that the first and chief design of the apostle in thus sending him was the good and edification of the Philippians themselves, to establish them in the faith according to the need they had of it; and the second and more distant object his own joy and consolation, by learning, at the return of Timothy, the good state in which he had placed and left this church. But consider, I beseech you, the wisdom and goodness of this holy minister of God, and how exquisite is the prudence with which he manages these believers. He says nothing to them of

the first object which he had in view, which was to support and strengthen them against the shock of enemies, for fear that setting forth this would afflict them, by appearing as a secret reproach of weakness, and a testimony of some distrust which the apostle felt in their perseverance and piety. He speaks to them but of the second object that he had in view, which was his own comfort, rather as if it had been *his* need instead of *theirs* which had rendered Timothy's journey necessary. This holy and spiritual address of the apostle ought to instruct us to treat those believers who are committed to us with the greatest circumspection; to avoid as much as possible all that is likely to offend them; and never to employ towards them without necessity, not fire and sword only, but even bitterness or other painful remedies, remembering that our ministry is to comfort and edify, not to afflict or destroy. I know well that there are morose and inexorable minds who will not approve this proceeding, who will accuse it of complaisance and flattery. But their judgment ought not to be in such high consideration with us, that we should not rather regard what the edification of human souls requires of us, the most delicate subject in the world, and one which ought to be managed with the utmost tenderness and moderation. The example of St Paul, which stands in the place of law to us in the church, compels us to it. For you see how, both here and elsewhere, he seasons all his discourses with an unparalleled gentleness and love; and never with that which wounds and offends, such as remonstrances and censures, but by constraint; and at last, "I will send you Timothy, that I also may be of good comfort, when I shall know your state." Could he say any thing more gentle and affectionate? That mind which braved hell and the world, which smiled at prisons and the threats of tyrants, which preserved its joy entire in irons, which looked upon life and death indifferently, could not bear the absence of the Philippians without trouble. That great courage, which defies and despises all the rest, yields under the feelings of the love which he cherished towards them. This passion alone was able to melt him. His uncertainty respecting their state gave him more trouble and uneasiness than all the chains and threats of Nero. I shall have no rest (says he) till I hear news of you. If there is any languor and weakness in my courage, that anxiety alone which I feel for you causes and maintains it. I am firm and strong against the rest; it is here only that I feel myself weak. But I hope that sending Timothy will relieve my anxiety, and at once set my heart at ease. Your prosperity will increase my courage, and once knowing you to be in safety, I shall have no more fear or uneasiness.

Such was the feeling of the apostle for his Philippian converts, and such ought to be that of all pastors for their flocks. Judge, then, in what proportion the feeling of the Philippians towards St Paul should be, what desire they should have for the repose and comfort of a man who loved them so tenderly. Dear brethren, we are infinitely below this great apostle, who never had his equal in the world. But however weak our ministry may be, you ought to cherish it, since it is appointed for you. And the chief favour that we ask at your hands is, that your piety, and charity, and sanctification may be such as to give us joy; that your spiritual prosperity may fill our souls with delight; so that knowing the happiness of your state, we may have (as the apostle says) so much more courage to labour for your

edification. For the rest, as St Paul hoped that sending Timothy would give him satisfaction, so he promised himself that it would afford much to these believers. And this is the meaning of the word "*also*," which he uses in this text, "so that I *also* may be of good comfort;" clearly taking for granted that he alone should not gather fruit from it, that the Philippians should do so in the first place, and he afterwards; and as they would receive great comfort in seeing Timothy amongst them, and in learning from him the deliverance and happy state of the apostle, their common master; so should he also in his turn have likewise extreme encouragement and rejoicing, in knowing from this faithful deputy the prosperity of their church.

II. But in order to excite their hearts to this expectation, and to make them more desire the enjoyment of this happiness, he sets before them in the following verses the excellent qualities of Timothy, which compelled him to appoint him to this deputation in preference to any other: "For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel." There is hardly in the Scriptures of the New Testament any minister of the gospel more celebrated than Timothy. St Luke, in the Acts of the apostles, and St Paul, in his Epistles, every where make very honourable mention of him; so that the apostle uses his name in the title or address of five of his letters, writing them in his name and in that of Timothy; and this is one of them, as you have heard at the beginning. And besides that, he has done him the honour to write two to him; the last of which is, as it were, the will of this great apostle, in which he commits to his dear disciple his last wishes, being on the point of leaving the world. These divine pieces teach us that he was born of a pagan father, but of a Jewish mother, named Eunice, daughter of Lois; both of them gifted with excellent faith, and celebrated by the pen of the apostle. These two good and religious women brought him up from his infancy in piety, and particularly in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, the true source of the fear of God, and salvation, in which he made great progress, 2 Timothy 1:5–6; 3:15; 4:14. And having since heard and embraced the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, he consecrated himself entirely to his service; and received the imposition of hands from St Paul and the company of priests or elders, and followed the apostle in the greater part of his travels. It is, then, this holy man whom the apostle here intends to send to the Philippians, and to whose zeal and piety he bears so great and singular a testimony. It is not to flatter him that he praises him, but to recommend him to the Philippians; so that seeing the opinion which the apostle entertained of him, they might desire his arrival, and receive him, when he should come among them, with the reverence and love due to his merit; and that by this means both his expectation and arrival should produce more fruit among them. I acknowledge that it is an abominable and pernicious delusion to praise those who do not deserve it, and I still further confess that it is a sad and odious vanity to praise even those who are praiseworthy without some reason compelling us so to do. But I also maintain that it is a duty, not only just, but very useful, to praise and recommend the piety and virtue of believers in suitable times and places. In the first place, it is like a tribute that we

owe to these good qualities to acknowledge them, and sincerely to praise them every where where we see them shining; and it would be ingratitude both towards those who possess them, and towards God who gave them, not to appear to see them. And every body knows that there is nothing which more stirs up right minds to the practice of honesty and virtue than praise. It attracts and binds them for ever to it; giving them a secret shame not to continue and increase to the end in a thing in which such an honourable testimony has been given them. Add to which, this recommendation gives efficacy to their usefulness with those with whom they have to labour. This is the reason why the apostle makes no scruple in this place to praise his disciple Timothy, and has willingly engraved his eulogium in this Epistle, as upon solid and durable brass, which has hitherto preserved and will preserve his name and his glory in the church to the end of the world. This example compels superiors to render similar testimony to those of their inferiors who deserve it, as fathers to their children, pastors to their sheep, crowning each of their good qualities with these sweet and agreeable flowers of praise every time that occasion requires it.

Behold then how the apostle exalts the zeal and piety of Timothy: "I have no person like-minded, who will naturally care for your state." The first eulogium, then, that he gives him is, that he has no person like-minded, from which it is clear that he places him above all his other disciples. But what he says, "that none are like-minded," may be interpreted in two ways. Some think that the apostle compares Timothy with himself, and means that he had a zeal and courage equal to his own. Others imagine that by these words he is compared, not with the apostle, but with the other disciples, implying that, of all those who were with St Paul, there was not one whose zeal and courage were equal to those of Timothy. And although both expositions are good and beneficial to this holy servant of God, yet the second seems the best, from the relation that it bears to the following words, where the apostle, to confirm what he had said, "that he had nobody like-minded with Timothy," adds, "that all seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's." Be it how it may, it is evident that by "this mind," whether like that of the apostle, or incomparably greater than that of the other disciples, is meant the zeal with which Timothy glowed for the advancement of the gospel, and for the glory of Jesus Christ; his affection and his quickness in embracing every occasion that might be useful to it, there being nothing either so difficult or so painful that he would not willingly undertake for this purpose. It is a quality necessary for all Christians, but more particularly for the ministers of the gospel, seeing that the difficulties they meet with in the exercise of their office are likely to discourage them at every moment, if they have only a common-place affection and courage. The other praise that the apostle here gives Timothy is, that he is more careful than any one else in the things that concern the Philippians; in which you see that, besides the affection which he bore in general to all the flock of Christ, he had an especial one for that of the Philippians; either that the stay which he had made among them, or the noise and wonder of their extraordinary piety, or the sympathy of his own feelings with tneirs, or some other reason, had more powerfully inclined his heart towards them.

He expresses the care that he took for them by a term full of emphasis, which signifies a great anxiety, which filled his mind with many thoughts, keeping it continually balanced and divided, as it happens sometimes to ourselves when we take the charge of a thing of which we are very fond. The apostle still adds another term, that he may better set before us the nature of that care which Timothy took for the affairs of the Philippians, saying that he was truly or naturally careful for them; that is to say, without pretence, or fraud, or hypocrisy; acquitting himself of his duties in all frankness and sincerity, without seeking any other thing in them than the good and edification of these believers. For evil-workers sometimes take charge of what belongs to a flock, but with bad designs; one to satisfy his curiosity, another to gratify his ambition or avarice, each rather for himself than for Jesus Christ or his church. But St Paul still further heightens the glory of Timothy in the following verse by the singular rarity of his virtue: "For all seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's." His zeal is so much the more admirable, that it is almost without example. In a great multitude of disciples, he alone does the work of the Lord with that true nobleness of mind which only regards his Master. All the others seek their own interest, rather than that of Jesus Christ. In the first place, it is clear enough that the apostle does not here speak of apostates, who, carried away by the cares of this world, whether the lusts of the flesh or the fear of persecution, had renounced the gospel, and openly quitted its profession; as that Hymeneus, and Alexander, and some others, of whom he complains elsewhere, saying "that some, having put away a good conscience, concerning faith have made shipwreck." Such wretches do not deserve that Timothy should be put in comparison with them. St Paul speaks of those who were living in the profession of Christianity, and exercised its holy ministry, and who were numbered in the company of his disciples. From which it appears, in the second place, that those of whom he here complains were not profane, and who took no care of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, nor of the edification of his church. These words of the apostle, "they seek not the things that are Jesus Christ's," must not be taken simply and absolutely, as meaning that they took no care whatever, nor gave themselves any trouble with the affairs of the Lord, more than the Jews or the pagans, but only as said by comparison, to mean that they sought their *own* things, rather than *those* of Jesus Christ; that they preferred their own interest to *his*, and had less care for *his* kingdom than for their *own* comfort; in the same way as the prophet Hosea said, as it is quoted by the Lord in St Matthew, "That God would have mercy, and not sacrifice," Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13, meaning that he better liked the works of mercy than the oblations of the sacrifices; and as St Paul says, "that God, in forbidding to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, took not care for oxen, but for us," 1 Corinthians 9:9–10, signifying that in that he had much more regard to us than to oxen; and as a prophet said that the Israelites had rejected, not Samuel, but the Eternal, meaning that it was not so much the government of Samuel that they had rejected, as that of God himself, 1 Samuel 8:7; and in many other places of Scripture, where this method of speaking is very usual. And that this passage must be so taken, the thing itself very evidently shows. For speaking simply, and without this comparison, it is

93

not forbidden us to seek what is our own, and to take care of our own interests, and of those who belong to us, as, for example, to preserve the health, reputation, and faculties both of ourselves and others. Even the apostle teaches us elsewhere that it is a grievous sin absolutely to neglect the care of such things; declaring that if any one careth not for his own, and chiefly for those of his own family, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel, 2 Timothy 5:3. That which is forbidden, and which is indeed a grievous sin against God and against ourselves, is this passion carried to excess, when we have more love and affection for our own affairs than for those of the Lord; "when we love (as it is in St Matthew) father or mother, son or daughter, (let us add health, repose, honour, goods, or life,) more than him;" when we seek *our* own convenience more than *his* glory, or attach ourselves more to our own interest than to his; and, in a word, when the consideration of what belongs to ourselves causes us to be wanting in his service. According to this Divine doctrine, it is evident that the apostle does not here intend, either that Timothy had no care whatever for his own things, (which would rather have been blamable than praiseworthy,) or that those other disciples with whom he compares him had simply some care or some attention to their own interests (which is not forbidden). But he means to say that Timothy, having placed the Lord Jesus in the chief spot of his heart, loved his glory and his kingdom above all things, treading under foot that which was most dear to him, when it interfered with the spread of the gospel, or the service of his church; and that these other disciples, on the contrary, although they had some regard for the kingdom of God, and employed themselves in preaching his word, were nevertheless so attached to their own interests, that this passion made them neglect those occupations of their office which interfered with their own comfort. And as it often happens that the interests of Christ and his gospel are incompatible with our own, you see how pernicious this foolish love is which prefers earth to heaven, and our own affairs to those of God, in all our callings, especially in that of ministers of the word. This then is what the apostle reproves in those of whom he speaks in this place; and this is the reason, why he does not reckon them fit to be sent to the Philippians. For the question being of a long and dangerous journey, persons who loved their own convenience so much might not easily resolve to undertake it. Believers, are you not astonished that even then, during that blessed golden age, when the presence of the apostle caused so much virtue and piety to flourish on earth, there were nevertheless at Rome, even in the society of St Paul, so few good and noble-minded soldiers of the Lord? "All (says the apostle) seek their own, and not the things that are Jesus Christ's." I acknowledge that we must not take his expression strictly, as if he meant to say simply and really that, except Timothy, there was no one at all who was not wrapped up in this criminal backwardness. But however that may be, it cannot be denied that this manner of speaking means that this corruption was so widely extended, and so few were exempt from it, that we may learn from it not to lose courage if we at present see the same evil in the church, and so few labourers of whom we can truly say that they seek what is Jesus Christ's and not their own.

But I return to Timothy. The apostle having thus preferred him to all his fellow

labourers, adds, "But you know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he has served with me in the gospel." It is not necessary (he observes) that I should recommend him to you beforehand. You yourselves know his value, and are not ignorant of the proofs which he has given of his zeal, and of his fidelity, in the exercise of his holy ministry. They knew the proof of Timothy; first, because they had seen him themselves among them, there being great reason to think that he was with St Paul, when, by direction of a heavenly vision, he passed into (94) Macedonia, and went to preach the gospel in the town of Philippi; and perhaps the apostle had also since sent him thither. They had, secondly, doubtless, heard the great actions of this holy man of God, his assiduity and fidelity in the work of the Lord, and the assistance and service that he had rendered to St Paul, keeping himself inseparably attached to him in all his journeys and enterprises. And this is what he expressly says, that "he had served with him in the gospel as a son with the father." In these words he praises the faith and modesty of Timothy; his faith, in that he served in the gospel, signifying by that he employed with zeal and assiduity every gift that he possessed in preaching the gospel; yielding to Jesus Christ his Lord, in this enterprise, all the duty that a slave owes to his master; sincerely proclaiming his word, such as he had received it from his apostles, without mixing with it the leaven of any human doctrine; seeking his glory alone, and labouring only for his name. The climax of his praise is, that he had served with St Paul, drawing, as it were, in the same yoke, following and imitating him in all things; so that in his conduct there shone an express image of the zeal, courage, sincerity, and laborious assiduity of that great apostle. But besides this imitation, it also signifies the faithful association he had maintained with him in all his journeys and dangers, and the part he had taken in all his victories. And it is to this that the following words relate, "He has served with me as a child with the father;" that is to say, that he had yielded to him, in the work of the Lord, all the obedience, reverence, subjection, and love that the best son could have yielded to his father, remaining always attached at his side in all his painful and dangerous expeditions, softening the labours of his apostleship by his continual assistance, flying where he sent him, refusing no danger, whether by sea or land, but taking as kindnesses all those labours in which St Paul employed him, religiously obeying all his orders, without ever infringing any of them. Indeed, if you read in the Acts the history of the apostle left us by St Luke, you will every where find Timothy with him; or if he sometimes quits him, it is by his command to execute his orders elsewhere. Neither the rage of the Jews nor the persecutions of the pagans, neither imprisonment nor trouble, neither storms at sea nor dangers by land, could separate him from this holy man. He gave up all to share his labours and his sorrows. This appears also in the Epistles of the apostle, in which Timothy is never forgotten. And this praise is still greater, as he was yet but a young man; and this is the reason St Paul says here that he had been with him as a son with his father. For is it not a wonderful thing that, notwithstanding the passions of that age, so difficult to restrain, disdaining with great courage the pleasures and exercises to which youth is given, he kept with the apostle, subjecting himself quietly to all his directions, employing in the work

of the Lord all that strength which others lose in debauchery and folly, preferring rather to weep and to suffer with St Paul than to laugh and amuse himself with the world?

After having thus nobly recommended him to the Philippians, he repeats the promise which he had already made to them above to send him to them shortly: "I trust then to send him to you shortly, as soon as I know how it will go with me." In the uncertainty in which his imprisonment kept him, not knowing what would be its issue, it was difficult for him to send Timothy far away from him. This is why he detained him yet some time, but with the promise, that as soon as he should see his affairs in such a state as to be able to do without him, he would not fail sending him on this journey. In which he plainly testifies, that although he was not entirely certain of the issue of his bonds, he, nevertheless, hoped to be delivered from them.

III. And what he adds in the third and last part of this text shows us still more expressly his opinion: "I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly." Before he had given them this hope, towards the end of the 1st chapter, where he said to them, "I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith," Phil, 1:25. Now then, for fear that sending Timothy, as he promises, should make them think that, changing his first plan, he no longer intended to visit them himself, he gives them this express assurance to the contrary. In which you see on one side the warmth of his affection for the Philippians, and on the other his humility and modesty, how he refers all to the will of God, saying that he trusts in the Lord, the same as he had said above, "I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly." Now what was indeed the issue of his imprisonment, and what the success of his intentions, we have formerly considered very fully in the exposition of the 1st chapter, in which we proved that there is great reason to believe that the apostle was delivered from his first bonds; and that he saw once more the churches that he had planted in Asia and Greece, which is precisely what he hopes here. Thus nothing now remains for us to do on this text than to meditate seriously on, and reduce to practice, the instructions which it contains.

In the first place, the example of Timothy teaches you what pastors you ought to desire for the guidance of the church, namely, such persons as nave courage similar to that of the apostle; who may be truly and sincerely careful of that which concerns their flocks, who seek the things which are Jesus Christ's, and not their own, and who serve the gospel with St Paul, and as he did. I acknowledge that eloquence and the best literary acquirements are not to be despised. But faith, zeal, and the love of Christ and his church, are the principal parts of this ministry. This is what you ought the most to desire, seek, and esteem in your pastors, as that which is most needful for your edification. The rest serves to please your ears, this to the salvation of your souls. But this lesson especially regards us whom God hath called to the exercise of this honourable office, committing to us the guidance of his church. His providence has preserved the eulogium with which St Paul here adorns Timothy, exactly as if this were ty be the pattern and idea on which we should form ourselves, in such a way, that if the holy apostle were still upon earth, he might conscientiously give us the same praises which he here gives to

his disciple. But, O ye faithful ministers of the Lord, whoever you may be, and in whatever place you may labour, the absence of St Paul will not deprive you of this fruit of your labours. If you are not praised by the pen of the apostle, you shall be so by the mouth of the supreme Master, who sees your troubles, and regards your fidelity, and will proclaim them one day in the presence of men and angels, when he will bestow on every one of his servants the praise that is due to him. Then what will be your joy and your glory, when you shall hear the Son of God in that august assembly say of you what the apostle here wrote of his Timothy, This servant has been truly careful of the good of my church; he has sought my interests, and not his own; he has served me in the gospel, as a son serves his father! Have always before your eyes this Divine reward. That you may have a share in Timothy's glory, imitate (95) his zeal and fidelity. Be careful of the flocks which Jesus Christ has committed to your care. Remember that it is for him you labour, for the glory of the Lord of the world, for the salvation and immortal felicity of men, to guide souls, which he hath redeemed with his own blood, to glory. God forbid that in so noble a design you should think of the flesh, or of the earth, or that you should injure such a ministry by low and mercenary thoughts, seeking reputation, ease, or convenience in offices which ought only to serve for the furtherance of the kingdom of God and the edification of his saints. May the glory of Jesus Christ be your only desire and your only interest; may this govern your whole life, and subdue every action of your minds and bodies. And as this should be your sole object, may the gospel also be your only occupation. Preach it in season, and out of season, with your voice and by your writings, with your mouth and in your manners. Mix with it nothing of your own. May your tongue and your life represent it faithfully, such as it was given you by the Lord and by his ministers. Cast the desire of ruling behind you. You are called to serve, and your whole office is but an honourable servitude. You are not the *lords*, but the *servants* of the flocks over which you preside. This is what the portrait of Timothy, here drawn by the apostle, teaches ministers in general. But it particularly warns the young to live humbly and modestly with the elders, to look upon them as their fathers, and to soften the trials of this laborious ministry by their respectful attentions. On the other hand, the conduct of the apostle instructs likewise the elders not to abuse the advantage which their age gives them over their Timothies; to love them tenderly, and to look upon them as their *brethren*, and not as their slaves, as the officers of Jesus Christ "who serve with them," as is here particularly said by the apostle, and not *under* them; to praise them, and to recommend them very affectionately to their flocks, and to do all in their power to render their ministry honourable.

This same Timothy consecrating his early years to this holy office, ought also to incite you, O Christian youth, to dedicate yourselves at once to the service of God, and immediately to awaken those among you who have the necessary gifts to devote themselves to the holy ministry. And God be praised, who has touched the hearts of some among you, to lead them to such a good design, crowning their beginnings with the flowers of his grace in such abundance that we have all good reason to hope for much fruit in its season. Follow their example, and employ,

to the advancement of the kingdom of God, and to the building his house, that warmth and vigour, and those other graces which your age consumes uselessly in worthless occupations. This is what the example of Timothy teaches us for the holy ministry.

But, dear brethren, do not imagine that you have no share in this, under pretence that you are not called to this office. I acknowledge that the holy ministry requires certain gifts, and certain peculiar cares. But in truth, as there is but one and the same salvation for the pastors and for the sheep, so there is but one and the same way to attain it; and those deeply deceive themselves who imagine that the morals of the people must, or at least may be, different from those of their guides. Consider then also, beloved brethren, this example and pattern of Timothy, which the apostle here places before your eyes. Children, learn from it respect, obedience, and submission towards your fathers. Render them the same duties that Timothy yielded to St Paul. Aid them in their sorrows, accompany them in their travels, console them in their adversities, be to them throughout their lives a crown of blessing and joy. Fathers, imitate also, and show towards your children, the gentleness, care, and friendship of St Paul towards Timothy, loving them tenderly as your own bowels, dedicating them to the Lord, placing them and leading them in his ways, giving them in the purity of your morals a beautiful and perfect pattern of life, which they may follow without blushing. Youth, here learn in general the deference which is due to elders. Treat them as your fathers. And you who are elders in age, have for the young affections and feelings similar to those of our Paul towards Timothy. Train them by your words and your examples to all godliness and honesty. Regard them not as strangers, but as your children, and unite with one another in a holy agreement to serve the gospel of the Lord, advancing it every day, attracting towards it those who are without, establishing those who are within, by the good example of a truly Christian life. For the principal thing is that all, young and old, rich and poor, of whatever age, sex, or condition we may be, we should each of us in our calling carefully imitate the zeal and faith of Timothy, that we should have, like him, an apostolical mind and courage, burning with love towards God, and a sincere affection towards his church; that, detached from earth, we should only seek heaven; that the affairs of the Lord Jesus, his kingdom and eternity, should possess our hearts day and night; that we should henceforth leave ease, convenience, and glory, and all the other petty passions of this vile flesh, to embrace the interests of God; that our whole lives may be only one continued proof of our faith and devotion; that it may be spent entirely in the service of the gospel, in that same course in which St Paul ended his old age, or in which the blessed Timothy sanctified his youth; that we may serve with them, that we may enjoy as they do the peace and consolation of the Lord Jesus in this world, and his glory and immortality in the other. So be it; and to him, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be honour and praise for ever. Amen.

Preached at Charenton,
Sunday, 30th June, 1641.

SERMON XVI.

Verse 25–30.

Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

The preservation of those societies which exist amongst mankind depends upon the union and good intelligence of the parties of which they are composed. It is of great consequence to such as govern clearly to understand the minds of those they guide. For unless that be the case, their obedience being forced and unwilling, it is not probable that their union should subsist long; experience teaching us every day that things that are violent are not of long duration. But among these superiors, there are none to whom this esteem and this disposition are more necessary than to the pastors whom God hath established in the church, because their whole government is only a gentle and amiable control, founded upon the devotion and submission of their flocks, and not a regal power; that is to say, a ministry, and not an empire, according to what the Lord said to his apostles, "The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you," Matthew 20:25–26. And even if the pastors should have this lordly power, which some among them have usurped, contrary to the express command of their Master, still it is very evident that it would be useless to the design of their office, which is to gain the hearts, and not to subject the bodies of men; so that to edify the societies over which they preside they must be held in great esteem, to the end that every body being persuaded of their good intentions, may willingly submit to their guidance. And they, and all those who desire the welfare of the church,

ought to do all in their power to place them in high estimation, and to turn from them as much as possible every thing that is likely to diminish the opinion and respect of their flocks towards them. The apostle St Paul, who often gives us this lesson in the instructions which he has left us in his Epistles, confirms it here by his example, recommending Epaphroditus very affectionately to the church of the Philippians, of which he was the pastor, and disabusing their minds of whatever little suspicion they might have about his conduct. These believers had sent him to St Paul, then a prisoner at Rome, not only to carry him their presents, and the aid of their charity, but also to remain about his person, and to yield him in so pressing an emergency all the service he possibly could until the Lord should otherwise order. Returning then now to them, that they might not imagine that it was his impatience, or his delicacy, or any other bad reason, which had induced him to return, the apostle shows them that it was he who had sent him, and sets before them the real and true reasons which had led him thus to act, all much in favour of Epaphroditus. He yields a plain and full testimony to his piety and virtue, and highly praising his fidelity, and the zeal with which he had acquitted himself of the business in which they had employed him, even to despising his own life for the work of the Lord, he directs them to receive him with peculiar joy and affection, as an excellent servant of God, and a precious gift of his grace. He says to them, in the first place, in general, that he thought himself obliged to send, him back quickly: "I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants." He then explains to them particularly the reasons for this return, drawn from the sickness of Epaphroditus, and from the desire it had awakened in him to see once more his beloved flock: "For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful." And, finally, he recommends him to them: "Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service towards me." This is what St Paul says of Epaphroditus. To understand it properly, and to draw from it all the teaching which is given for our instruction and consolation, we will examine these five points in order, if the Lord permit: the titles of Epaphroditus; his sickness; his cure; his return; and his recommendation.

I. For the first, the apostle gives him five considerable titles. For, in the first place, he calls him his "brother;" then, his "fellow labourer;" in the third place his "fellow soldier;" in the fourth place, "the apostle of the Philippians;" and finally, "the minister of his wants or necessity." The first of these names shows his religion, and the holy union there was in this respect, both with the apostle and with other believers. For the Christians in these early ages called each other *brother*, a name full of sweetness and friendliness, derived from the custom of the Jewish church, of which Christianity is the daughter. The Hebrews, as we learn from many places

of the Old and New Testament, called themselves brethren, because they were all descended from the same father, that is to say, from Jacob and from Abraham. Christians, after their example, also took that sacred name. And, indeed, it is not less suitable to them according to the Spirit, than to the others according to the flesh; for as the Jews were all of one race according to the flesh, so Christians also have one Father according to the Spirit, Jesus Christ, who has begotten them by the same blood, and quickened them by the same Spirit, uniting them in one and the same family. They are nourished by the same food, consecrated by the same sacraments, brought up under one rule, washed by one baptism, united by one communion, called to the same inheritance, and destined to the same glory. Believers, remember this; and every time that you see a Christian, whatever may be his condition, believe that he is your brother. St Paul was a great apostle, elevated above all men by many advantages which God had given him. And yet he does not here disdain to call Epaphroditus his brother, and does the same honour elsewhere to each of the other Christians, however much they might be lower than he. May this sacred name warm your charity towards those who need either your alms, your assistance, or your consolation. May it appease your feelings against those who have offended you. Respect in them the blood and Spirit of the Lord, of which you both participate, and recall to yourselves continually what Moses formerly said to the Hebrews, "We are brethren, why do ye wrong one to another?"

The second title that St Paul gives to Epaphroditus is, his "companion in labour," which relates to his office, viz. the holy ministry of the gospel, to which he had been consecrated, and in which he had acquitted himself faithfully. From which it appears that this excellent person had laboured in Rome itself, in preaching and in the edification of people, and so much the more as the imprisonment of Paul prevented his doing so as freely as he desired. Observe, believers, I beseech you, how excellent this office is! It renders us companions of Paul, and of all the holy apostles. It gives us an entrance into their sacred college, and associates us with the judges of the world. By it we have the honour of being brethren of Jesus Christ the Prince of bishops, and workers with God, which is the highest glory that man can have. Judge with what desire we should wish for such an excellent office, and what respect we ought to yield to those whom God has called to it, and who worthily exercise it in his church. (97)

But besides the holy ministry, the apostle still associates Epaphroditus in his labours, naming him, in the third place, his "fellow soldier;" thus expressing the part that he had taken in his battles against the devil, the world, and false brethren, for the glory of his Master, and the salvation of his flock. It is indeed true that it may be said of all mortal men in general, "that their life is a warfare upon earth," as we read in Job, chapter 7:1. And it is still further true, that it is more peculiarly suitable to believers in Jesus Christ, who are all called to sutler persecution, and to carry the cross, and who wrestle not against flesh and blood only, but also against principalities and powers, against the lords of the world, the rulers of the age, and against spiritual wickedness in high places; Satan no sooner seeing man consecrated to God by the sacrament of baptism, than he immediately begins

to fight, and to tempt him, as he acted formerly towards Jesus Christ himself, the Prince of warriors; and this is the reason why the apostle elsewhere exhorts believers in general to clothe themselves with the armour of God, that they may be able to resist the efforts of so potent an enemy. But as the ministers of the gospel have the honour to carry the standard in this sacred war, and to lead and encourage others at every opportunity, it is evident that no Christians have more to do in it than they. It is to them that the enemy particularly addresses himself, it is to them that he directs the most dangerous of his blows, and against them that he employs his darkest malice, and the most poisonous of his arrows. He leaves none of them at rest; and no sooner does he see them occupied in this Divine ministry, than he raises against them from all quarters innumerable fightings within and without, filling their whole lives with trouble and bitterness. Christians! you who by a noble vow have consecrated yourselves to this heavenly office, reckon that you are entered on a difficult and deadly warfare. Do not imagine that the Lord calls you to a festival, or to a soft and voluptuous life, in which you have only (like the greater part of the Romish priests) to enjoy at your ease the comfortable revenues of a living. What you have undertaken is a painful labour; a bloody and obstinate battle, in which you will continually have your enemy upon fou. That you may have a share in the honour of Paul, you must also participate in his fatigues, and you must be his fellow soldier to partake his triumph. This is what he elsewhere shows to his dear disciple Timothy, and what every faithful minister ought always to have before him: "Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," 2 Timothy 2:3–5. Far from us be idleness and pleasure, the encumbrance of the cares of earth, and the business of the flesh. No one who goes to war encumbers himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who has enlisted him. So also, if any wrestle, he is not crowned if he have not fairly fought. The laurels of Jesus Christ are not otherwise gathered. But if the labour of these combats be great, the consolation and glory is infinitely greater; the supreme Pastor continually assisting his warriors, gently wiping away the perspiration, inspiring them with new strength and vigour; keeping for them, on the day of his triumph, an incorruptible and glorious crown; and giving them here, during their life, the approbation and praise of the saints. Thus he formerly treated Epaphroditus, consoling him in his labours, by the testimony which the apostle gave him; placing on his head, if one may so say, as a rich crown of beautiful and immortal flowers, those two superb titles with which he honours him, calling him his companion in labour and fellow soldier.

He still adds two other titles, which seem to relate to the employment which had been given him by the Philippians. The first is that he calls him their apostle (for this is what the original precisely means, and which our Bibles have translated "your messenger"). Some take the word apostle here to mean those ministers that St Paul elsewhere names evangelists, who assisted the apostles of the Lord, and were as their lieutenants. For the holy apostles not being able to remain long in each place, were accustomed, when they had commenced the conversion of a country by their preaching, to leave there some of their inferiors, with authority to establish a suitable order, and to complete that which they had begun; as St

Paul says that he had left Titus in the isle of Candia, that he might continue the arrangement of things in proper order, which still remained to be done, and to ordain elders or priests in every city, Titus 1:5. They imagine, then, that Epaphroditus was of this class of ministers, formerly left by St Paul in the city of Philippi, with the office of establishing there, and in the surrounding country, the order and discipline necessary for the preservation of the church. And it is clear that the word of the apostle may indeed frequently be taken in this sense, as he says "that Andronicus and Junia were of note among the apostles," Romans 16:7. And it is possible that Epaphroditus had the honour of being one of this class of ministers. Others, considering that it was by the hands of this person that the Philippians sent to St Paul the fruit of their love, here take the word, "apostle of the Philippians," as meaning their ambassador, he that had been sent by them. For besides that this is what the word signifies in its first and original sense, apostle, in the Greek language, being the same as messenger or deputy in ours; besides that, I say, it appears also that St Paul sometimes uses the word apostle, apostle of the churches, that is to say, their ambassadors and deputies, for those whom they had sent to gather the alms and contributions which Macedonia and Greece made for their relief. Our Bible has followed this second exposition; to that sense the last of the titles relates, which the apostle here gives to Epaphroditus, calling him the minister of his necessities; that is to say, he who had furnished him with the things necessary for life, amid the discomforts of a prison; by which he testifies that this holy man had faithfully acquitted himself of the office which the Philippians had given him, of carrying to St Paul some charitable assistance in his necessity, as he afterwards more clearly tells us, where he praises them for having taken care of him, and for having communicated to his affliction; and says that he abounds having received what they had sent by him, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God, Philippians 4:14, 18. It is with good reason that St Paul mentions that amongst the glorious eulogiums with which he honours Epaphroditus. For if the Lord will one day publish in the general assembly of men and of angels the little charities that we have shown to the least among believers, the visits and the assistance that we have given them in their necessity, rewarding them in his infinite mercy with the heavenly inheritance, and the crown of a blessed immortality; what a glory was it to Epaphroditus to have served the apostle, the greatest of God's servants, and to have soothed his sorrows on this sad occasion! visiting his prison, softening its inconveniences, and refreshing him by the alms of an entire church! Such are the titles given him by St Paul. 98

II. Let us now consider the grievous sickness into which this holy minister of the Lord fell, in faithfully acquitting himself of his office, and of which the Philippians themselves had heard the sad and painful news: "You have heard that he was sick; and indeed he was sick nigh unto death." If we only regard the natural constitution of the body, it is composed of so frail a substance, and of so many parts differing from one another, and so delicate in their complexion, and requiring so many things for its preservation, and exposed by sin to so many injuries and blows from without, that we have no reason to be astonished that Epaphroditus, after the

troubles of so long a voyage, and the continual labour which he had undergone for the service of St Paul in the work of the Lord, should at last have fallen into so serious a sickness. These are accidents common to men, the consequence of our infirmity, the fruits of our toil and labour, and the forerunners of death, to which our disobedience has subjected us all. But if we lift our eyes higher, and consider on one side the providence of God, which watches over his own in a peculiar manner, often changing in their favour the most fixed order of nature; and on the other the piety and fidelity of Epaphroditus in his ministry, and the gifts of Paul with whom he then lived; we shall doubtless find it very strange that the Lord should have permitted so excellent a man, so usefully occupied in the affairs of his house, to have been afflicted with such an illness; and that this great apostle, who cast out demons, who cured all sorts of ills, who even raised the dead by touching them with his hands, and by the simple words of his lips, could not keep from such a scourge a person who was so dear to him, and that he should have been without the power to prevent the attentions and services of his love being interrupted by this sad accident, or rather that they should have produced so bad an effect, there being much probability that this labour itself had brought this indisposition upon him. It is a doubt which deserves to be cleared up, so much the more, as it often harasses the weak, and furnishes to men of the world a great matter for their abuse of piety, when they see the most excellent servants of Jesus Christ subject to the common troubles of human nature; some tormented with most acute diseases, such as the stone, or the gout; others afflicted with long and wearying infirmities; some plunged into poverty, others persecuted by calumny; some even troubled in their minds, or falling, notwithstanding their piety and innocence, into strange and extraordinary disgrace, or carried out of this life by some sad and tragical accident. Indeed those within the church, after the sufferings of Job, and the trials of Paul and the other apostles, have no longer any cause to consider such accidents as arguments either of the impiety of men, or of the hatred of God towards them.

But if such strange events cannot but give them pain, and in spite of themselves occasion them heaviness and trouble, to console them on the one hand, and to repel on the other the blasphemies of the worldly-minded, we will bring forward on this subject some of the reasons which lead Providence to permit such things. In the first place, then, the tord wishes that his servants should be subject to these afflictions and infirmities, lest the excellence of their piety, and of the graces with which he has clothed them, should raise their vanity. This exercise preserves them in a salutary modesty, and makes them feel the weakness, the misery, and the nothingness of their nature, and prevents their being elated with pride. St Paul teaches us this expressly, when after having related the grace that he had experienced of being lifted up to heaven, and of having there heard "unspeakable words," he adds, that, lest he should be lifted up above measure on account of the excellence of these revelations, there was given him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him; and though he had earnestly asked the Lord to be freed from it, he had not been able to obtain deliverance. Although it is very difficult to define what this affliction was under which the apostle laboured, still

it sufficiently appears that it was very grievous and painful, from his calling it a thorn, and a pointed cross fixed in his flesh, and the buffetings of a messenger of Satan. It was like a cautery, truly vexing, but useful and beneficial, by which this holy man was preserved from pride. For although this apostle and his brethren were great and admirable persons, they were, no withstanding, men, subject to our passions, and capable of falling into the vice common to our nature, and to feel vanity from their own holiness. It is from this kind of temptation Phariseeism sprang, the plague of the old and new church. God, to secure his elect from this misfortune, visits them with divers sorts of afflictions as a counterpoise to keep them low, and to prevent their rising or flying too high. He does it also to show us that they are men, lest seeing them in such full and entire happiness, we should make idols of them, and imagine them to have a nature different from that of others. For it is from hence that idolatry has entered into the world. As soon as we see any thing great or extraordinary in any one, immediately we deify him, and we willingly cry, like the auditors of Herod, "It is the voice," or work, "of a god, and not of a man." Thus the first idolaters changed those of their princes into gods, in whom there shone any valour, or goodness, or uncommon power. And we read in Acts 14:13, that the Lycaonians, astonished at having seen a lame man cured by St Paul and Barnabas, wished to offer sacrifices to them; and that the barbarians of Malta, having seen the former shake off a viper, hanging from his finger, without being injured, said among themselves that he was a god, Acts 28:6. This is the reason why these holy men themselves so eagerly repulsed these false imaginations, so extremely insulting to the Divinity: "Why are your eyes fixed upon us, (said they,) as if by our own power or holiness we had done these things?" Acts 3:12. "Stand up, for we also are men," Acts 10:26. "Why do ye these things? for we are men, subject to like passions with you," Acts 14:15. And St Paul, not wishing to display all the wonders with which God had gratified him, restrains himself, saying, "Lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me," 2 Corinthians 12:6. To deliver us from so dangerous an error, the Lord condescended to be afflicted in every way, and to pass through our greatest infirmities, having placed purposely in our sight these true and indubitable marks of his humanity that we might be assured of it; and it is for the same reason that the Holy Scripture has so carefully set forth the faults of the greatest servants of God, without hiding any of them from us. Still you see that, notwithstanding these warnings which, the Lord has shown us, and the proofs of their weakness, there are people to be found among Christians who yield them a religious worship, and fix their devotion even on the ashes and the relics of their bodies and of their clothes; who pray to them, and invoke them, although dead and absent, presuming on a quality which belongs to God alone, that they know all the secrets of their hearts; and, not satisfied with the saints of antiquity, make new ones daily of those after their death, whom they formerly saw living in all the infirmities of this poor nature, even to the basest and most shameful; and, that they may not appear to do so without some colour, forge miracles, the credit of which they impute to them; so strong in the minds of men is that empty desire to deify all that appears to them to

surpass their own common standard. God then was graciously pleased to root out this crying evil by the afflictions and calamities with which he visited his servants.

But he also acts thus for another reason, that the wonders of his power may shine gloriously, when with such weak instruments, and which are not exempt from any of our miseries, he still does not fail to perform his work. And this is what the apostle means, when he tells us that he and his companions had the treasure of the gospel "in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of *God*, and not of *us*," 2 Corinthians 4:7. And elsewhere, when he asked to be delivered from the messenger of Satan, which buffeted him, he was answered, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness," 2 Corinthians 12:9. It shines in your weakness. The shadows of your afflictions and sufferings give a brilliancy to my power, which appears so much the brighter, the more weak and frail the instruments which it uses. For as the skill of a pilot is more clearly seen in the guidance of a bad vessel among banks and breakers, than if he piloted some good ship, well equipped in a safe sea without danger; so is it evident that the power and wisdom of God are more clearly and wonderfully shown, when he preserves and guides to the completion of his plans his poor believers, weak and subject as they are to the sufferings and miseries of other men, than if, stripping them of their vileness, and clothing them from thence with an immortal nature, incapable of suffering, he employed them thus fitted in his work. Besides, he acts thus for the praise of believers themselves, afflictions justifying their piety, and making its lustre appear as well as its firmness in the eyes of men and angels. It remains subject to calumny whilst in prosperity. Satan desires to make it pass for hypocrisy, and for a mercenary service, as if they only loved God because he spared them. It is what he formerly said of Job, that he only feared the Lord because he had every where encompassed him with a hedge of providence and blessing, and that he would doubtless change his piety into blasphemy if God were to strike him. To confound this malice, the Lord gave up to him the property and health of his servant, and caused his faith and his love to be seen by his constancy in the midst of these severe trials. Sickness, poverty, persecution, and other sufferings, are as it were the crucible of God. He makes believers pass through this fire, that their piety being preserved, and that coming out of it more pure and brilliant, every one may be forced to acknowledge their value; and this is what we are taught by the apostle St Peter, saying that the trial of our faith in the midst of temptations is much more precious than gold which perishes, and though it be tried with fire shall turn "to praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ," 1 Peter 1:7. For besides that this manifestation is very honourable to us, and very useful to our neighbours in this world, it is necessary to justify in the last day the equity and righteousness of the judgment of God, making it clearly seen that those to whom he will give heaven and immortality are truly believers. St Paul teaches it to us, when he says that their patience and faith in afflictions is a manifest demonstration of the righteous judgment of God, that they may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, as also that it is a righteous thing in God to render affliction to those who trouble them, and rest to those who are troubled, 2 Thessalonians 5:6–7. For

besides these trials tending to the praise of believers, they are also useful for their sanctification. They detach their hearts from earth, and make them feel the vanity and misery of this world. They warn them of the weakness and mortality of their nature, and by these holy thoughts mortify any desires they might have for the lusts of the world, and oblige them, after having renounced them, to take their flight towards heaven, there to embrace the Lord Jesus, and seek in him alone all their happiness, with more ardour and zeal than ever. Seeing and feeling the nothingness of this life, which is but a vain shadow, they think of another, which is spiritual and immortal, and of the resurrection, which is the door of it, and of heaven, which is its home, to die henceforth to the world, and to live to Jesus only. This is what David acknowledges, when he sings, that it is good for him to have been afflicted, that before he was afflicted he went astray, "but now (says he to the Lord) have I kept thy word," Psalm 119:67. For these and similar reasons God permits believers sometimes to fall into great disgrace according to the flesh, and to them must be referred the painful and dangerous sickness with which he visited Epaphroditus, notwithstanding his zeal and fidelity in the execution of his office. Hence it also appears why the apostle did not preserve him from it. For since it was not the wish and particular desire of Paul, but the will of the Lord, which ruled and rendered efficacious the virtue of the cures and miracles with which he had favoured him, dispensing them or not, according as it was suitable for the interests of his glory, we must not be astonished that he should not have displayed it on a man whom God pleased to visit with sickness. For the same reason, this grace of the apostle had no power, either to deliver himself from the pricking thorn which was fixed in his flesh, nor to cure Timothy of his stomach complaints and other infirmities, under which he continually suffered, 1 Timothy 5:23. For the power of miracles was given at the beginning, not to oppose the institutions of God, or to trouble the order of his regulations, but to confound ungodliness, to conquer incredulity, and to plant and establish the faith of the gospel in the world.

III. I come now to the cure of Epaphroditus. His illness had been extreme, as St Paul shows in saying that he had been near unto death: "But God (adds he) had pity on him; and not on him only, but also on me, that I should not have sorrow upon sorrow." It is thus that the Lord often acts towards his own, allowing them to descend to the last degree of sorrow, to relieve them afterwards from it with greater eclat and glory. Hezekiah was brought to the gates of the grave, as he says, and considered his life cut off, when God set him again on foot, and added to his life fifteen years. How often did he permit David to fall into the extremity of anguish! This proceeding is very suitable both for us and for him. For us, that our faith may be so much the better exercised, the extremity of the danger firing our zeal, and warming our desires in our vows and prayers. For him also. The greater is our danger, and to all appearance without resource, the more glorious is the power which he displays in delivering us from it. St Paul here entirely attributes to him the cure of Epaphroditus, whether he had sent it immediately from heaven, or, to procure it, had blessed the remedies or the medicine, or the hands of St Paul, as some imagine. For in whatever way health may be restored to us, either by the use

of means or without them, it is always the work of God, and second causes never ought to obscure his glory, since we know that it is he who gives them, by the secret power of his blessing, whatever efficacy they have. But the apostle does not simply say that the cure of Epaphroditus was the effect of the power of God. He says that it was a gift of his mercy, "God had pity on him." How could that be, seeing it would only prolong his sufferings, and the time of his misery? and that, on the contrary, to separate him from this body, was to draw him out of prison, and from a sad and dangerous combat, to place him in the enjoyment of celestial light? I acknowledge that our sojourn on earth is accompanied with many infirmities and evils, and that, taking it altogether, it is infinitely better for us to be with Christ, as the apostle tells us, than to languish here out of his sanctuary. But all this does not oppose the idea, that this life, considered in itself, away from this comparison, is an excellent gift of God, and a present of his mercy, particularly to those who (like Epaphroditus) possess it in Jesus Christ, and to whom it is gain to live, no less than to die. Added to which, the true believer, such as he was, has more regard to the glory of God and the good of the church, than to his own satisfaction; and considering life in this sense, that it is useful to one or both of these objects, he may desire it, to have the means of finishing his course, and the work committed to him. If such were the desire of Epaphroditus, (as it might lawfully have been,) who cannot see that his cure was an effect of Divine mercy, whose property is to hear our prayers, and to grant us what we ask?

But besides, St Paul here recognises the goodness of God towards himself: "He had also pity on me, (says he,) that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow." He does not conceal the fact, that the death of his dear fellow labourer would have been very bitter, and would have overwhelmed him with a new trouble; by which he again acknowledges that his present situation in the bonds of Nero was a cause of sadness. For the patience and courage of the saints in afflictions, is not a proud insensibility, such as some of the pagan philosophers demanded in their wise men, desiring that they should feel no sentiment of grief or sorrow. This is to despoil man of his nature, and to turn him into stone or brass. Christian piety *tempers* the passions, but it does not *eradicate* them. It *softens* and *tranquillizes*, but it does not *extinguish* them. To render man courageous it does not make him insensible. It leaves him the innocent and necessary feelings of nature. St Paul felt the inconveniences of his prison, the loss of his liberty, and that it took from him the means of going hither and thither to sow in the ministry of the gospel. But however grievous these things were to him, he supported them, nevertheless, courageously; the will of God, and other considerations of religion, softening the feeling, and leading all the desires of his nature captive under the yoke of the Lord. It is properly in that that the sacrifice of our obedience consists, when we present to God a heart not insensible to his chastisements, but tamed and subdued to suffer them with patience and resignation, and to submit to his will both our tears and sorrows. St Paul was touched in the same way with the sickness of his friend, and would have been still more so by his death; but without murmuring or resistance, ruling his sorrows and his feelings in such a way that he had finally settled and subdued them

to the orders of his Master. Thus, elsewhere, he does not positively forbid believers to weep for the death of friends in Christ, but not to weep excessively, or to suffer in the manner of those who had no hope, 1 Thessalonians 4:13. In the first place, the death of every man, whoever he may be, is a sad thing, and frightful in itself; an effect of sin, and of the wrath of God against human nature; hence the grave of Lazarus drew tears even from the eyes of the Saviour of the world. The death of a dear friend, such as Epaphroditus was to St Paul, is still more sad; for besides the general horror that it occasions, it deprives us of the pleasure of his conversation and of his good services. But we cannot doubt that the apostle looked more to the interests of the church than to his own, in the death of Epaphroditus, which would have taken from the Philippians an excellent pastor, whom it would have been difficult, or perhaps even impossible, worthily to replace, the number of similar labourers always being very small. It is this consideration, more than any other, which would have caused the sadness which the apostle confesses he should have felt at this loss.

IV. This reason led him to send him back to them quickly as soon as he was well; in which the feelings of Epaphroditus were conformed to his own. For this good servant of God, knowing that the news of his malady had much grieved the church of the Philippians, and touched with reciprocal love, desired, as soon as he was in health, to see them again, that he might change their sorrow into joy: "For (says the apostle) he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because you had heard that he had been ill." Which shall we most admire, the affection of the flock towards their shepherd, or the love of the shepherd towards his flock? Although distant and far separated, they have the same mind, the same desires, the same feelings. It is one of the miracles of love which unites and blends thus what distance of place in vain separates. The Philippians love and so tenderly honour Epaphroditus, that they feel his illness as much as he did himself, as soon as they heard of it. Epaphroditus so cordially loves the Philippians, that the sorrow which his illness had occasioned them cause him more anguish than he felt from his own malady. He longs for them all with a very remarkable affection, and can have no rest until his presence shall have dried up their tears, and drawn their minds from the pain they had felt. O happy churches which have such pastors! O happy pastors who have such churches! What in the world is sweeter, more beautiful, more pleasing to God, or more beneficial to men, than this holy union and sympathy of the affections? What is the sorrow that it cannot soften? or the pain that it cannot soothe? or the anxiety that it cannot console? The apostle, that he might not injure it, nor deprive either of their full satisfaction, consents to the departure of Epaphroditus, and obliged by these necessary reasons, sends their dear pastor back to the Philippians, rather preferring to deprive himself of the good services which he rendered to him at this difficult period, than to see him languish in that secret anxiety which the absence from his beloved flock occasioned him. "I sent him therefore (says the apostle) the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful." He himself also enters into the fellowship of their joy: he takes so lively a share in it that he forgets his own interests. See, I pray you, my brethren, in

this example, the power of love, and how absolute the empire which it exercises in the minds of believers. When Epaphroditus shall be gone, says he, "I shall be less sorrowful." What then, O holy apostle? Does the presence of such an excellent man whom you esteem and love so much give you sorrow? Is his society wearisome? Are those offices and duties which he has performed towards you with such
101 kindness and attention become painful to you? Yes, he replies, and his absence (who would think it?) will bring me comfort; and, what is still stranger, it is in part the love itself that I bear him which makes me wish for his departure; for, whilst with me, he cannot be with that beloved flock, by which he is so ardently desired, and which he himself longs for, and where his presence is no less necessary than it is wished. I am sorry that consideration for me takes him from them, and that the offices which he renders me should prevent his acquitting himself of those which he owes to his Philippians. A consideration which costs so much is painful to me; I cannot enjoy it without grief, and it is to comfort myself that I send him back. It is not simply for the satisfaction of the Philippians, it is also for my own. This is, dear brethren, the true meaning of these words of the apostle.

V. After having thus explained the reason of his sending Epaphroditus back, he finally recommends him to his flock: "Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness." "In the Lord that is to say, for the love of the Lord, as his faithful servant, whom he has given you, whose life he has preserved, and whom he restores to you safe and sound for your preservation and edification. This is what Jesus Christ calls receiving some one in his name: "Whosoever receiveth one of these little ones in my name receiveth me," Mark 9:37. Here he regulates the manner in which they ought to welcome their pastor, not according to the fashion of the men of the world, with festivals and carnal rejoicings, but as becometh saints, with reverence and spiritual love, cherishing him, and respecting in his person the Lord, of whom he is the servant. "With all joy;" that is to say, with full and perfect content, with a pure and sincere joy, which fills the whole heart, so to speak, as he elsewhere does, where he says, "Though I may have all faith," that is to say, a very complete faith, even to "remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing," 1 Corinthians 13:2. But from Epaphroditus individually the apostle extends his order to all good and faithful pastors in general: "Hold such in reputation." Look upon them and cherish them as pearls and precious jewels, drawn from the treasures of God for the consolation and salvation of your souls. The more scarce they are, the more ought they to be esteemed. It is the will of God who gives them to us, and who often very severely punishes those who despise them, sending them bad and faithless ones, such as deserve their contempt. But the common edification of the church compels us also to the same duty, there being nothing which more conduces to it than the lawful authority of good pastors, or which does more harm than bad ones. And although the Philippians had sufficiently known the value of Epaphroditus by their own experience, and also what the apostle had just said sufficiently testified it, still, not being able to satisfy himself in the praise of this good man, and still more to draw upon him the hearts and affections of his flock, he further dilates on his zeal and fidelity, adding, in the last verse of this chapter, "that for the work of Christ

he had been nigh unto death, not regarding his life to supply the Philippians' lack of service to him." He does not mean that the Philippians had failed in affection towards him. On the contrary, he praises them for their love in many places of this Epistle. But their absence prevented their rendering him in his bonds the services which they owed him, and which they would willingly have yielded if they had been present; it neither being possible nor convenient that a whole church should transport itself to Rome for this purpose. It is, then, of this want that he speaks, and which Epaphroditus had endeavoured to supply; exerting all his strength in the service of the apostle, that he himself might, in some measure, supply whatever consolation the whole church would have given him had it been on the spot. This is what he also calls "the work of the Lord," for two reasons: First, Because to serve his ministers is to serve Jesus Christ, as he declares in many places: "He who receiveth you receiveth me, and whatsoever you have done to one of these little ones you have done to me also." Secondly, Because it is a work that the Lord has commanded us, wishing that we should honour and succour in a peculiar manner those who suffer for his name, and especially the ministers of his word. He says, then, that Epaphroditus, to acquit himself worthily of this duty, had not had any regard to his own life, and had been nigh unto death. Some understand by this the danger in which he had been by visiting the apostle, drawing upon himself thereby the hatred and cruelty of the ministers of Nero, who retained him in prison; as we know that tyrants often seize and condemn to death those who wish to favour or comfort believers, whom they persecute for the gospel's sake. But it appears from the last chapter of the Acts, and from this Epistle itself, that Rome did not then exercise towards St Paul that inhumanity which she has since used, and still uses at this time, towards the faithful servants of God; and the end of this text clearly shows that it must relate here to the illness of Epaphroditus, which he had drawn upon himself by too much labour, preferring rather to fail in the attention which he owed to his own health than in the services which he was obliged to yield to St Paul; so that his illness itself was both the effect and sign of his piety. For though there is no merit in being ill, there is much in not sparing oneself for the service of Christ.

Such, dear brethren, is our exposition of this text. It remains to apply it to our own profit; and that so holy and salutary a doctrine should not uselessly reach our ears, let us imprint upon our hearts the images of the three examples which are set before us, in Epaphroditus, the Philippians, and St Paul. Let us contemplate and imitate them, let us form the affections of our minds, and the actions of our life, after these excellent models.

The illness of Epaphroditus teaches us, in the first place, not to judge of men by the accidents which befall them; as if affliction and disgrace were the necessary marks of a bad cause. Let us remember the warning of the prophet, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor," Psalm 41:1. Innocence is not always in prosperity, and piety often falls into great calamities; God permitting it to be so for the reasons explained above. And as we should act with this equity to others, we ought also to have it towards ourselves. Never let the illnesses with which God visits us either

make us doubt his love or our election. He has truly promised us in this world his friendship, his peace, the joy of his Spirit, and the assistance of his Christ, and in another immortality. But he no where promises that we shall be exempted from the evils and miseries of the present life. He declares to us, on the contrary, that we shall be more subject to them than others. Let us then receive these strokes from his hand with patience and gentleness of mind, and instead of murmuring or hardening ourselves under the rod, let us profit by it as a salutary correction and an honourable trial; learning from it the vanity of this life, and of all the good that it possesses, thinking rightly of the infirmity of our nature, and of death, which will assuredly destroy it, to withdraw our affections from earth, to renounce vice and its lusts, and to aspire only after a blessed immortality, the end and prize of our holy calling. And as to your life, if it is useful, either to the church or to your families, I do not forbid you to desire it; I simply wish that you would ask it from God, and expect it from his mercy alone, who brings to the tomb, and lifts you from it, when he will; and that, when you have recovered your health, you would ascribe to his goodness all the glory of your cure, devoutly consecrating to his service all the fruits of a life which you only hold from his grace.

102

But while the illness of Epaphroditus gives us this lesson, the cause whence it arose teaches us another, not less necessary. For he had gained it in the work of the Lord. O happy sickness, which carries its consolation with it! for it is not possible that so good and so holy a cause should produce a bad effect. How different from this are our diseases, which are mostly the consequences of our vices, the effects of our intemperance, our vanity, or our avarice! as those of whom Job said, "whose bones are full of the sins of their youth," Job 20:11; bad fruits of a bad tree; shameful effects of an evil cause. Believers, if it is not possible that you should be exempt from infirmities and indispositions, order your life in such a manner that, while suffering them, you may have the consolation of knowing that it is in the service of God, and not in that of the world; that it is the work of Christ, and not that of Satan, or of vice, which has drawn them upon you. It is true that, strictly speaking, we can and ought to take care of our life, so moderating the lawful labours of our calling that they should not injure our health. But where the service of God calls us, we must put every thing under our feet, and, like the blessed Epaphroditus, courageously hazard health and life, and have no regard to either, rather than fail in the work of our Master. The illnesses caught, the deaths endured, with such a good design and for so holy a cause, are martyrdoms before God, which he will assuredly crown with abundant consolation and immortal glory!

But besides these general lessons, Epaphroditus especially warns pastors to cherish a warm affection for their flocks, sensibly to feel their sorrows, and to hold nothing so dear as their consolation. It was, doubtless, a very great and pleasing satisfaction to Epaphroditus to be with St Paul, to listen to his heavenly words, and to see his noble bonds. But as soon as he knew that the report of his sickness had put his church in pain, he was willing to leave all to restore it to joy. How also, believers, does both the example of the Philippians, and the command of the apostle to them to receive Epaphroditus with joy in the Lord, oblige you to

share the good and bad fortune of your pastors, to compassionate their sorrows, to rejoice in their happiness, and by love and cordial reverence to soften all the bitterness of so laborious an office!

Finally, The example of St Paul, who cheerfully yielded to the edification of the Philippians every advantage and pleasure which he received from the presence of Epaphroditus, shows to both mutually, that there is nothing so dear to us that we should not willingly give up to the interests of the church, reckoning our losses gain, when they are needful for the consolation of our brethren; remembering the love of the Lord Jesus, who, being rich, became poor, and, being the King of glory, submitted to the greatest shame, that he might enrich and glorify us. To him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, blessed for ever, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Preached at Charenton,
4th August, 1641.

103

DEDICATION.
TO MADAME DE DANGEAU.

MADAME,

THESE sermons would have belonged to your late mother, Madame la Mareschale de la Force, as a continuation of those which I have already presented to the public under her patronage; but since it has pleased God to take her to the repose of his heavenly kingdom, where she has no longer need of our feeble assistance, seeing fully and clearly in the great Source of light those Divine truths which we can behold only through a thick veil, and can explain only in a stammering tongue, I consider myself obliged, Madame, by all means, to dedicate my little work to you. And if that happy spirit, in the enjoyment of the felicity she now possesses, according to her hope and the promise of her Lord, can have any knowledge of the events which occur on earth, I feel assured she will approve my choice, and rejoice to see the page formerly destined for her name occupied by yours. For not only are you of her blood, and the eldest of the children she has left behind, but you also inherit her virtues. You assemble the church in your house, as she was wont in her lifetime, and, like her, you there strengthen its confidence in God and the knowledge of his word. You train up the children which God has given you, and form them for his service by diligent instruction, and by the example of a holy life. You carefully preserve the sacred deposit of faith which (to speak with Paul) dwelt first in your ancestors, and especially in that great hero, whose praise is in the world and in the church, Monsiegneur du Plessis, your grandfather. I therefore deem it my duty to honour virtues which flourish on so illustrious a stem, and spread a pure and sweet odour through the house of God. Be pleased, then, Madame, to receive this book which I present to you, not only as the heiress of your late mother, to whom it belonged, but also as a sincere testimonial of the esteem which I feel towards you, and of the ardent desire I have to promote the edification of yourself and all your family as far as I am able.

To God I commend you in my prayers, and remain inviolably,

Madame,

Your humble and obedient servant,

Paris, April 14th, 1647 DAILLÉ.

CHAPTER 3.
SERMON XVII

VERSE 1–3.

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

As there is no doctrine in the world more contrary to the kingdom and interests of Satan than the gospel of Jesus Christ, so there is none which that mortal enemy of the human race detests and combats more cruelly. Besides the persecutions that he raises from without against this Divine truth, he attacks it still more from within by his seductive artifices, inspiring its ministers with various errors, in order to corrupt the purity of the sacred word, and thereby render it ineffectual to the salvation of men.

This the apostle foretold to the Corinthians, and the experience of all ages has verified the prediction, "There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved among you may be made manifest," 1 Corinthians 11:19. And he also warned the Ephesians, that "after his departure would grievous wolves thrust themselves in among them, not sparing the flock; and that even of themselves would men arise, speaking perverse things, in order to draw away disciples after them," Acts 20:29–30. In fact, we learn from the Epistles of this holy man, that scarcely had he quitted the churches he had established among the nations, when false teachers immediately presented themselves, to tempt them and corrupt their faith. Amongst others, he complains often of the Jews, who, from the commencement of Christianity, used every effort to confound the gospel with the law, and mingle Moses with Jesus Christ; endeavouring, under various plausible pretences, to introduce among believers circumcision, and the observance of the other ceremonies of the Old Testament. It was these miserable people who had tainted the churches of Galatia with the pernicious leaven of their false doctrine, as appears by the divine Epistle addressed to them by St Paul, wherein that true servant of God, burning with zeal for the honour of his Lord, argues at some length against those impostors with apostolic plainness and vehemence. They had

also tempted the Philippians, although without success, those believers having courageously resisted their seductions, and constantly maintained the doctrine of St Paul in all its purity. But as love is always full of apprehension, the apostle, fearing that the arts of those deceivers might at length make some impression on the hearts of his dear disciples, warns them in this chapter to stand on their guard. Hitherto he had armed their faith against persecution and the vices of the world, now he fortifies it against the assaults of error. And as in the former part of this Epistle he presents to them Jesus Christ, in whose humiliation and glory we have abundance of consolations in affliction and of preservatives against sin; so in this second he again sets him forth as the inexhaustible source of justice and truth, in opposition to all the seductions of error. He also declares to them his own example, who, having every advantage which those false teachers possessed, and in a much higher degree than they, had, nevertheless, voluntarily renounced all to be found in Jesus Christ. Then, having exhorted the Philippians to modesty, concord, and the imitation of his conduct and conversation, and having manifested the filthiness of those evil-doers who thought only of their belly and the pleasures of the flesh; he concludes, by setting before their eyes the dignity of Christians, and the excellence of their condition who have no inheritance on earth, but are citizens of heaven, from whence they expect Christ their Lord, and his blessed immortality.

This, dear brethren, is the subject and summary of this chapter, which shall be hereafter, if it please God, matter for our discourses. At present, we shall endeavour to explain to you the first part, contained in the three verses you have just heard: and, to proceed with order, we shall consider, First, The consolation given by the apostle to the Philippians at the commencement, which is, as it were, the conclusion of the whole preceding chapter, and the foundation of the present: "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord."

Then, Secondly, Follows a brief excuse which he makes to them for teaching them often the same things: "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe."

Thirdly, We shall see the grave and solemn warning he gives them to beware of false apostles: "Beware of dogs, beware of evil-workers, beware of the concision."

And fourth and lastly, We shall consider the reasons which he adds: "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

I. Touching the first point, where the apostle commands the Philippians to "rejoice in the Lord," some have considered that it relates simply to what had been said in the preceding chapter respecting the mission, the recovery, and the zeal of Epaphroditus, and to his own contentment in the midst of bonds, and firm resolution to live or die joyfully for the gospel. As though he had said to these believers, Since your affairs and mine are in this state, nothing remains but that you should be content, and extract from these mercies of God a pure and spiritual joy worthy of that heavenly Sovereign and Lord whom you serve. But I consider that, besides this, it relates principally to what he had before taught of the humiliation of Christ, and the glory to which he had been raised, and to the

providence with which he governs all things; concluding from thence, that since they have the honour of belonging to this sovereign Lord, and of being in him by faith in his gospel, they might henceforth be at rest, rejoicing in the possession of so rich a treasure, without being astonished or afflicted at the misfortunes which might happen to them, or with which others might threaten them. This is signified by the word "finally," which he uses at the commencement to unite this and the preceding chapter; that, since they are built upon Jesus Christ, and their salvation is secure in him, they have now but to persevere with constancy, and to rejoice during the remainder of their life with that perfect peace which such a certainty of bliss is calculated to produce in their hearts; seeking and finding in Christ that consolation in distress, and that peace and joy, which their souls require in the midst of so many trials. For Satan, by the troubles he raises up for believers, endeavours to imbitter every feeling, and render the name and the gospel of Christ unpleasing. But the apostle desires that we should so taste the grace of God, that this holy feeling should sweeten every thing, and render us joyful in all the doubts, trials, and afflictions of this life. Indeed, if we have Jesus Christ truly dwelling in our hearts by faith, no grief, no labour, no calamity is capable of hurting us, or of destroying our peace. For in him is abundantly found a fulness of every good, and a deliverance from every evil. Let the world and the devil take away from the believer every thing he holds dear on earth, let them plunge him into the most dreadful evils,—they cannot take away his joy, because Jesus Christ, the Prince of peace, the Father everlasting, the Author of all grace, dwells in him; and he preserves all those who possess him in the fires, and even in death itself; and, in spite of the efforts of their enemies, defends and maintains in them the life, happiness, and immortality which he gave them.

Rejoice then in him, beloved brethren; shut your eyes to all other objects, and regard none but this. Consider the grace that Christ has given you, and it is impossible but that the consideration must bring with it solid and true peace. This Saviour has appeased the wrath of God; he has rendered him propitious and favourable to you; he has abolished the curse of the law; he has conquered death; he has opened heaven to you; he has made you the children of God, brethren and fellow citizens with angels; he has united himself to you, having mingled his blood and spirit with yours; so that henceforth you are co#heirs with him, "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;" you partake of his kingdom and glory. But we shall have (with God's help) another opportunity of treating more fully on the subject of the Christian's joy, when, in the following chapter, we shall find the apostle repeating the same command to us in stronger terms: "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice."

For the present, I will only add that St Paul here lays the foundation of the exhortation to the Philippians which follows, to beware of false teachers of the circumcision; it being evident that if these believers rejoice in the Lord as ne 105
commands them, if they rely on him as on a sure foundation, where they can enjoy true peace, it will be in vain that these people press them to mingle the observances of Moses with the gospel; for all these additional ceremonies, whether they be of

Moses or of others, which false teachers are continually endeavouring to introduce into the religion of Christians, proceed purely from the distaste which they have for Christ. It appears to them that faith is too simple and naked a thing, and therefore they smother it with their own inventions, and accuse those who content themselves with Christ alone of spoiling religion of her necessary ornaments. This was the sin of the Israelites in the desert, who were disgusted with the manna sent from God, as meagre food, and coveted the flesh and onions of Egypt. These Jews also, of whom the apostle here complains, despised like them the simplicity of the Lord Jesus, the true Bread which came down from heaven, and wished to unite with him Moses and a carnal service. And from the same root springs the disordered appetite of those who, in the present day, add to the gospel of Jesus so many traditions and human ceremonies.

Very wisely, therefore, does the apostle, both here and in his Epistle to the Colossians, shield believers from this snare, by setting forth Jesus Christ as the source of joy, the treasury of all good, which contains in its simplicity every grace of which we stand in need, and where dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

II. Having laid the foundation, he goes on to the warning which he gives them to beware of false teachers. But, first, he makes a short preface, which we now, in the second place, consider: "To write the same things unto you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe."

These "things," of which he speaks, may relate generally to all the points of doctrine on which he ad already dwelt in this Epistle, or to those on which he might hereafter dwell. But it seems best to restrict them especially to the warning which he was about to give the Philippians to beware of the corruptions of false teachers. It is unnecessary to suppose he had written any previous letter to them, in which he had treated of the same subject. It is sufficient that he had spoken of it when with them, recommending them, as he did his other disciples, not to lend an ear to those impostors who wished to replace Christians under the yoke of the Mosaic law. He therefore replies to an idea that may have arisen in their minds, that it was useless to take the trouble of repeating in his letter the same warning which he had so often given them in word. No, says he to the believers, it is neither grievous to me, nor useless to you, that I should frequently teach the same thing. It rather insures your safety. This repetition may serve to place your faith out of danger, and secure it at all points against the assaults and temptations of the enemy. For the dulness of our minds, in every thing regarding salvation, is such, that we easily pass over that which is told us but once, or we imagine that at least it is not a matter of any consequence. Fearing, therefore, that his silence might place the faith of the Philippians in danger, the apostle is not ashamed to reiterate the warnings which they had formerly heard from him. And in thus acting he gives an excellent lesson to those in the church who preach, and to those who hear, not to be weary; the former with teaching, the latter with hearing, oftentimes the same things.

As for the first, since God has established them pastors of his flock, it is not enough that they present to the sheep the pasture of the heavenly word once or twice, or that they chase away once or twice the wolf from the fold. They must

continue these duties to the end without weariness. For as the enemy watches night and day for the destruction of the church; as he is never discouraged, but returns again and again, presenting himself boldly, and incessantly sounding in our ears the same lies and seductions; it is but reasonable that we should oppose indefatigable vigilance to his obstinate effrontery, and the firmness of the truth to the importunity of his lies; and that we should have as much ardour and zeal for your salvation as he has for your ruin.

And as for you, believers, instead of being wearied with our continual reiteration of your duties, O take it in good part, remembering that it is for your greater security that we thus act towards you. Let not your ears be so refined that they cannot endure to hear a thing repeated more than once. Alas! the life of the majority too visibly proves, that however often truth may have been set before them, it has not yet been well understood. We cannot therefore explain too often what you do not yet comprehend; and if the gospel of Christ cannot be too much in our hearts, it is evident it cannot be too often in our mouths.

III. But the apostle, having now secured the attention of the Philippians, gives them a holy and salutary warning against the corruptions of false teachers, in these words: "Beware of dogs, beware of evil-workers, beware of the concision." We have already said, that he here alludes to those among the converted Jews, who considered the observance of the Mosaic law and its ceremonies, as circumcision, &c., to be necessary before Christians could be justified in the sight of God. That they are the same against whom he argues at length in the Epistles to the Galatians and Colossians, is manifest from the words and ideas which he here uses; it being evident that they are perfectly descriptive of these people, and cannot relate to others. He describes them especially by three remarkable appellations:

First, "Dogs."

Secondly, "Evil-workers;" and,

Thirdly, "The concision."

The "dog" is in all languages the image and symbol of impudence, and the most ancient of heathen poets[1] gives to a man the eyes of a dog to signify extreme impudence, because the countenance, and particularly the eye, should be the seat of bashfulness. Scripture, also, uses the name of this animal as a term of reproach, to describe a profane person, a hardened sinner, who sells himself a slave to all kinds of vice without shame before God or man. It is in this sense the word is used in Matthew 7:15, where our Lord forbids his disciples to give "holy things to the dogs and also in Revelation 22:15, where the Holy Spirit banishes from the celestial city "dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whatsoever loveth and maketh a lie." In the book of Proverbs, chapter 26:11, and in the Second Epistle of Peter, those who fall many times into the same wickedness are compared to "dogs:" "As the dog returneth to his own vomit again, so doth the fool to his folly." And our Lord gives the same name to pagans, who live far from communion with God and his people, when he says to the Canaanitish woman, "It

1 Homer.

is not meet to take the children's bread, and give it to the dogs," Matthew 15:26, i. e. on account of their ignorance, brutality, and profaneness. The law placed the dog among unclean animals, so that even the money procured by the sale of a dog was
106 an abomination to the Lord, Deuteronomy 23:18. All these reasons prove that the apostle in this place, under the general word "dogs," would describe false teachers. For their impudence was evident, in that they gave the lie boldly to the real servants of God, and dared to reestablish what Christ had abolished. They had also fallen back into their original error, for, from Jews having become Christians, they had again returned to Judaism, wishing to mix it with the gospel. And lastly, they had thrown themselves by this out of communion with God, and out of his church, none being qualified to have part therein but those "who worship him in spirit and in truth." But it is very likely that, in calling them "dogs," St Paul had especial reference to that filthy and shameful gluttony which he afterwards, at the close of this chapter, so expressly blames, saying, "Whose belly is their god, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things, who are enemies of the cross of Christ." From whence it appears, that however fair and specious the pretensions of these people might be, yet, in reality, they were guided only by the flesh and the belly. For it is this profane and sensual brutality which is specially pointed out by the name here given them of "dogs," as though he would say that they were but filthy and gluttonous beasts, who railed against wholesome doctrine that they might the more indulge the lusts of the flesh.

Isaiah also calls the false teachers of his day "greedy dogs which can never have enough," Isaiah 56:11.

The second title the apostle gives them is that of "evil-workers." I would not absolutely deny that in naming them thus, he might not have reference to that which these people were incessantly crying, Works, works, pretending that through them alone man can be justified before God. But it certainly appears to me more probable that St Paul intends simply to blame them, and to reject the pains they took to preach, and to run hither and thither, because it was done with a bad design, and still worse success, both with regard to themselves and to others. They laboured—but it was to tear up that which had been well and happily planted, and to sow the seeds of dissension and error. They laboured—but it was for the ruin of souls, like Satan, who disquiets the world, and prowls around the church to tempt men and draw them into perdition; or like the scribes and Pharisees, who compassed sea and land but to render their proselytes doubly the children of hell. For there are always in the world numbers of these workers, who give themselves much trouble to do that which is of no value, and who, under pretence of edifying the church, embroil and ruin every thing. Unhappy people! who, after so much time and trouble lost in these visionary schemes, reap no other fruit than their own damnation, and the utter confusion of those who were carried away by their impostures. It would be infinitely better, both for themselves and others, that they should remain all their life with their arms crossed in the most profound indolence, than consume themselves thus by labouring in a bad cause.

Lastly, the apostle calls these false teachers "the concision:" "Beware of the

concision." This word is not in use in our language. But our Bibles have necessarily retained it, in order, in some measure, to represent the elegance and grace of the original term, and to preserve the resemblance which exists between the word signifying circumcision and that which the apostle here uses, which signifies to retrench, cut off, tear away; and which is rendered "concision," from a Latin word, approaching as you see to circumcision. These false teachers retained the Mosaic ceremonial, and especially circumcision, the seal of the old covenant, the livery and mark of those who had part therein, of such great importance under the law, that even the sabbath, one of the most ancient ceremonies of the primitive race, yielded to it, it being permitted to circumcise infants on the sabbath day (all other work or manual labour being forbidden) when it happened that this was the eighth day from the birth of the child. On this account the whole Jewish nation is frequently called "the circumcision," from its most ancient and necessary mark. For this reason those false teachers who retained the custom among the Christians might be called by this name, and perhaps they gloried in it, calling themselves and those of their sect "the circumcision," as though none but they were in covenant with God. St Paul, to put down their presumption, instead of this glorious name of circumcision, gives them another, nearly approaching to it in sound, and in the number of syllables, but very distinct in sense; for he calls them "the concision," that is, *the cut off. the diminished ones*, and not "the circumcision;" meaning to show, that by their doctrine and the practice of this ceremony, instead of placing men in covenant with the Lord, they cut them off, and unhappily divided the church, instead of uniting it to the Saviour; this mark which they made in the bodies of their miserable disciples being no longer, as formerly, under the old covenant, the sign of their renunciation of the sins of the flesh, but rather a sign and seal of their renunciation of Christ, and of the wounds and divisions which they were making in Christianity. It is a mode of expression somewhat similar to that of some learned writers of the church of Rome, who, describing the lives of some of their popes, which they acknowledge to have been very wicked and pernicious to the church, call them not apostolical, (which is the title usually given to the popes,) but *apostatical*.[1]

Such was also the witty saying of a learned man of our nation,[2] who, speaking of Pope Boniface VIII., well known for his violence against this kingdom, called him *Maliface* instead of *Boniface*. This figure of speech is not uncommon in the best authors, and teachers of rhetoric call it paronomasia. It is thus therefore that St Paul calls these false judaizing teachers "the concision," and not "the circumcision." Upon which we have three remarks to make before we pass on; the first upon the words, and the two others on the things themselves. And, first, with regard to the words; this example teaches us that the instruments of the Holy Spirit disdain not that elegance which allusions and the affinity of words give to language, provided they consist with decency and gravity, and do not fall into affectation

1 Genebrard in his Chronicle, A. D. 901.
2 M. Servin.

and buffoonery, both of which are unworthy of an honest man, and still more so of a servant of God. Thus we find that elsewhere the apostle often, with beauty and elegance, contrasts various words and ideas with their opposites, and that even sometimes he seeks to ornament his language by allusions from the Hebrew and Syriac: as, for example, when he says, "the praise of a real Jew is of God," Romans 5:29, he evidently alludes to the origin of the name "Jew," which in Hebrew signifies *praise*; and in another place, where he says "our afflictions work out for us a weight of glory," 1 Corinthians 4:17, he, without doubt, makes allusion to the word "glory" in the Syriac, where it signifies *weight* or *heaviness*. The prophet Isaiah, among the writers of the Old Testament, makes such frequent use of these ornaments, that there is scarcely one of the writers of his age whose language is so flowery, and so abundant in figures and allusions. From whence it appears how unreasonable those are who wish to banish these elegancies from the words and writings of God's servants.

107

But we must, secondly, remark, most carefully, the inutility, or, to speak plainly, the poison, of those things which are pressed into religion without the command of God. God had formerly instituted circumcision; he had given it to Abraham, and afterwards, by the law of Moses, had again commanded the Israelites' to observe it. It was the seal of the justice of God, and the token of his covenant. Yet, nevertheless, when Jesus Christ had abolished the carnal law, and established Divine worship in spirit and in truth, circumcision became *concision*, a cutting off, instead of a union. Such, without doubt, is the nature of every other ceremony of man's device, as abstaining from meats, observing days, &c. These are no longer the livery of God's people; the marks of our faith *in* him, or the seals of our union *to* him. They are vain things, of no other service than to rend the mystical body of Christ, to wound the conscience, and to injure rather than edify.

And, lastly, we must remark here the holy vehemence of the apostle against these false teachers, whom he denominates "dogs, evil-workers, cutters#off;" very severe words, to teach us that we must never regard with an indifferent eye those who disturb the church and truth of God, but must consider them such as they are in reality—unhappy and pernicious instruments in the hands of Satan. We should however beware, lest, under colour of zeal, we suffer ourselves to be carried away by an excess of hatred; but let us so restrain our hearts and tongues, that in the just indignation we feel against the *attempts* of these people we may still show love to their *persons*, not to uphold them or follow their doctrines, but to desire and endeavour after their salvation as much as possible. For the apostle commands the Philippians to beware of those whom he had thus described; and to show them how needful it was for the glory of God and their own safety to fly such pests, he repeats his words three times: "Beware of dogs, beware of evil-workers, beware of the concision." This duty contains two parts. First, That we should be able to distinguish these evil-workers from good ones; and second, That having distinguished them, we should shut our ears to their instructions, and quickly withdraw from communion with them. The word here used by the apostle relates precisely to the first of these duties, signifying to see, regard, and consider a thing,

so as to discern and recognise it among others. This is the same that St John so distinctly commands, "Beloved, try the spirits, whether they be of God," 1 John 4:2; and St Paul elsewhere says that "we should examine all things, and hold fast that which is good," 1 Thessalonians 5:2. Our Lord also gives us this mark of his sheep, "that they know his voice, and discern it from that of a stranger," John 10:4–5. From whence it appears, first, That it is by the doctrine that preachers should be discerned, and not the doctrine by the preachers, as the papists maintain; and secondly, That the Lord's sheep are not of the description of those of the pope, who receive with closed eyes that which is presented to them, without examination or recognition; who regard the mitre and the cross rather than the words and instructions of the preacher. As for outward appearance, the Lord has warned us that it is often deceitful; that wolves can disguise themselves as sheep; and that the angels of Satan are sometimes clothed like the angels of light. But the truth is a certain and immutable thing, which can never be abused. It is that which we must recognise, and for which we must examine the doctrines that are presented to us, if we wish to be capable of obeying the apostle, that is, of discerning evil-workers, and keeping ourselves from their impostures.

Now this injunction of the apostle exposes alike the absurdity and impiety of the modern method, which enchains the senses, and extinguishes the light of reason, not allowing us to receive as certain any truth which is to be discerned by their means. For how could the Philippians distinguish between true and false apostles, except by applying the marks given by St Paul? and how can Christians of the present day discern the true faith amidst jarring opinions, but by confronting every doctrine with these rules, that is, by reasoning? And it must not be answered that the church saves us this trouble. For, first, what church soever you may intend, I cannot assure myself that it is the true church, nor receive the witness it gives to any doctrine, except with the assistance of my understanding; so that it is clear, that if all that is done, by its interposition be fallible and uncertain, I can never have any firm and assured belief in what the church maintains. For respecting the church itself, these evil-workers, of whom the apostle commands us to beware, often assume that title as boldly as those who compose the true church in reality. And lastly, supposed (but not granted, for God forbid it) that the assembly of those who follow the pope composes the true church, how am I to know what is really its belief on each point of doctrine, when its ministers teach differently respecting it? For example: a teacher presents himself who recommends the people to study the word of God. To discern whether this be a good or an evil worker I seek to know the Romish church's decision on this subject. At first it appears to me that it condemns this custom; for I read that the popes, who are its heads, say that to permit the reading of the Scriptures to all indifferently brings more vexation than profit, and they therefore forbid it to all their people,[1] "except (say they) that the said reading might be allowed to those to whom the bishop or inquisitor, with the advice of the curate or confessor, should not consider it hurtful." The succeeding

1 Article 4. Council of Trente

popes add, in the observation which they make on this article,[1] that the bishops, inquisitors, or superiors of religious houses, must not suppose that by that they have authority to give licence to any to purchase, read, or keep a Bible in the vulgar tongue; such power (as they say) having been taken from them by the command and usage of the holy Roman and Catholic Inquisition, and that this command must be inviolably observed.

The cardinals Bellannine and Hosius also, with the greater number of the most celebrated writers of their communion, have spoken on this point, and have argued in the same manner. Yet nevertheless, other teachers newly arisen strongly and positively deny that their church forbids the people to read the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue, and boldly contradict those who believe it upon the authority of their popes.

Thus also with regard to images: they accuse those of misunderstanding their sentiments who believe that they give to them more honour than to the Bible, the candlesticks, and lamps employed in religious worship, although their last council (Trent) commands them to uncover the head and prostrate themselves before images, and although the public custom gives them still greater honour.

108 In like manner, on the doctrine of assurance in the grace of God, one will tell you that their church believes it, and others that it condemns it; and so on many other points. How then can a thing so doubtful and obscure in itself regulate the judgment to be given on particular teachers?

Let us then, leaving this uncertain method, cling to the truth of God revealed in the Scriptures, the only constant and unchangeable rule of our faith, keeping ourselves carefully from all those who would add to or take from it, as from evil-workers.

IV. But it is time to pass on to the latter clause of our text, in which the apostle, to prove that he was justified in giving to these false teachers the name of *concision*, as signifying *cutters-off*, adds that to us belongs the true name of "circumcision:" "For (says he) we are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

It is evident that he here speaks of true Christians, who, embracing with a lively faith the discipline of the gospel, serve God in spirit and in truth, putting all their trust in his Son, and not in any carnal thing.

In what sense then does he denominate Christians "the circumcision?" Bear brethren, the apostle, by calling them thus, and by speaking of them elsewhere as "the seed of Abraham and the Israel of God," does not intend to say that they are Jews properly speaking, that is, descendants of the patriarchs after the flesh, but rather that they have by faith all the privileges of God's ancient people, and that they are (as St Peter also says) "a holy nation, a royal priesthood;" all the dignities of the first Israel having been derived by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by him transmitted to the Christian church. He likewise does not here maintain that Christians are literally circumcised, but rather that they now possess all

1 Observation on the 4th Article.

those advantages and salutary effects which circumcision formerly bestowed or signified. It was the seal of the covenant of God; it incorporated with his people and in the communion of his republic all those who received it. Jesus Christ has bestowed both these privileges on those who believe in him. Certainly then they have "the circumcision;" they have all the effects, virtues, and excellencies of it, although they have not the literal mark. For the Holy Scriptures usually designate by name rather the dignity and value of a thing than its mere outward form. As, when Isaiah says that alms and munificence are the true fast chosen by the Lord, Isaiah 58, he intends to show that they possessed all the excellence and value which were attributed to fasting. And when the Lord Jesus says that "whosoever shall do the will of his Father which is in heaven, the same is his brother, and sister, and mother," he means that he holds them as in the same degree of relationship; that he loves them, and feels for them, as though they were his brother, his sister, or his mother.

It is said also in another place, "that he that shall humble himself, the same shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven," Matthew 18:4; intimating that he shall have all the honours and dignities which the disciples understood by that priority concerning which they had disputed among themselves.

But this manner of speaking, which in itself is very elegant, is of still greater advantage when, between the subjects whose names are exchanged, there is a similarity capable of maintaining such a change. And thus it happens in our text. For though the Christian receives not the old circumcision in his person, he suffers nevertheless a certain separation which may be so called, because it is the reality and signification of the other circumcision. To understand this, you must know that the "circumcision" of Israel was not merely the mark that was made in the flesh. For then the Ishmaelites and other profane people (who were circumcised outwardly as well as the Jews) would have possessed the sacrament of circumcision. But in it was contained a mystery, denoting the cutting away from a man all carnal affections. That this was its sense and signification we learn from Moses, who thus taught the Israelites: "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul," Deuteronomy 30:6. Jeremiah also commands the Jews to "circumcise themselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskin of their hearts," Jeremiah 4:4. And St Paul still more clearly teaches the same truth, saying, "Neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter," Romans 2:28–29.

Thus the mystery and reality of bodily circumcision was nothing less than a renunciation of flesh and blood; the Jew professing by this ceremony to cut off from his heart every carnal thought, affection, and desire, in order thenceforward to serve God in spirit and in truth, attaching himself to him alone, and putting all his trust in him, and not in man or in the flesh, in which by nature we are so prone to place our confidence and glory. This is the circumcision of which Paul speaks, calling it "that made without hands," Colossians 2:11.

Now that the Christian does suffer this sort of cutting away when he receives the

gospel of Jesus Christ is evident. For, instead of that external circumcision which takes away but a part of the flesh, the Christian (as the apostle elegantly expresses it, Colossians 2:11) "puts off the whole body of the sins of the flesh;" and again, "He has crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts," Galatians 5:24; and having cut and torn it, not with the sword of Moses, but of the true Joshua, the thorns and nails of Jesus, he casts it from him, and buries it in the sepulchre of his Lord.

This then is what the apostle teaches in our text, having chosen those functions of our religion which relate to this spiritual circumcision by which to describe true Christians: "We (says he) are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

By serving God in spirit, he understands that spiritual worship established by Jesus Christ in the gospel, consisting of faith and the love of God, and in the continual practice of piety, charity, and all those virtues which depend thereon, and not in bodily exercises (of which the worship of the Jews consisted); they having been but the shadows and types, of which spiritual piety is the truth and reality; and thus our Lord told the Samaritan woman, that in his reign "the servants of God must worship him in spirit and in truth."

The apostle tells us, in the second place, that we "rejoice in Christ Jesus;" that is to say, we make profession of the religion of this Divine and heavenly Prince, in whom is nothing carnal; calling on his name, and putting all our hope of eternal life in him, and glorying continually in the communion that we have with him. To this he adds by opposition, that "we have no confidence in the flesh," that is, in any outward or corporeal thing, our religion being altogether spiritual and Divine. From whence it appears, that no people in the world can and may so exclusively claim the title of "the circumcision," not even the ancient Israelites, to whom circumcision especially belonged. For although in comparison with the 109 false religions then in vogue, they might say that they worshipped God in spirit and in truth, having cast away from amongst them the gods, the idols, and the carnal ceremonies of the pagans; yet, to speak plainly, their worship was still carnal, consisting greatly in washings, expiations, sanctifications, sacrifices, and other exterior ceremonies. They had not in this respect altogether crucified the flesh; whereas among Christians there is nothing of all this, their worship being purely spiritual. It was the same with their glorying. For although God was the author of their religion, nevertheless they gloried also in Abraham and in Moses, and in their carnal extraction; so that in this respect again they had not cast away the flesh from the midst of them; whereas Christ, in whom we place our glory, has destroyed by his cross all that was carnal in him and in us, and is now a heavenly man, having nothing in common with the corruptions of flesh and blood; on which account the apostle says, "The Lord is Spirit," 2 Corinthians 3:17, and that those who are called by him receive their dignity "not of men, neither by man," Galatians 1:1; and again, "If we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now know we him no more," 2 Corinthians 5:16.

And, lastly, although the confidence of the Israelites was placed in God, yet they also in some degree trusted in the flesh, since their temple, their altar, their

sanctuary were "worldly," as the apostle calls them, Hebrews 9:1; and not only was their worship "bodily," but even the priesthood depended on flesh and blood; whereas *our* Lord Jesus draws our love, our confidence, and indeed our whole conversation, upwards to the heavens, "the world being crucified to us, and we unto the world."

If then, as is very evident, they best merit the name of "circumcision" who have most absolutely and completely cast away the flesh, then does this title properly belong to Christians; the ancient believers having possessed but the shadow and type of that of which we possess the reality and the spirit; we (that is) who worship God in the spirit, who glory in the crucified One, and put all our trust in him alone.

From this it appears how impious and pernicious, as well as ridiculous, was the superstition of those false teachers who were endeavouring to introduce circumcision and the knife of Moses among Christians, as if the sword of Jesus and his gospel were not powerful to circumcise them; thus raising up that which the Saviour had for ever buried, and concealing the very mystery and signification of circumcision, which consists in the cutting off and taking away of all carnal things; instead of which these unhappy people wished to re-establish in the church a trusting in the flesh, exhorting men to place their confidence in works and carnal services, rather than in the alone grace of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

It follows, then, that the apostle has justly taken from them the name and glory of circumcision, which belongs solely to us, and given them in contempt that of concision, since in reality all their teaching served but to mutilate the body, the spirit, the religion of true believers.

Thus, dear brethren, we have expounded to you this text of the apostle. Let us now endeavour to profit by seriously applying its doctrine to the security of our faith, and the sanctification of our lives.

Let us then, first, receive into our hearts this blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, the Prince of life, who is presented to us here, and throughout the Scriptures. Let him dwell in us by faith, and maintain peace and joy in our souls in the midst of the storms of our earthly pilgrimage. Let our understandings be enlightened with that knowledge which can alone render us capable of discerning truth from error, or the traditions of men from the commands of God. Let our minds be so habituated to his teaching, that we instantly know his voice from that of strangers. For we have to do with evil-workers as well as the Philippians, and we must not be surprised when they discover themselves among us, since even in the time of this great apostle, under his eye and in his brilliant light, people were found bold enough to disturb his preaching, and endeavour to corrupt his doctrine. I leave it to their consciences to examine whether it be not the flesh which prompts them to act thus, whether it be not the desire of ease and advantage, and whether the end of these works, of which they boast so much, be not to have part of the good things of this life.

But be their motives what they may, I assert (from Scripture) that they are "evil-workers," who labour to ruin and destroy what the gospel has built up; who corrupt and disfigure what the Lord has made and established; who mingle together things

incompatible, earth with heaven, flesh with spirit, Jesus with his adversary. Let us, dear brethren, be content with our Lord, and never suffer the pure and spiritual service which he has prescribed to us in his word to be injured by the admixture of ceremonies and carnal observances, inspired by fleshly minds, and not by the Spirit of God. For if the apostle is so strenuously opposed to circumcision and the other ceremonies solemnly and publicly instituted by Moses the minister of God, how much less should we be disposed to admit into the religion of Jesus doctrines established and authorized by flesh and blood, which proceed from Rome instead of Sinai, from man instead of God!

But above all, O believers, take heed that you be the true "circumcision" of God, serving him in the spirit, rejoicing in his dear Son Jesus Christ, and putting no manner of trust in the flesh, or, as St Paul elsewhere expresses it, "renouncing ungodliness and worldly lusts, live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." If you possess this mystical and spiritual circumcision, you will easily despise the other, as well as the whole encumbrance of superstitious ceremonies. For the desire of a carnal worship arises among Christians entirely for want of a spiritual mind; they have recourse to the external sacrifice of their altars, in order to supply the defect of that internal oblation which the apostle commands us to present continually to God, i. e. our bodies, as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to him, Romans 12:1. If their consciences had been truly purged from the dead works of sin, they would not have required the flames of purgatory, holy water, or other carnal purifications. If they had diligently given to the Saviour that reasonable service which he demands, they would never have had recourse to their fastings, their scourging, their pilgrimages, their confessions, and other bodily exercises, in which, alas, nearly the whole of their religion consists.

To preserve yourselves from their errors, you then must crucify the flesh, and serve God in spirit. Circumcise your hearts with the sword of his word, and take from them the lusts of the flesh, ambition, avarice, luxury, pride, envy, cursing. Present yourselves daily to the Lord with a chaste body, with clean hands and a pure heart, with a humble and holy mind, raising these your offerings to heaven on the wings of faith, and placing them on the only true altar, Jesus Christ, by whom
(110) alone they can be accepted of the Father. This is the service he demands from us; this is the victim he graciously beholds; a heart full of pious desires, and purified from all affections contrary to his word.

Let his Son, Jesus Christ, be all our glory, the only object of our hope, the only object of our joy. Let his life be reflected in ours, so that those within and those without may recognise the marks of this sovereign Lord. Let us ever seek in him alone our justification, our holiness, our liberty, our knowledge, our happiness, our life.

May our hearts and our confidence be detached from the flesh and fleshly things, how specious and pompous soever they may be; and may we love, adore, and serve none but Christ alone, so living and dying in him that we may have part in his kingdom and glory. Amen.

SERMON XVIII.

Verse 4–7.

Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the slock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

Brethren, well might John the Baptist warn the Jews who came to him not to place their dependence on having had Abraham for their father, Matthew 3:9. For the presumption which their extraction, and the privileges consequent upon it, produced in their hearts, was one of the principal causes of their perdition.

Sprung from this ancient and noble stem, in covenant with God, of which they bore the mark in their flesh, and in their external observances, they supposed salvation must infallibly be theirs. Vain idea! which caused them to despise the study and practice of the only true way which conducteth to salvation. John, therefore, commenced at the root, and endeavoured first of all to eradicate from their hearts this foolish and hurtful imagination, as the principal hinderance to their repentance and their happiness.

Our Lord himself spoke also to the same effect, showing them from the first the inutility of those outward advantages, and decrying the righteousness of the Pharisees, the wisdom of the scribes, and all that was then in the greatest estimation among the Jews; so that the first lesson he gave to Nicodemus was, that if he would enter the kingdom of God, he must be born again; i. e. he must put away all those vain notions in which he then gloried, and present another mind before God, cleansed and purified from every presumptuous hope.

In fact, the love and admiration of these carnal advantages not only hindered that unhappy people from profiting by the baptism of John, but also prevented their embracing the gospel of Christ. For besides those among them whose opinion of their own righteousness kept them altogether from believing in Jesus, those even who, convinced by his instructions, received his gospel, were also for the most part

desirous of mixing with it the ceremonies of Judaism, and retaining in the school of heaven the rudiments of the earth; so strong was their affection for those things which birth and education, strengthened by habit, had rendered venerable.

It is against the advocates of this dangerous melange that the apostle argues in this chapter, (as you will remember, brethren, I mentioned in my discourse on the preceding text,) wherein he prays the Philippians to beware of such evil-workers, declaring that by the Spirit of Christ we have every advantage which was vainly sought by the letter of Moses.

Now, to give more weight to his words, he shows them that it is not through envy that he thus speaks, being himself as well or even better furnished than they were, with all those advantages of which they so much boasted. For it sometimes happens that men, through extreme vanity, despise the things which they do not possess. They rail at and decry such gifts as they are destitute of, that their failing in that respect may not detract from their merit in the sight of others.

St Paul, to prove that no such reasons induced him to contemn circumcision and justification by works, which were taught by false apostles, represents here, in a forcible manner, that he failed in none of these things, nay, that he even possessed them in a higher degree than those did who esteemed them so greatly; yet, notwithstanding the advantages he appeared to have, he is constrained to declare that, whatever lustre they may possess in the eyes of flesh, they are of no avail before Jesus Christ.

As when some learned man, after having thrown contempt upon philosophy and worldly knowledge, might add, to give power to his words, that it was not that he was unable to enter the lists for the prize in that sort of wisdom; so St Paul, in the same manner, after having strongly repulsed those who pressed the observance of circumcision and other rites, to demonstrate that it is the truth itself, and not personal interest, which prompts him so to speak, adds directly, "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more." And to convince them that he boasts not without reason, he enumerates at length all the advantages he possessed with regard to these things: "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." But after all, he protests that, so far from building his hopes thereon, "he considers all these things as loss for Christ," although, were he to follow the false teachers, he should consider them as gain.

This is a summary of the apostle's meaning in the text; and that God-may bless it to your further instruction, I purpose to consider the subject under three heads: First, The declaration of St Paul, that he had more than others whereof he might trust in the flesh. Secondly, The advantages which he details at length respecting the subject of this trust. Thirdly, His solemn protestation, that he counts them all as loss for the love of Christ.

I. The apostle had said, in the preceding verse, speaking of himself and of all true believers, "We serve God in spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no

confidence in the flesh," i. e. (as we have already explained,) we lean on no carnal thing, Jesus Christ alone being the object of our hope and joy. When, therefore, he adds, "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh," it is evidently as if he had said, Although, with regard to myself, I take the Lord Jesus for my only joy, and place all my dependence on him, yet this is not because I am conscious of being without those advantages which the false teachers hold in such high estimation. Were I inclined to follow their doctrines, and, like them, mingle the services of flesh and blood with my hope in Christ, I might also have whereon to lean; for I have abundance of those things on which they build their hopes, and possess all the privileges wherein they find their joy. 111

But the apostle goes even beyond this, and challenges, not these teachers only, (who perhaps really possessed few of those qualities which they so strongly urged upon Christians,) but all others, whoever they might be, convinced that none could be found possessing as many of these external advantages as himself: "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more."

Thus he ranks himself above them all; because they had nothing which he had not also (as we shall presently see); and, on the other hand, he possessed many things in which they failed. And here I beg you to remark carefully the apostle's expression: he does not say, "If any man *have*" but, "If any man *thinketh* that he hath showing us thereby that all the trust which these people placed in carnal things was but fancy and opinion, they being in reality no just ground of confidence.

For it is evident, and St Paul has explained it more fully in several of his other Epistles, that neither circumcision, nor the observance of the Mosaic law, nor any other carnal service, can be capable of justifying man in the sight of God; so that all who trust in them are greatly mistaken. Nothing but the righteousness of Christ can reconcile us to God and shield us from the curse. Yet it was the will of the Lord that this his apostle, who so loudly contemned all trust and confidence in the law or any external advantage, should not himself be wanting in any one of those things in which so many placed their confidence. And herein is made manifest the wisdom of God; the testimony of St Paul being by this means purified from all suspicion or reproach. It is in like manner that he employs his pen(1 Corinthians 9:6–7) to recommend to the flock the maintenance of their pastors, because, having always supported himself by the labour of his own hands, and having never required assistance from the churches he had planted, he could treat the subject without being suspected of interested motives.

And for the same purpose God often calls to the knowledge of his Son those who are gifted with the things most esteemed in the world, as nobility, riches, learning, talent, whether in arts or sciences, and other similar advantages, in order that they may with greater authority declare the vanity of such things, and teach men with more freedom to humble themselves at the cross of Christ.

And those believers who are thus qualified should not be ashamed, when opportunities occur, to detail the advantages they possess in these respects, in order to confound the arrogance of worldly men who make such things their pride,

and to show them that it is not through envy that Christians despise them, but rather from the dictates of their conscience, which can find no solid foundation of hope and assurance but in Christ the Lord; all trust in the flesh and its works being vain presumption.

St Paul has inculcated this by his example. For he makes no scruple of lowering the pride of these false apostles by enumerating at length the advantages he had according to the flesh, and the confidence he might have drawn from them had he been so inclined; none of those external things being wanting in him in which these people so greatly exulted, whether it were nobility of descent, the privilege of circumcision, the advantages of learning, probity of manners, or purity of life.

This carnal superiority which the apostle possessed without trusting in consisted of seven qualities, and these we will now examine one after another, as he has enumerated them. First, That he had been "circumcised the eighth day." Second, That he was "of the stock of Israel." Third, That he was "of the tribe of Benjamin." Fourth, That he was "a Hebrew of the Hebrews." Fifth, That he was by religion "a Pharisee." Sixth, That he had been so zealous for Judaism as to have "persecuted the church" of Christ. And seventh and last, That his life, "touching the righteousness of the law, was blameless."

He names circumcision the first, because it was the first and most necessary sacrament of the Jewish people, the seal of the Mosaic covenant, the livery, mark, and glory of an Israelite, which separated him from all the nations of the world, and was the principal subject of controversy between the apostle and the false teachers, who, above all things, contended for it, and esteemed it essentially necessary to justification. But he also particularly mentions having received it on the eighth day, i. e. eight days after his birth, according to the original institution and command of God; and this added greatly to the advantage of it; for those proselytes who, from the darkness of idolatry, had ranged themselves under the banners of Judaism, could but receive circumcision at the age to which they had attained at the time of their conversion, some in youth, others in manhood, and others again in old age. And although it was to them a great privilege to be admitted by this rite into communion with the people of God, yet they could not glory in it as much as those who were born to this privilege, and who, from the eighth day of their lives, had been solemnly consecrated to the service of God, and had worn his livery and badge. Although it was an honour to receive circumcision at any age, it certainly was the greatest honour to receive it on the eighth day. For this cause St Paul expressly mentions it among other external advantages, not merely saying that he was circumcised, but that he had been circumcised the eighth day.

To this he adds, secondly, That he was "of the stock of Israel."

To have received circumcision on the eighth day plainly proved that a person had been born of parents professing Judaism; but it did not prove that he was descended from the blood of Israel.

The Gentile proselytes, having themselves entered into communion with God's people, circumcised their children on the eighth day, as well as the true Israelites. The apostle therefore is not satisfied with simply saying that he had

been circumcised the eighth day: he goes beyond this, adding, that he was of the race of Israel, to show the nobility and purity of his extraction, that his blood was unmingled with that of Gentiles, being derived from the ancient and illustrious root of Jacob, the patriarch of the Jewish nation, and to which he had given name; that people (as you know) calling themselves the "children of Israel," from the surname given to Jacob by the Almighty, as a token of blessing, on the memorable night that he had wrestled with him. This was the great privilege of the Jews, and that on which they set the highest value; for with regard to circumcision, observance of the law, zeal for religion, the light of knowledge, purity of life, and other things of a like nature, the proselytes might equal them; nay, they sometimes greatly surpassed them in these respects, and their history furnishes several examples of such being the case; but this nobility of descent was peculiar to the Jews, and no foreigner could contest this advantage with them.

And if we consider the subject in itself, without prejudice, we cannot deny that 112
the advantages after the flesh were great. For with regard to antiquity, which is generally esteemed one of the most essential qualifications of nobility, there was then, and there is now, no family in the whole human race so noble as that of the Jews, who could show their genealogy clearly and distinctly from Adam to themselves, that is, for upwards of four thousand years; whereas all those grand and illustrious families who flourished among the Greeks and Romans, or who flourish now in Christendom or elsewhere, are supposed to have fully established their noble descent, if they can reckon back for seven or eight hundred years; and even the proudest and highest cannot trace much further than that.

But if we consider the qualities of their ancestors, which are the principal foundations of true nobility, who can be compared to the Jews? Descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, at once the elect, the anointed, the holy prophets of God, the most noble and illustrious persons of antiquity! Whereas the genealogy of most other families is drawn from foul and disgraceful sources, from the blood of a barbarian or an idolater, sometimes even from a robber or a monster, celebrated more for his vices than his virtues.

Though, however, this true nobility of descent belonged originally to all the race of Israel, yet it had not preserved itself equally pure among the several families who had issued from that root. For this reason the apostle, after having said that he was of the stock of Israel, particularly signifies the tribe to which he belonged, "of the tribe of Benjamin." For I do not think he would have added this, except to show by his family the purity of his extraction.

It seems that he mentions the circumstance in order to distinguish his blood from the pollutions in which great part of that of Jacob was involved. For of the twelve tribes which sprang from him ten had sadly degenerated, soiling the honour of their nobility by their vices, plunging into idolatry, and separating themselves from the communion of the ark and temple of God; for which they had been afterwards, by the just anger of Jehovah, transported into Assyria, where they had for the most part lost the purity of their extraction by intermarriages with the Gentiles.

The apostle therefore shows, that it is not on that side that he is descended from Jacob, but from the family of Benjamin, illustrious among his people, not only for having had the honour of giving the first king to Israel, but still more so for having preserved in itself, in conjunction with Judah and Levi, the purity of Divine worship, at the time when the ten tribes, revolting from the house of David, gave themselves up to the idolatry of the golden calves, established by the rebel Jeroboam in Dan and Beth-el.

Thus you see that the apostle's extraction was very noble, he being not only of the most ancient and illustrious nation in the world, but also of one of the purest and most esteemed tribes in that nation.

But he continues, "an Hebrew of the Hebrews." This name of Hebrew (as you know) was especially given to the people of Israel, and still continues to be one of the most common appellations of the Jews; although it appears that originally the Chaldeans applied the word to all those nations who inhabited the countries beyond the Euphrates; and that the Egyptians gave them the same appellation for a like cause, namely, that they dwelt beyond the rivers that separated Egypt from other lands; and if you attentively consider those passages in Genesis where the word "Hebrew" is employed, you will easily perceive that it signifies literally "one who dwells beyond the waters." The posterity of Jacob, however, having afterwards occupied the country of Canaan, the inhabitants of which were called Hebrews, the word began to be applied to the Israelites, and in process of time became the appellation of the nation. So also the language spoken by the Jews during their occupation of Canaan, and in which the Old Testament, both the law and the prophets, (except two or three chapters of Daniel,) was written, is called, as well by ancient as by modern authors, "the Hebrew."

Thus, therefore, the apostle, by styling himself "an Hebrew of the Hebrews," signifies that he was a Jew by lineage from father to son; not having partaken of this privilege by adoption or the conversion of his forefathers, but by a regular and uninterrupted descent from that first ancient and noble stem from which his ancestors themselves had sprung.

After having thus shown the dignity of his extraction, he declares, fifthly, His profession or sect in the Jewish church, saying that he was "by religion a Pharisee." In the original, "as touching the law, a Pharisee."

Now it appears that the word "law" in this passage would denote a sect, order, or profession, such as the order of monks, or the societies of men or women that are found in the church of Rome, and the word is often used thus in our common conversation. Thus, when the apostle was brought before the assembly of the chief priests and elders at Jerusalem, he cried aloud, "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee," Acts 23:6; and afterwards, when pleading his cause before Festus and Agrippa at Cesarea, he said, in like manner, that all the Jews knew that "from his youth up, after the straitest sect of their religion, he had lived a Pharisee," Acts 26:5. In another place also, (Acts 22:3,) he declares that, in order to be better instructed in their doctrines, he had been sent in childhood from Tarsus in Cilicia, his native city, to Jerusalem, where he had been educated "at the feet," that is to say, in the

doctrines and discipline, "of Gamaliel," a Jewish doctor of high estimation. From these and several other parts of the New Testament, you will perceive that the Pharisees were at that time a sect of great repute among the Jews, and generally the most esteemed of any, as you would now describe the order of Jesuits in the Romish communion, except that the Pharisees did not dwell together in convents, but had their own houses and establishments like other citizens; at the same time composing one body, holding the same doctrines, living under the same discipline, and sustaining and assisting one another as much as possible.

It was about a hundred years before the birth of Christ that three sects arose among the Jews; the Pharisees, the Essenes, and the Sadducees. No mention is made of the Essenes in the New Testament Scriptures, partly because there was scarcely any difference between their doctrines and those of the Pharisees; and partly because they lived retired in distant places, having but little intercourse with the world. But the other two sects dwelt in cities, in the society of enlightened men, taking part in civil as well as in ecclesiastical affairs.

The Sadducees (as we learn from the writings of the New Testament, from Josephus, and other Jewish authors) held most extravagant opinions, boldly denying a resurrection and the immortality of the soul, and even the existence of angel or spirit, Acts 23:8.

The Pharisees also maintained some dangerous errors, but at the same time they held the fundamental truths of Scripture, believing the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body; neither is there any proof of their having taught (as some modern writers allege) the transmigration of the soul after death. Thus they 113
easily gained the ascendancy over the Essenes by the greater refinement of their life, and over the Sadducees by the greater purity of their doctrine; to which must be added, by their extraordinary profession of sanctity, which tinctured all their conversation and manners.

To this outward profession the Scriptures relate, when they inform us that they "made wide their phylacteries, and enlarged the borders of their garments," Matthew 23:5, &c.; (i. e. they wore on their foreheads and on the edge of their robes wide pieces of parchment, on which were written certain texts from the law or the prophets; and this is still a Jewish custom;) that they washed often and carefully their persons, their utensils, and their furniture; that they fasted twice a week, and gave tithes most scrupulously of all they possessed, even of the smallest herbs of the garden, as mint and cummin; that they built and superbly adorned the sepulchres of the prophets; and that they would compass sea and land to make one proselyte. We learn also from other sources, that the devotees among them slept on very narrow planks, or upon gravel, and that they fastened thorns under their garments, which pricked their heels and ancles in walking so as even to draw blood.

This austere manner of life, indicating so much zeal and sanctity, procured for them the name of Pharisee, which signifies, a *person separated and withdrawn from the world;* with which indeed they professed to have nothing in common, having entirely withdrawn from the vices of the multitude; calling them in contempt,

people of the earth, shunning their society, and even considering themselves unclean if they had been accidentally touched by one of them.

It was to this refined sect that St Paul belonged, both by birth and education. But if his ancestors and preceptors had on their part given him a birth and education propitious to Judaism, he also, on his part, had so diligently applied himself to profit by the advantages he thus possessed, that he had arrived at the highest possible perfection of a Pharisee.

And this he shows in the two last clauses of the account which he is here giving of himself, by adding that, "concerning zeal, he had persecuted the church," and that, "touching the righteousness of the law, he had been blameless."

With regard to the first, we are informed by St Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, that Paul took part in the murder of the blessed martyr of Christ, St Stephen; and that afterwards, "breathing out threatening and slaughter," he devoted himself to the persecution of the Christians, and left Jerusalem with letters from the high priest empowering him to carry thither as prisoners all the disciples of Christ whom he should find in Damascus and its neighbourhood. He has himself also often related this sad story: speaking in the assembly of the Jews, (Acts 22:3–4,) he says, "Being zealous toward God, as ye all are this day, I persecuted this way (Christianity) unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women." Again, pleading before Agrippa, (Acts 26:9–11,) he thus speaks, "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities."

He also tells the Galatians, in the commencement of his Epistle to them, that he had "persecuted and wasted the church of God beyond measure, having been exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the fathers," Galatians 1:13. Again, writing to Timothy, he acknowledges that he was once a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an oppressor, 1 Timothy 1:13; on which account it is that he speaks of himself to the Corinthians with such deep humility, saying that he is unworthy to be called an apostle, because of having persecuted the church of God.

He mentions it in our text to prove his extreme devotion to Judaism; and as he himself calls persecution a "blasphemy," a "wasting," a "ravaging," of the church of God, he highly condemns it, and witnesses against himself that he had grievously sinned in this respect. Therefore it is not his intention here to class it among good and praiseworthy actions. He alleges it solely as an incontestable proof of his zeal for the honour of Judaism; a blind zeal, certainly, and not "according to knowledge," but nevertheless ardent, and clearly showing the sincerity with which he had formerly undertaken the defence of his religion. The false teachers against whom he argues were satisfied if circumcision were retained, and Moses were made a companion of Christ. But Paul had gone much further, desiring Moses to reign alone, and fiercely overturning every thing that opposed his empire in such

a manner, that if there were any profit or glory to be expected from having zeal for Judaism, it is evident that Paul in this respect had the advantage of these pretended upholders of Moses.

Lastly, he adds, that whatever might have been his zeal for the religion of his forefathers, the purity of his life and conversation was in the same proportion. For it often happens that enthusiasts, under the boiling of their zeal, conceal a very irregular life, and shamefully violate, every day, the laws and regulations of that religion, the name and outward forms of which they are defending with so much warmth. There are in history many examples of this, and especially among the Jewish people. At the last destruction of Jerusalem, how many wretched men were there, trampling under foot every law, human and Divine, and leading the most execrable lives possible; at the very time that they were such zealots for the name and temple of Jehovah, as to be resolved to endure to the last extremity in his cause! But the apostle must not be classed with such fanatics. He had been a Jew in truth and sincerity, and in the midst of his zeal against Christianity had observed with such strictness all that was enjoined by his religion, that he can boldly say in our text, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."

What then, (you will perhaps say,) while Paul lived a Pharisee, an alien from the grace of Christ, had he so fulfilled all the righteousness prescribed to us in the law, that he can be reproached with nothing in that respect? Did he fail in no point in that righteousness which the law demands of men? Dear brethren, I answer, that by "the righteousness which is in the law" he intends, and it is a common mode of expression in the sacred writings, all the righteousness that is *by* the law; that is to say, as much as the law could work in any man, even in the best and most advanced among the Pharisees; and this is so far from being perfect, or even from being a step towards admission into grace, that Jesus himself said, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

As for the righteousness contained *in* the law, which consists of a perfect love to God, a perfect charity towards our neighbour, and an innocence and holiness of life maintained in every point, neither Paul nor any other Pharisee has ever (114) possessed it; as this great apostle himself has clearly shown in several places; but especially in the 7th chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. And if any man ever had possessed this righteousness, that man would have been justified by the law, (which is absolutely impossible,) and would have had no need of Christ, without whom we are told we can do nothing. These words of the apostle have the same signification as in Romans 2:14, where he says, "the Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the law;" that is, not the things commanded by the law, as, to love God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, (for how could the Gentiles do those things naturally which the Jews themselves were never able to accomplish?) but all that which the law does for its disciples; restraining and bridling their outward man; leading them to the admiration and study of virtue; and, in fact, accusing or excusing them in the secret recesses of their hearts: and this the apostle calls *the work of the law;* because it is what the law does in us, and not what the law

prescribes *to* us: so he also, in the text, speaks of the righteousness which is *in* or *by* the law,—not merely that which the law commands, but that which it works in the hearts and lives of its disciples.

This then is the righteousness of which St Paul boasts; meaning to say that he had shown forth in his former life and character all those good qualities which the profession of Phariseeism required; and that he could not be reproached with having failed in one duty which his sect considered to be prescribed by the law of God.

Thus it appears how truly the apostle spoke, in saying that if any man might trust in the flesh, it would be himself, since he possessed every advantage that was a ground of trust; whether by birth, as a free Israelite, of the blood of Jacob, of the tribe of Benjamin; whether by instruction, having been circumcised on the eighth day, and educated in Phariseeism, the most celebrated sect among the Jews; whether by devotion to the cause, having been zealous even to the persecuting of the church, and observant of every legal rite, so as to have acquired a character without reproach. "But (says he) what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." So far from building my hopes on these carnal advantages, in which the false teachers place their glory, I despise them all since I have known and tasted the Lord Jesus; and now consider them, not merely as useless, but as hurtful to my salvation.

II. This is the concluding verse of the text, in which the apostle mentions two things: first, That these prerogatives that he had in Judaism, and of which he had just' spoken, "were gain to him," or rather, had been gain to him; and, secondly, That for the "love of Christ he had counted them as loss." As for the first, I must acknowledge that it was no small step towards salvation to be born in Israel, of the blood of the patriarchs, and to be nourished and instructed from childhood in the knowledge of the Divine law; which was to the church in its infancy as a schoolmaster, and an excellent means of bringing men to Christ: and the apostle elsewhere says, that "the advantage of the Jew, and the profit of circumcision, were great every way, but chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God," Romans 3:1; which grace had not been given to other nations, as the psalmist tells us, Psalm 147:20. And they to whom the law had rendered this good office of preparing and bringing them to Christ, as Simeon, and Nathaniel, and many others, could truly say that it had been gain to them, being born in Israel, and circumcised, and instructed in the school of the law. But this is not the case here. For the instruction that Paul had had in the law was mixed with the leaven of Phariseeism; his mind was puffed up with his own merit, and his zeal was full of rage against the Christ of God. How, then, could he say that these things were gain to him? Dear brethren, I maintain that the apostle does not say this literally and absolutely. God forbid that he should! for this would, by one stroke of his pen, efface all the truth of his doctrine, which every where declares that there is nothing so opposed to salvation as the leaven of the Pharisees and the presumption of merit. Nor is there any thing so abhorrent to God or so pernicious to men as the persecution of Christ and his members. But he here speaks according to

the notions he had formerly held on this subject in his blindness and error, and according to the ideas of the false teachers against whom he is arguing. They "were gain to me," that is, in my opinion; and with this idea I gloried in them, and imagined that on them my salvation depended.

For this was in reality the doctrine of the Pharisees. They placed their hopes and their happiness in these carnal advantages; in being the seed of Abraham and the disciples of Moses; and considered the furious zeal which they had for the law as one of their highest merits, imagining that they did God service in persecuting the Christians. And all this would have been gain to the apostle had he continued in Judaism, as the false teachers supposed he ought to have done. For by this he would (according to their view) have obtained favour with God and men; he would have preserved the good-will of his nation, and acquired reputation and esteem among his countrymen by passing for one of their most accomplished and learned doctors. But he protests, however advantageous these things might have been to me after the flesh, "I count them loss for Christ."

III. When once the Lord had enlightened his mind, and delivered his eyes from the thick scales of ignorance which formerly covered them, he became altogether changed in judgment and temper. He saw that that Jesus whom he had so fiercely persecuted was the Lord of glory, the Prince of peace, the everlasting Father, the only author and giver of grace. He saw in him truth, righteousness, and salvation for men, treasures of Divine mercy, and the plenitude of the Godhead. Satisfied with so precious and perfect a gift, he condemns his former errors, and renounces with all his heart all those petty advantages of birth and education which he had heretofore so much admired, and resolves, like the merchant in the parable, to acquire, by the loss of all he possessed, the inestimable jewel that was to be found in Christ. He is so in love with this treasure, that he not only *leaves* all he had, but *hates* all for its sake. He does not merely confess that he can draw no profit from his former merits, but complains that they are hurtful to him; that they have kept him long in ignorance, and have prevented him from earlier enjoying peace through Christ; that they increased his furious zeal, and soiled his hands with the precious blood of his sovereign Lord. For, although this last had been done in ignorance, he never ceased to remember it with horror, and to reckon it the greatest misfortune that had ever occurred to him. Thus St Paul is to be understood, when he declares, "what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."

But, O holy apostle, elect instrument of God, that which was loss to thee has proved gain to us; and it was for our profit that the gracious Lord, who had separated thee from thy mother's womb, did permit thee to enter so deeply into Judaism, and to remain for so long a period out of his true church, that so thy testimony concerning it might be the more efficacious to us. Certainly, dear brethren, the testimony of the other apostles respecting the resurrection and Divinity of our Lord is authentic and worthy of belief, and whoever calmly considers it must be constrained to confess that their witness is true. But the testimony of Paul is stronger. For with what can infidelity reproach him? Can it say that he was an ignorant person, easily duped in that which respects religion?

115

He was a Pharisee from his birth; instructed in the school of the first master of his age and sect; and very learned in all the traditions and doctrines of the Jews, as his writings clearly prove. Was it intimacy with Jesus, and friendship for him, that induced him to uphold his religion? He had never seen him during his life, and, after his death, far from loving or favouring, he had outrageously persecuted him. And yet, behold him stopping suddenly in the midst of his career of rage and fury, changed in a moment, adoring him whom he had blasphemed, preaching him whom he had persecuted, continuing several years in this new faith, and at length dying for him whom he had formerly so often slain in his members.

What could have caused so wonderful a change? What could have snatched from Judaism so obstinate a Pharisee? so attached to his sect by birth, education, reputation, interest, manner of life? What could have broken in one moment so many ties? What could have drawn forth from that heart and mouth, hitherto sending out fire and flames against Jesus, praise and adoration of him? Dear brethren, it could have been nothing less than the truth itself, manifested to him by an Almighty hand, (as he himself often and fully declares,) arresting and converting him on his way to Damascus.

Let us then embrace this Divine Saviour whom he so eloquently preaches to us. Let us be converted with this happy Pharisee. Let us believe on the testimony of so authentic a witness, that Jesus is in heaven crowned with glory and honour; that he is truly the Son of God, the end and object of the law, the salvation of Jews and Gentiles, the true circumcision, the root and offspring of David, the propitiation for sin, the peace of the conscience, the light of the understanding, the wisdom of the heart, the author of the justification, holiness, rest, resurrection, and immortality of all believers. Dear brethren, let us render to him the homage due to his majesty. Let nothing separate us from fellowship with him. Let us be zealous for his glory. Never let us suffer any thing whatever to divide with him our confidence and. hope. Let us serve him only, as he only has redeemed us. However useful and advantageous a thing may appear, let it be as loss to us, or even as a calamity, if it be prejudicial to the interest of Christ. Never let us purchase ease, or peace, or even life itself, at his expense. Let us rather hate and despise all things for love of him. Let that which is gain become loss to us, if hurtful in the smallest degree to his service and glory. Nobility of birth, abundance of riches, the honour of our reputation, the excellence of learning, the friendship of those among whom we dwell; all these I confess are great advantages. But if they estrange you from fellowship and communion with Christ, if they hinder you in the heavenly race, regard them as losses, as misfortunes. Do not hesitate to renounce them, and generously sacrifice this vain-glory at the foot of the cross, as did Paul the Pharisee. Hold nothing so dear but that you can quit it with alacrity for so good a Master. Remember that in reality there is nothing good, nothing useful without him; that all that men worship, out of him, whether it be grandeur, or science, or morality, or even the deepest and warmest devotion, is incapable of turning away from us the curse of God, or of bringing us to his heavenly kingdom.

May the Lord himself impress these sentiments deeply on our hearts, so that faithfully serving him in this life, we may dwell with him in life everlasting. Amen.

SERMON XIX.

Verse 8.

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.

Dear brethren, in order to be truly wise, it is not sufficient to be able merely to distinguish between good things and bad; we must also discern the difference that exists among things that are good, so as to set each at its real value, and esteem those the most which are the most excellent: and it is in this sense that many understand the apostle, when he desires for the Philippians that they "may approve (or discern) things that are excellent," Philippians 1:10. For if you consider this matter, you will perceive that the weakness of being unable to reject the lesser good for the greater, is the cause of almost all the miseries of men. They have less difficulty in discerning good from evil, because of the immense difference between them. But when two things that are good present themselves, the desire of possessing both perplexes their judgment to that degree, that they are unable to resolve to quit the less that they may win the greater; and instead of this generous resolution, they continually, though uselessly, endeavour to find means whereby they may keep both the one and the other. From whence it frequently happens that they lose the whole, because they were not satisfied with the better part; like the merchant, who could not resolve to save his life during a storm by throwing the cargo of his vessel into the sea, and therefore lost his vessel and his life together. In how many countries and families does this error cause disasters daily! But who can enumerate the evils it produces in religion, the most important object of our life! It is this that causes the destruction of the lukewarm, of the Nicodemuses, (commonly so called,) of all who would fain possess both earth and heaven, both flesh and spirit, and, in fact, of the greater part of those that perish. It is this that suggests to them all those pernicious expedients which they adopt to their own ruin, fancying they can, by these means, be exempted from the losses and troubles to which the gospel subjects them, and can at once maintain peace with God and with the world.

It was the same error which disturbed in its infancy the Christian church,

from the endeavours of some within it to mingle Judaism with Christianity. It was not that they hated or despised Christ, but that they did not esteem and love him sufficiently. If they had thoroughly recognised his sovereign excellence, they would have been contented with him, and would have found in him so full a satisfying of every desire, that they would have wished for no other good. For this reason, St Paul, in the text, to guard the Philippians from this error, shows them the estimation in which they should hold the Saviour; and having already 116 detailed all the advantages which he possessed according to the flesh, he adds, that these things, however great they might appear, yet, considered in themselves, must vanish before the light of the knowledge of Jesus; and that, compared with the blessings the Saviour bestows on his servants, they lose their value, and become as dross or dung, or the very vilest things.

He had taught the same doctrine in the preceding verse, where, after showing the prerogatives of his birth and education in Judaism, he said, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ and this I explained to you in my last discourse on this subject: and now again he takes up the same idea, and enlarges upon it, adding, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

The apostle thus repeats his words for two reasons: first, On account of the importance of the subject, the noblest, the grandest, the most necessary in the world. And it is very usual for ministers thus to insist on essential subjects, if they desire deeply to impress the hearts of their hearers; and even to repeat the same thing two or three times: and the best masters of eloquence consider these repetitions, if well done, among the greatest ornaments of language. Secondly, The apostle wishes to show that he maintains the same feelings towards his Saviour as he had at the beginning. For it occasionally happens that the novelty of things surprises and dazzles us at first, causing us to despise every thing besides; but when time has lessened the attraction which novelty gave, and experience has given us more intimate knowledge of them, we repent of having allowed ourselves to be deceived, and change the opinion we at first held respecting them. St Paul, therefore, having said that when he had once seen Christ, he despised and counted as loss those advantages which he had formerly prized, adds now that he is still of the same opinion. My senses (says he) were not *dazzled* by the glory of Christ, which at first struck me so forcibly; it was not the *novelty* of his doctrine which delighted me, and caused me to contemn all that I had hitherto valued. I have always preserved the same feeling in this respect as I had then. Time has not discovered to me in my new Master any thing which corresponds not with that excellence which my first view of him promised. The esteem and love I then felt and avowed, far from having lessened, have increased within me more and more. And as I then quitted all for his sake, and considered every thing as hurtful which separated me from communion with him, so I do still, and am more than ever resolved to be eternally his. I find nothing beautiful, nothing excellent, but in him,

and I renounce from my heart every thing the world esteems, and most willingly suffer the loss of all things that I may win Christ.

These are the reasons that induced the apostle to repeat his words. For though the *all things* of which he speaks might be taken in their simple and universal sense, (as in fact there is nothing in the world which ought to be compared in value to Christ and his salvation,) yet the apostle's argument seems to require that they should relate to what he had before spoken of, namely, the advantages he possessed in Judaism. And our French Bible connects them in the translation of the second clause of this verse, where the apostle is said not merely to have deprived himself of *all things*, but of *all these things*, i. e. of which he had just spoken. But this must not prevent our understanding all that St Paul had said respecting the advantages of Judaism, as extending also to every other means of salvation which men consider necessary, equal or preferable to, or at least joining and associating them with, the gospel of Christ. For if the blood of patriarchs and prophets, if the seal of the Mosaic covenant, if observance of and zeal for the law of God, if an unblemished reputation, are but small things compared with the knowledge of Jesus Christ, if they must be regarded as dross, in what class must we place ceremonies and traditions purely human, which were commanded neither at Sinai nor at Zion, nor by the voice of a prophet, and have their authority from superstition alone?

But without going further into this subject, let us consider what the apostle says in our text respecting those advantages he formerly possessed in the Jewish religion. He declares that he counts all these things as loss, and afterwards, that he has suffered the loss of them, and esteems them but as dross. But he is not satisfied with this; he shows us the reason why he made such small account of things apparently so advantageous, "for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus;" and also his design in renouncing them, "that I might win Christ." We have thus three subjects set forth in the text, on which, by God's grace, we will endeavour to speak.

First, The excellency of the knowledge of Jesus.

Secondly, The uselessness and vileness of all such advantages, and even of the observance of the law, as the price of this knowledge.

Thirdly, The necessity of renouncing them all, if we would win Christ.

I. Respecting the first, this is not the only place in which the apostle sets forth, above all things, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, to confound the superstition of the Judaizing Christians. He does the same in his Epistle to the Colossians, (Colossians 1:15–19,) where, arguing against this error, to show how vain and useless was the addition which these new teachers wished to make to the gospel, he represents to believers the sovereign dignity of the *Lord Jesus*, the image of the invisible God, the first#born of every creature, yea, the Creator of all things in heaven and in earth; the Head of the church, the first-born from the dead, in whom dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in whom also are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Here, then, for the same reason, he alleges the excellency of Christ, calling him his Lord, not merely as a testimony of the ardent affection he bore him, but also to show the insult offered to him by

those false teachers who would fain give to them whom he had saved another Lord beside him.

The excellency of knowledge may be considered in two points; either as regarding the things known, or as regarding the use and fruit thereof. And for the first, we call that knowledge *excellent* which treats of lofty and elevated subjects; and it is in this sense that philosophers prefer the least knowledge of the heavens, and the motions of the luminary bodies, to the most intimate acquaintance with earth and its concerns, because the first of these subjects is much more noble and wonderful than the other. And, secondly, we consider that knowledge excellent which is useful and necessary to us, and increases the happiness of life: and it is in this sense that the same philosophers esteem the knowledge of morals, placing it above the abstract sciences, because it is more needful for the conduct of our life; and those among them are praised who have brought the study of the heavens down to the earth; that is to say, who, instead of amusing themselves by speculations upon the motions and properties of the heavens, have employed all (117) their powers in the consideration of the nature of man, of the end for which he lives, and the qualities necessary to render him happy.

The knowledge of Jesus our Lord includes both these excellences in a high degree. For surely Jesus Christ is the grandest, the most excellent, the most exalted subject in the universe; not a mere heavenly body or immaterial being, but the Creator and Master of the heavens, the King and Lord of angels, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, his word, his wisdom, his eternal power; in a word, "God over all, blessed for ever:" and, surpassing wonder! not merely God, but "God manifest in the flesh God and man in one person, in whom, as in a mirror, may be seen all the perfections of the Divine and human nature; not slightly and faintly represented, but vividly portrayed, or rather existing in the most perfect and exalted form; not in type and shadow, but in reality and truth. In Jesus Christ are made known the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the Divine glories, secrets which no eye has seen, no imagination conceived. In him is shown forth the incomprehensible distinction of three Persons in one Being, and the unity of one Being in three distinct Persons. In him are manifested all the attributes of God, his eternity, his infinitude, his power, his wisdom, his justice, his goodness, his providence; the designs of his eternal mind, and the mighty works of his hands. In him are seen, not only the past and the present, but also the future; the diversity of times and dispensations; the origin, progress, and end of ages; the wonders of this world and of that which is to come. And the knowledge which Christ gives us is not a doubtful and uncertain opinion, such as we acquire in the schools of men, whose wisdom at best is but suspicion or belief; not a true and certain knowledge only; but it is a clear and solid understanding of these subjects; a power of contemplating "God with open face," as St Paul saith, 2 Corinthians 3:18, God having rendered himself visible and palpable in Christ, in such wise, that whosoever has seen him has seen the Father; which St John also declares, "That which was from the beginning, which we have seen with

our eyes, which we have heard, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life," 1 John 1:1.

But if the knowledge of Jesus Christ is excellent on account of the grandeur of the object, and the clearness and certainty of the evidence which it gives, it is not the less so on account of its usefulness; and it is in this sense principally that the apostle considers it in the text; because if this wisdom were of no avail, it would not induce us to despise or reject things otherwise advantageous to us. The results which arise from a knowledge of the Saviour are on the one hand so grand and Divine, and on the other so important and necessary, that we may truly say, It alone is excellent; all other knowledge being useless without this, and this being alone capable of rendering us eternally happy.

For, in the first place, while other systems are either ignorant of or extenuate our evil condition, this knowledge instructs us respecting the greatness and the extent of our vileness, showing us that, born as we are, and living as we do, we must expect nothing but death and damnation. It reveals to us the wrath of God kindled against the human race, his inexorable anger against sin, and the inevitable punishment that awaits us. It shows us the blindness of those who falsely imagine they owe nothing to the Divine justice, as well as the vanity of all means invented or employed by men to appease the Almighty and win his favour. But having made us sensible of our evil state, it places in our hands the true and only remedy, Jesus crucified and raised again for us. By the blood of that sacrifice, alone capable of expiating the sins of man and of purifying his soul, because it is an offering equal to the infinitude of his crimes, the wrath of God is extinguished. Thus the knowledge of Jesus gives peace to the conscience, chasing away from the soul the fear of the avenging anger of God, which waged a cruel war within us by day and night. It disarms the destroying angel of the sword that alarms us, and heaven of the thunder which threatens us.

But it does not merely deliver us from the fear of hell. It gives us the blessed hope of everlasting life; it opens to us heaven and its eternal sanctuary, putting us in possession of that perfect and supreme felicity for which we sighed even before we were acquainted with it. For Christ in dying has not only satisfied the Divine justice, he has also obtained from the Father's love, besides the pardon of our sins, the Holy Spirit, heaven, and eternal life to bestow upon his servants; in token of which he was raised from the dead the third day, and is now seated at the right hand of God, to administer his kingdom, and to dispense life and glory to all who believe in him. From thence he clothes his people with armour, and sends them all things needful for their earthly pilgrimage: he sheds into their hearts a joy that passeth understanding: he gives them consolation in every affliction, and assurance even in death itself. He fills their hearts with ardent love to God, and real charity towards their neighbour, producing within them true sanctification; not a mercenary spirit like the Pharisees, who acted for hire, and served God only in order to profit themselves, but a sincere and candid mind, which embraces truth for the love of it, and in so doing considers itself entitled to no reward, but simply as having done that which it was its duty to do. And when, having passed through

the trials and labours of this life, they are called to the grave, he receives their souls to himself, and preserves their bodies amidst all the changes and confusion of the world, to be raised again at the great day, and to be made conformable to the glory of his body, when he will bestow on them his last and highest gift, and elevate them to a participation of his glorious and eternal kingdom.

Judge, then, believers, whether the apostle is not right in calling the knowledge of Jesus excellent, since it produces such sweet and precious fruits. I confess, however, that not all who say they possess it are partakers of these fruits. But such are presented for their acceptance, and to them belongs the blame if they have them not. Although, to speak correctly, no one truly knows Christ who is not a partaker of his righteousness and glory, because in this knowledge is life. "This is life eternal, that they might *know* thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John 17:3. Therefore St Paul scruples not to say that none of the princes of this world possessed the knowledge of God, alleging as a reason, "for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory," 1 Corinthians 2:8. For how is it possible that a man could know Jesus without loving him, without believing his promises, and trusting in him? Now, all who believe in him and trust in him receive his Spirit, pass from death to life, and. participate in all his precious gifts; and it therefore follows that they who are not thus in him know him not. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water," John 4:10. Thus St Paul confounds the false teachers of the circumcision, proving to them that (118) they had not the knowledge of Christ, although they so loudly boasted of it, and even affected to instruct others therein; because, had they really known him, they would not, any more than himself, have made such account of the mere rudiments as to propose to mingle them with the gospel. For that all the observances of the Mosaic law, and all the advantages with regard to the flesh that can possibly be had, are of no value compared with Christ, is very evident from what has just been said respecting the excellence of the knowledge of him.

II. This brings us to the second point of the apostle's argument, in which he declares that, "for the excellency of this knowledge, he considers all these things as loss, that he has suffered the loss of them, and that he esteems them but as dung." Certainly it is scarcely possible to hold them in greater contempt than this. For, in the first place, while the false teachers recommended them as important, useful, and even necessary for the justification of believers, the apostle, on the contrary, "counts them as loss," retarding, rather than advancing, the salvation of their souls. He adds, secondly, that so considering them, he has renounced them all, and voluntarily "suffered their loss;" just as a mariner who, seeing that his merchandise is sinking his vessel, throws every thing into the sea with his own hands, preferring rather to save himself alone than to endanger his life by retaining the goods in the ship. And, thirdly, the apostle tells us that "he counts them but as dung." Now he who throws his merchandise into the sea, does it with sorrow, constrained by the necessity of saving his life, and when the danger is over, he remembers his loss with regret. St Paul, on the contrary, makes no more account of the loss of those things

of which he had deprived himself for the love of Christ, than if they had been straw and rubbish. For the Greek word which he here uses[1] signifies literally that: a thing of nothing, filthiness that is thrown away, as not being merely useless, but disgusting.

And to understand more fully the sense and reason of this doctrine of St Paul, we must remember that the Mosaic law was given but for a certain time, and as a certain dispensation; to be, as it were, a schoolmaster to the ancient people of God until Christ came: not to *justify* believers, but to keep them in fear, and discipline them unto obedience, till the church should have attained (so to speak) the age of its majority; as the apostle explains at some length in his Epistle to the Galatians, and in several other places. This era was now arrived; the legal economy ceased; Moses gave up the people to Joshua; he put them into the hands of Jesus, his living Lord, to be thenceforth under his guidance, to live at liberty, no longer subject to the severity and the beggarly elements of the schoolmaster of their infancy; so that all the bodily services which they were accustomed to render became from that moment perfectly useless, because in Christ there is an abundance of those benefits which, prior to his coming, were obtained by the law. For what service could the law now render to us? It showed to the Jews the evil of sin, by the curses that were recorded against those who were guilty of it. But the gospel of Christ shows the evil of sin much more clearly and efficaciously, since it places before our eyes the Son of God suffering an ignominious death to atone for our sins, and at the same time opens to our view the everlasting miseries in hell, which they who die in unbelief and impenifence must certainly endure. Again, the law discovered to man his weakness and impotence by the endeavours it produced in him to obey it, as St Paul explains fully in the 7th chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. But Jesus shows us this more clearly, telling us at once, without any disguise, that of ourselves we can do nothing, and that our whole nature is so dreadfully corrupt, that if we would enter the kingdom of God, we must be altogether born again. The law, by the spirit of slavery which it induced, kept the Israelites in some measure to their duty, constraining them to abstain from vice, and devote themselves to the study of piety and holiness. But Jesus does this more effectually, transforming our hearts into the fear and love of God, by the Spirit of adoption, by the clearness and propriety of his doctrines, by the beautiful picture of holiness which he proposes to us, by the example of his own life, and lastly, by the many proofs of the goodness of God, and the blessed immortality reserved for us, which are scattered every where throughout the gospel. And finally, the law represented the mysteries of Christ and his kingdom, the value of his sacrifice, the assistance of his Spirit, the purity of his worship. But what need have we now of the shadow, since we possess the things themselves? Of what use to us could the types be, since we have the spirit and the substance?

Thus you see that, according to the design of God, the advantages and sacraments of the law are of no avail since the manifestation of his Son, and that

1 Σκύβαλα.

those who now beguile themselves with them lose their time and their trouble, as completely as though, after the rising of the sun, they still used the light of a lamp; or as if, in the strength of manhood, a person were retained in all the exercises and sports of childhood. Therefore those false teachers who desired to retain the ceremonies of the law among Christians, regarded them in quite another light than that for which God instituted them, supposing them to be, not instructions for leading men to Christ, (and in this respect they could be no longer necessary, since Christ was already come,) but as a means of obtaining salvation, by the merit and efficacy of which man might be justified before God. And this was precisely the error in which Paul himself had formerly been, when in the school of the Pharisees; believing, like them, that circumcision, sacrifices, abstinence, ablutions, and other ceremonies of the law, were really expiatory for sin, and merited the favour of God, having been instituted by Moses for that end.

And it is on this account that the apostle here so strongly decries all the advantages of the law, protesting that he counts them as dross, that he rejects them as not merely useless, but vile and abominable. Certainly the ideas the Pharisees entertained were full of error, and at the same time the obedience they rendered to the law was by no means such as the law demanded of them. It was a mark or image of righteousness, ornamented outwardly with fine colours, but within full of falsehood and deceit; and, to crown the whole, it was tainted with the deadly poison of presuming to merit the favour of the Almighty. However, supposing they had been all they pretended to be, it is yet evident that every advantage they could possess must be nothing in comparison with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. *You* boast, O Pharisee, of being of the blood of Abraham, an Israelite, nay, a Hebrew of the Hebrews! But what is that compared to all we possess in Christ Jesus, who has made us bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, citizens of heaven, brethren of angels, children of God, and heirs of his kingdom? *You* glory in having been circumcised in carrying the seal of the covenant in your flesh; but Christ gives 119
us infinitely more in which to glory, taking from us the entire fleshly nature, and sealing both the soul and body with the mark of his Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption. *You* make a parade of your righteousness, and tell us that it is without spot; but what can you reply when we tell you, that the righteousness with which our Christ clothes us is much more perfect than yours can be, inasmuch as it is Divine and not human, eternal and not temporal, capable of meeting the eyes and the examination of God, and not those merely of men? But I will go further. Even were you perfectly to fulfil the whole law, so as to have no need of an atonement, and were you thus able to appear before the tribunal of God, and justly claim all that he has promised to entire obedience, still to you could not be given crowns so delightful and so excellent as those which he has given to his Son; and although you would receive your reward, you would not enjoy the kingdom purchased by his blood, you would not share in the honours of Jesus, by being partakers with him, animated by his Spirit, and members of his body, which are certainly the highest honours a creature can possess.

From whence it is evident, that, whatever may be the advantages of the law, they

fall very short of those which are to be found in the knowledge of Jesus; so that, in comparison with them, they may well be counted as loss. And if you consider in what estimation the Pharisees and Judaizing Christians held them, who expected to be justified by the defective imperfect obedience which they rendered to the law, it appears that by thus regarding them they became an obstacle to their salvation, their loss rather than their gain. The apostle, having been taught in the school of Christ, attacks their error sharply, and exposes their pretended advantages as mere things of nought, protesting that, far from glorying in them, he has them in contempt. And he even ventures to compare them to dross and dung, in order to show how great was the folly of these people, who, in glorying in such things, were only making crowns of straw and filth, which would soil and dishonour the head, instead of adorning it. As for himself, he says, although the advantages he possessed were greater than theirs, yet he has willingly suffered the loss of all, that "he may win Christ." And this brings us to the third clause in the text.

III. The apostle compares the things of which he has deprived himself to a price that he willingly paid to possess Christ, and calls him a "gain," because he had found in him infinitely greater good than all he had renounced; a divine instead of a carnal parentage; a complete and perfect righteousness instead of a corrupt and imperfect obedience; the love of God instead of the favour of men; the friendship of angels instead of that of the Jews; immortal glory instead of the vain approbation of the world; true peace in the conscience instead of the mere assumption of it; happiness in the Spirit instead of ease in the flesh; in a word, all the treasures of heaven and eternity instead of a few trifling and perishable possessions in the earth.

But I must here entreat you, dear brethren, carefully to remark what is shown to us by the apostle, namely, that in order to win Christ we must deprive ourselves of all other things. This pearl of great price is only to be obtained at the sum of all that we nave. Those false teachers did not openly renounce Christ; they professed to believe in him, and trust him; they even gave him the highest place in their esteem: but they also required that the sacrifices and ceremonies of Moses should be associated with him as the proper means of man's justification. But the apostle utterly condemns this union of the two. He tells us we must be saved entirely by Christ, and must owe all our righteousness to his free grace alone. He teaches that we must either renounce him altogether, or serve none but him. You insult him if you imagine that to be saved you have need of Moses or any other being. But what! (you will exclaim,) in order to win Christ, am I then obliged to deprive myself of all my worldly goods? Must I quit my nobility, for instance, or my dignities, or my wealth, or the refinement of my manners, my integrity, my strict justice, and other virtues which are often found in those who know not Jesus? Is it not possible to have part with him without abandoning every thing I possessed before?

Dear brethren, I answer, that it is necessary to distinguish between the real value of those things, and the qualities attributed to them by nature or superstition. Paul, to become a Christian, did not renounce his extraction from the blood of Abraham, but he renounced the absurd trust which other Jews placed in this carnal

nobility. He did not lay aside his probity and the righteousness commanded by the law in order to give himself up to intemperance or licentiousness; his conversion rendered him more pure and virtuous than he had ever been; but he dismissed for ever all the pride that he had felt in his own perfection. He did not lay aside good works, but he did lay aside all presumptuous hopes founded upon them. And when we discourse upon the rightousness of faith, it is not that we blame or contemn good works, (God forbid,) but we simply take from them the virtues which our adversaries falsely ascribe to them, namely, of being capable of justifying men before God. This is the leaven that spoils them; this is the fly that corrupts them; this it is that changes their gain into loss, and from jewels produces dross and filth.

As for riches and honours, and similar things, which are good only in their use, and not morally so, we should detach them from our hearts to that degree as to be ready instantly to part with them, whenever it happens that we cannot maintain them in possession without danger of losing Christ. You may be a Christian without being poor. But you cannot be a Christian without being willing to become poor whenever your Master calls you so to be. In short, the doctrine and the example of the apostle teach us to renounce every thing that can only be possessed without Christ, that is to say, every thing incompatible with his inward kingdom, with that entire rule which he ought to bear over us; every thing that can hinder our saying with truth, In him is all our glory.

Thus, dear brethren, I have explained to you this word of the apostle. May God, who has given it to us by the pen of his servant, engrave it in our hearts by the hand of his Spirit, so that henceforward the Son may reign there with absolute power; and in order to gain him, may we hold nothing so dear that we cannot easily part from it, counting our lives but as rubbish in comparison of preserving ourselves pure in him.

Let us then, first, bless God who has given us this knowledge of the Son of his love, the most precious of all his treasures. Let us, with Paul, admire the excellency of this grace, and learn from him to value it at its just price. This knowledge, brethren, infinitely surpasses all earthly wisdom, and even the wisdom of the law itself, though given from heaven. All that knowledge of the ancient Israelites, so much esteemed by Moses, and so exalted above the knowledge of every other nation on the earth, was yet but the rudiment of our gospel: compared with it, it 120
was but like the twinkling of a star, dimly discerned through the darkness of the night, or the pale light of a lamp, feebly indicating the glory of the noonday sun. I will say more: the knowledge of Christ is above the knowledge that Adam had, or could have acquired, in Paradise. It is even more excellent than the light which angels possessed before the manifestation of the Saviour. Let us then praise the Lord for thus enlightening our minds; for thus in his infinite mercy separating us from the rest of the world, which lieth in the darkness of nature or superstition; and vouchsafing to send us his apostles and prophets to teach us the knowledge of the mystery of Christ. O let us profit by his goodness, and be attentive to his instructions. Let us leave all other subjects to study this; and, with St Paul, let us resolve to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Let us give ourselves

no rest until we become acquainted with him. For the light we possess, which shines brightly in the midst of us, will but aggravate our misery, and enhance our condemnation, if we make not the proper use of it. Its real use is to dispose our hearts, like that of Paul, to admire and love Christ above all things, and to esteem as filth and dross whatever places itself in competition with him. And, in fact, brethren, there is not, and there never can be, any thing on earth comparable to this gracious Lord, whether for the excellence of his gifts, or the means by which he bestows them on men.

The Paradise of Eden and its delights were but types of the glorious and perfect beatitude which God has prepared for the members of his Son; so that had we been enabled to perform the whole law, and been on the point of receiving the reward promised under the first covenant, and had the happiness derived from Jesus been then offered to us, we should certainly have quitted the former to embrace the latter, renouncing Adam and his Paradise to obtain Christ. But, alas, these are not the terms offered to us. In the case described, not to choose Christ would be a loss truly; but it would be only the loss of a greater benefit, while the lesser would still remain to us. But now there is no middle line between communion with Christ or the most awful reverse. We are somewhat in the condition of princes, who cannot descend to a private station, they must perish or reign. It is the same with us. We must either reign with Jesus, or perish for ever with devils; either enjoy the most perfect happiness, or suffer the utmost misery; because, being sinners, we can be saved only by Christ, and whom he saves he renders happy to all eternity.

Let us then embrace his salvation with our whole hearts, both on account of his excellence and our own necessity. Let this great truth be stamped upon our minds, that out of him every thing is mortal and evanescent. You behold the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men; time which ends with the world; death which spares none; riches, honours, men, families, villages, empires passing away one after another, and leaving no traces behind them: a secret and inevitable decree sapping the foundation of things apparently the most solid; ravaging and carrying away all things, and plunging them, like the deluge of old, into a dark and deep abyss from whence there is no return. These things you behold now. But those which are yet invisible are infinitely worse; hell-fire unquenchable; the worm that never dies, but is eternally gnawing impenitent sinners!

Remember, therefore, that Jesus Christ alone, like another Noah, saves from destruction all who take refuge in his ark, which now stands open to receive them. That ark, sinners, is your only hope. O flee to it. Disengage yourselves from the trammels of this world, and forsake all to gain it. Reject whatever might retard you in the pursuit of so requisite an end, and scruple not to say to those who would dissuade you from your purpose, though they were even your parents or best friends, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence to me."

Remember, you have nothing so precious as your soul; nothing so sacred, so essential as fellowship with the Saviour; that for him it is needful to "hate father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and even our own life." and that to obtain his salvation it is necessary, in the language of Scripture, "to cut off our hands,

or our feet, or even to pluck out our eyes;" it being "better to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into hell-fire." Unhappy sinner! of what avail can those honours and those pleasures be which you so dearly love, if you lose your own soul? How can you be so ill-advised as to prefer such vanities to the Lord Jesus, the King of glory, the life and happiness of mankind? How is it you do not understand, that in losing him you lose every thing, but by gaining him you lose nothing? If you are willing to quit these things for his sake, he will give himself entirely to you. He will give you the peace of the Father, the consolation of the Spirit, and a blessed immortality. And is not the acquisition of so great a benefit at the expense of such mere trifles an inestimable gain? But, my friends, we have been hitherto spared, and have experienced no temptation, save "that which is common to man." At present, our Lord has not required us to shed our blood for his sake, or to deprive ourselves of our goods, though, were he to demand these things, they would be nothing to the price he has given for us. He requires only that we renounce every evil thing, ambition, avarice, hatred, strife, envy; that we consider all sin as a monstrous thing, for so in fact it is; that we hold it in abhorrence, and look upon it as abominable filth; and that we at all times prefer his glory to the gratification of our own sinful lusts.

Let us then obey these reasonable demands, and in order to win the Saviour, who thus so graciously presents himself to us both in his word and ordinances, let us cast away every thing of a sinful nature, and accustom ourselves so to behold and taste the value of this Divine Redeemer, that at length we may be enabled for his sake to despise every earthly good, and to say with the apostle in sincerity of heart, "Yea doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." Amen.

SERMON XX.

Verse 9–11.

And (that I may) be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

121 We read in the book of Genesis that Adam and Eve, immediately after their fall, perceiving their nakedness, sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons; that, nearing the voice of the Lord, they hid themselves from him among the trees of the garden; that the Almighty, after having convicted them of their sin, and pronounced their sentence of condemnation, (ameliorating his threatened judgments by giving them the hope of restitution through the seed of the woman,) condescended himself to "make them coats of skin, and clothe them."

As all things contained in the ancient Scriptures relate to Christ, who is the sum and substance, of them, I have no doubt, brethren, that this wonderful transaction represents to us some of the mysteries of his gospel. Now in my opinion the first part of this mystical picture describes the feelings and sentiments of sinful man in the state in which he is born. He is not so brutish that he cannot perceive his misery, and the nakedness of his nature, despoiled of that innocence and holiness which ought to dwell therein. This sense of nakedness induces him to seek some covering to conceal his sin and shame, and enable him to appear in the light without blushing. But instead of providing himself with suitable clothing, he does but industriously sew fig leaves together; a vain and useless attempt, too well describing the expiations, satisfactions, and pretended righteousness which nature and superstition have invented to conceal sin, and justify man in the sight of God. For as the fig leaf is rough and unpleasant to the touch, and, moreover, its edges so divided and cut, that it necessarily leaves some part of the body uncovered; so the superstitions and ceremonies which the heathen, the Pharisees, and all others, ancient or modern, who would justify themselves, have invented to hide sin, (the shame of our nature,) are difficult and wearisome to the mind, and are, moreover,

unequal to the task assigned them, being utterly incapable of concealing our nakedness. And therefore it often happens, that those who beguile themselves with such things (though they may strut before men, and talk loudly of their expiations and their merits, fancying they have sufficient not only for themselves, but for others also) no sooner hear the voice of God coming to judge them, than, like Adam and Eve, they flee trembling from him, conscious of the impotence of the miserable fig leaves with which they are adorned, and vainly wishing to hide their nakedness from the eyes of their sovereign Judge.

This appears to me the mystical meaning of the first part of this wonderful nistory. But what can be the signification of the second part; God himself making coats of skin for Adam and Eve, and clothing them therewith? Dear brethren, it is an image of the infinite mercy which God has shown toward us in the person of his Son Jesus. Adam, that is to say, man, with all the fertility of his invention, supplies himself with nothing but useless leaves. God alone, in his goodness, has provided a garment capable of concealing our nakedness, and of enabling us to appear in his presence without shame and without fear. The substance and quality of the clothing made for Adam represents in a lively manner that mystic garment which God has bestowed on us by his Son. For Adam's covering was not made of flax, or of hemp, or of wool, or of silk, or of any of those articles which man employs for this purpose, but *of skins*, as the Scripture tells us; of the skin of some animal put to death in order to clothe our first parents; thereby signifying to us, that the robe with which the Saviour by grace covers his people must cost that blessed Lamb his life, being taken from him who is sacrificed for us. For, as you well know, his death is our life: he has shed his blood to cover our nakedness, and conceal our shame; and by his death alone his saints are invested with their immortal robe of glory. As the clothing of Adam was a gift from God, and not the invention or work of man; so the righteousness of Christ is a gift from heaven, and not a production of the earth. It is given to us by the free grace of God, who, in his wisdom, designed, formed, and made this mystical garment, of which neither angels nor men could have conceived an idea. And as the clothing provided for Adam was suitable to his need, and fit for the purpose designed, not unseemly and imperfect, like the absurd fig leaves of his own sewing together; so the righteousness of the Lamb of God has every requisite for our complete justification, being perfect and entire, and suited to our necessities in every respect, and not defective, like the supposed merits of men, which are in reality more likely to hurt and disgrace than to clothe and adorn us.

It is of this righteousness of God that St Paul speaks to us to-day, brethren, in the text which you have heard. He had seen how useless and imperfect was that with which the disciples of superstition or of the law imagined they could appear before God, having formerly lost his time and trouble in adorning himself with those vain leaves while he was yet in the school of the Pharisees. But the eyes of his understanding having been enlightened from heaven in a miraculous manner to see the wonderful treasures of the Lord Jesus, he instantly and for ever quitted the false splendour of his Pharisaic clothing, casting it away as no better than mere

fig leaves, and gave himself entirely to the Saviour; thus putting aside the garments of the first Adam to adorn himself with those of the Second. He had begun this subject in the preceding verse, in which he declares, as you will remember, that "he had suffered the loss of all (these) things, counting them as dung, that he might win Christ." He now enforces this proposition, showing us more especially in what the "gain" of possessing Christ consisted; and what were the effects of that fellowship with him which he was so desirous to possess: "That I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

The apostle in this rich and magnificent, though brief, language, declares to us that which he expected from the Lord Jesus, and which he actually gives to all who truly believe in him.

First, He clothes them with "the righteousness of God by faith."

Secondly, He gives them a part in "the power of his resurrection."

Thirdly, He makes them "conformable to his death." And,

Lastly, He conducts them to his glorious "resurrection;" and this includes all the principal mercies that we receive from God by his Son: it is by him that we are justified and sanctified; by him we are armed with patience to endure afflictions; and by him we shall at length be raised in glory. These, therefore, if it please God, shall form the four subjects of the present discourse: the righteousness of God in Christ; the power of his resurrection; the fellowship of his sufferings; and the resurrection from death to which we aspire.

I. To commence, then, with the first clause, the apostle tells us that he renounced
122 all other advantages in order that he "might be found in Christ not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." *To he found*, in the language in which the apostle wrote, is generally expressive simply of *to be*, and in the text, therefore, *to be found in him*, signifies *to be in him:* however, the common mode of expression may perhaps be best here. For when God comes to judge men, he finds them in opposite states; some *without* Christ, having no fellowship with him; others *in* Christ, trusting to him alone, and united to him by a pure and simple faith. The apostle desires to be of the number of these last, well knowing that out of Christ nothing is to be expected but condemnation and misery; and therefore to this end he, as it were, quits himself, he casts away every advantage that belonged to him by birth and education, to put on Christ; so that when the sovereign Judge shall come, or the accuser present himself, he may be found in Christ, in his body, in his vine. It appears that he here alludes to what he had said before, that he counted all things loss, and most willingly deprived himself of them, that he might win Christ; adding now that he had done so *to be found in him*, or, *to find himself in him;* and this signifies that the *loss* of all was very advantageous to him, since instead of those things of nought of which he had deprived himself, he now possessed Christ,

being lost in himself to be saved by him. And truly there is but this one Saviour in whom man can be found; he is lost if he relies on any other: and, on the contrary, whatever loss he may sustain to win Christ, he finds again in him; as saith our Lord on another subject, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it," Matthew 10:39.

But the apostle, in order to mark more especially the object he seeks, and, in fact, finds in Christ, adds, "not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." God, being of purer eyes than to behold sin, will never communicate himself to the creature who is guilty of it, while he remains unpunished; there are therefore but two methods of appearing in his presence and partaking of his favour: the one is, by proving that we are free from sin, having perfectly fulfilled his commands; the other, by receiving mercy and grace through the satisfaction of Jesus Christ, who by his obedience even unto death, has made an atonement for sin, and appeased the wrath of God. The first of these two ways is that which the apostle calls in the text, "his righteousness, which is of the law;" the second, "the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." He had formerly followed the first way, while in the darkness of Phariseeism, expecting to be justified (that is, declared righteous, and treated by God as such) by the works of the law, in virtue of that obedience which he daily studied to render to its commands. And these false teachers, by reason of whom he seems partly to have penned this Epistle, still retained the same error while professing Christianity, subjecting believers to the law, and supposing that these observances which they added to the gospel would be the means of justifying them in the sight of God. But St Paul, enlightened by the Lord, altogether rejects this way of justification, showing at some length, in the five first chapters of his Epistle to the Romans, that in the present state of man it is impracticable; and again, he carries on the same argument in the Epistle to the Galatians. And indeed, if we consider the subject calmly, this truth is self-evident. For as the law curses with inexorable rigour whoever should fail in one point which it commands; and as it appears, on the other hand, both by the word of God, and the answer of the conscience, that there is no mortal man who has not sinned, and who fails not continually in that obedience which the law demands; who does not see that if he were to have the boldness to present himself before the tribunal of the law, he could but bring thence confusion and cursing? Yes, it is impossible that man can be saved by the law. It is on this account that David entreats the Lord not to enter into judgment with him, adding that in his sight no flesh could be justified, Psalm 14:3. But there is no need to insist on this point. The authority and the example of the apostle are sufficient for us, and he loudly and clearly renounces in the text "the righteousness which is of the law." But blessed for ever be the Lord, who in the inexhaustible treasures of his wisdom and mercy has found another method of justifying the sinner, not only possible, but easy, by sending his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, and through his blood making a new covenant with us, which saith not, as the old covenant, "Do this, and live," but, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved;" so

that whosoever believes obtains remission of sins, and access to the throne of God, there to receive the fruits of grace, peace, consolation, sanctification, and in the end a blessed immortality; all in virtue of that obedience which Jesus rendered to the Father on the cross, where he was made sin and a curse for us, his agonies being imputed to us as though we had suffered them. It is to this righteousness St Paul alludes. This he desires to possess as the only means of obtaining the peace of God, as the only title to salvation and to life. He knows that no other can stand before an all-searching God; that no righteousness but this can meet his view. He calls it righteousness because it is by it that we are justified, being dealt with by the Lord as though we were perfectly righteous, as though we had never committed a sin against him. He tells us it is by the "faith of Christ," (that is, by the faith we possess in the gospel of Christ,) because it is communicated to the believer in Jesus, according as the Scriptures teach in an infinite number of places. "He that believeth in the Son is not condemned, but is passed from death unto life," John 3:18, 36. And therefore the apostle elsewhere says, that whoso believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness, Romans 4:5, because it occupies the place of righteousness; this faith obtaining from God all the recompence that is promised to the most perfect obedience, even as it is said of Abraham, "He believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

The apostle adds, that this "righteousness is of God by faith," because it is God alone who establisheth us therein, who hath given us the Son, the foundation of our faith, having revealed him from heaven, and who communicate th this righteousness in imputing to the believer the obedience of the Mediator, regarding him with a favourable eye when thus clothed as it were with Jesus, and crowning him with all the benefits he purchased by his death upon the cross.

Our adversaries of the church of Rome, who retain in some degree the doctrine of those whom the apostle here condemns, interpret these words in another manner, and understand by "the righteousness which is of God by faith," the good works St Paul performed after he became a Christian, pretending that through their means he was justified before God, and therefore calls them "the righteousness of God by faith," because they were the fruits of his faith in Christ. But this
123 interpretation upholds a doctrine full of vanity and pride, condemned by the apostle a hundred times, namely, that man may be justified by his works: it strains and perverts the whole text, and makes void the contrast which St Paul expressly draws between "the righteousness which is by the law," and "the righteousness of God," which he desired to possess in Christ; it being clear, even according to our antagonists, that he might equally well call the good works which he performed when a Christian his "righteousness which is by the law," as those which he had performed when a Jew, since it was himself who did them; since they were done according to the law, which commands us to love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves; and since he wrought them, if you believe the Romish church, with a view to be justified by them, according to that word of the law, "Do this, and live." But this explanation evidently injures the cause of the apostle. For those of whom he had been discoursing also professed to have embraced the

gospel, and maintained that the good works by which they expected to be justified were fruits of faith in Christ; so that if the apostle's righteousness consisted also in good works, he was wrong for having argued so forcibly against them. He ought only to have forbidden circumcision and the other ceremonies which these people retained, leaving to the works commanded by the moral law the glory they ascribed to them, that of being the cause of our justification; instead of which he every where disputes against this doctrine, absolutely denying that man can be justified by the works of the law; and placing expressly among the advantages that he had renounced all "the righteousness that is by the law," in which, until then, he had been irreproachable; and it is evident the works of the moral law are equally intended with those of the ceremonial.

And as for that which some allege, that the righteousness which St Paul renounced proceeded from his own free-will, while that which he desired to find in Christ was derived from the grace of the Holy Spirit, if the apostle had had any intention of marking this difference, it is strange that he says nothing respecting it, either here or elsewhere; all his argument being against the power attributed to good works of being able to justify man, and not against the principle from whence they proceeded. Again, is it not very clear that these people held that their works were the offspring of their own free-will, after they had received the gospel? and it appears they maintained on this subject an opinion similar to that which is taught in most of the Romish schools, namely, that good works spring partly from grace, and partly from free-will.

But they add, that the righteousness the apostle desired must be understood as a righteousness inherent in his person, and not imputed by the grace of God, because he says he is in Christ, and those who are in him, by virtue of that fellowship, are really sanctified in their hearts; and this, they suppose, is signified by the words, "that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings which, however, evidently signify the sanctification produced in us by the communion we have with desks crucified and raised again. Thus far I most willingly allow, that every man, who by a true and lively faith enters into communion and fellowship with Jesus, is, by the mercy of God, transformed into a new creature, and "created unto good works," that he may walk therein in fear and trembling, as the apostle has taught us elsewhere: "Who has given himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Titus 2:14; and again, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," 2 Corinthians 5:17: and I grant also, that Paul, the chosen vessel, abounded in these Divine fruits more than any other disciple of the Lord. We dispute this with none. We simply contend that, upon the subject of appearing before God to partake of his grace and glory, neither Paul nor any other true believer trusts to any thing but the death and passion of the Lord Jesus. No believer depends upon his works for justification, however excellent they may be.

Be it then that Paul, by the efficacy of fellowship with Jesus, and by virtue of his death and resurrection, was greatly sanctified, and produced excellent fruits of piety and charity (as I believe, and for which I praise God); it does not therefore

follow that this holy apostle pleaded his works as his righteousness before the tribunal of the Lord, or that he intends to speak of them here by the "righteousness of God," as opposed to his own, or "the righteousness which is of God by faith," opposed to that which is "by the law." On the contrary, the distinction he draws between "the knowledge of Christ and fellowship with his sufferings," and the possession of the "righteousness of God," as of effects and cause, evidently proves that this righteousness, and the holiness depending thereon, are separate things.

The righteousness of God, which we have in his Son, is the principle, the source, the cause: holiness is the fruit, the stream, the effect; good works, as one said formerly, following, and not preceding justification; an evident token that they are not the cause of it. This truth is so clear, and so needful for the peace of the soul, that our adversaries are constrained to join hands with it, when they consider it calmly, without the excitement and warmth of dispute. And to close the subject, I will quote the words of a cardinal of the Romish church, celebrated in his age for the purity of his doctrine, the integrity of his manners, the nobility of his birth, and the various offices of trust which he discharged.[1]

"We ought to rest upon the righteousness that is given us in Christ, as on a sure and solid foundation, and not upon the grace or holiness inherent in us. For as for this inherent righteousness, it is but in its infancy, and very imperfect, and cannot prevent us from sinning and transgressing continually in many things; consequently we have need to pray to God daily for pardon. And therefore, clothed with our own righteousness, we cannot stand before God just and holy as the children of Christ should be. But the righteousness of Christ, which is bestowed on us, is a true and perfect righteousness, complete in the sight of God, in which can be nothing offensive, nothing unpleasing to him. It is, then, upon this only secure foundation that we ought to lean, believing that by this alone we are justified, that is, accounted righteous and holy before God. This is that precious treasure which Christians sell all they have to procure. This is the pearl of great price, which whoever finds leaves all to possess; as says St Paul, 'I count all things but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Jesus Christ.'" And again, "We see by experience that the more holy men advance in holiness, the more are they dissatisfied with themselves, and the more do they perceive their need of Jesus Christ and his righteousness; and therefore they renounce themselves, and trust on Christ alone; because their eyes are more enlightened to behold the imperfection of
124 their obedience and inherent righteousness; and the more clear and distinct their sight is, the more spots and blemishes do they discover in themselves; so that at length they are brought to rely entirely on the grace and righteousness of Christ, instead of leaning in any degree upon their own holiness and merit."

Such is the acknowledgment made by this writer, of the truth of the doctrine of justification by the grace and merit of Christ alone. Ah, God forbid, beloved

1 Contarin on Justification, p. 572.

brethren, that we should ever be drawn aside into error by the persuasions of others, so as to be induced to depart from so holy and essential a doctrine.

II. I must now return to the apostle, who goes on to recount the excellent fruits of this righteousness of God which he possessed in Christ; saying, "that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection." I am not ignorant that the apostle says in his Epistle to the Romans, "Christ was raised for our justification;" meaning that by his glorious resurrection he has shown us that the atonement made by his death was perfect and entire, and as such accepted by the Father; his resurrection, being as it were a token of complete acquittance for the payment of our ransom: and therefore what Paul says in my text of the power of his resurrection, may relate to that faith which it is capable of producing in us, whereby we are justified.[1] But it appears that the apostle having spoken sufficiently of our righteousness in Christ, these words more properly relate to the efficacy of his resurrection for our sanctification, by raising us from the sepulchre of sin. For St Paul attributes this effect to it in many parts of his writings, teaching us that "we are buried with Christ by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised again from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life," Romans 6; and "if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." St Peter also tells us that "we have been begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; and that by this resurrection we have the answer of a good conscience towards God," 1 Peter 1;3; 3:21; in which he makes the principal virtue of our baptism to consist. And therefore it is that when he would describe our sanctification, St Paul makes use frequently of these grand expressions, that "we are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead," Colossians 2:12; and he says not only that we are "raised together with him, but that we are seated with him in the heavenly places," Ephesians 2:6. On this account it is that he so beautifully exhorts the believers at Colosse: "If then you are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God," Colossians 3:1. In fact, the resurrection of Christ from the dead has detached the hearts of believers from this world, in which they were formerly buried. It has manifested the sovereign love which God bears to them, and his design of clothing them with his own glory, of taking from them all that is carnal and earthly, and of converting them into celestial and Divine beings. He has shown them in the person of Christ, the model of their life, and the only real good, which ought thenceforward to be all the desire of their souls; for by faith beholding him rising from the grave, laden with the spoils of death, and crowned with glory, surely it is impossible but that this manifestation of the power and goodness of God must constrain them to aim at the like resurrection, to place all their hopes and affections in him, and to find their highest joy in communion with him; and fulfilling his commands by following his example. This, my friends, is "the power of his resurrection" which the apostle desired to know; that is, to feel by experience

1 The Cardinal Contarin.

its sovereign efficacy. For he speaks not here of a dead and naked knowledge; of an idea conceived in the mind without any impression made upon the heart. But according to the usual style of Scripture, he means to express a lively knowledge, which is confirmed by feeling and experience. And the addition of this to the righteousness of God by Jesus Christ is very suitable. For the mercenary spirit of those against whom he argues, and of all their disciples, leading them to believe that there can be no inducement to good works, except the reward which (they suppose) they merit, they therefore imagine that holiness is at an end when justification by the free grace of God in Christ is established.

Therefore, to prevent these people from calumniating the doctrine of the apostle, and imputing to him that in teaching the righteousness of Christ by faith he opened a door to sin, he adds, that such was not the design of God in justifying us freely, and that the righteousness of faith is given us in order that we may go on to "know the power of the resurrection of the Lord." In the same manner, in his Epistle to the Romans, after having at some length magnificently established the doctrine of justification by faith without works, he adds, "What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid." To which answer he adds also the efficacy of the resurrection of Christ for our sanctification.

And in this our day, is not our doctrine misunderstood and calumniated in the same way? do they not say, Since you are justified by faith alone, what inducement have you to perform good works? But, O ye adversaries, it is to perform good works that I am justified. This Divine righteousness of Christ has been communicated to me, in order that I may be transformed into his image; that I may know the power of his resurrection, and that I may be like him, a new creature; that I may love God, not to lay him under obligation to me, (far, far from my soul such a preposterous notion,) but to acquit myself in a small degree of the immense debt I owe him. I love him because he has loved me, because God is love, and because he has sent his Son Jesus to die and rise again for me. Will my obedience be less acceptable to him because I think not of merit in rendering it? Will he reject it because the cross and resurrection of Christ inspires it, and not an intention of deserving a reward? You allow that the holiness of the blessed, of those who are already in heaven, and of those who will be there after the resurrection, does not justify them, or merit for them a continuation of their glory. Why then do you blame me for believing that the commencement of the rudiments of holiness are of the same nature as its completion and perfection? Why may I not serve God here on earth in the same manner as I hope to serve him hereafter in heaven, with a pure, a free, and a truly filial affection? And such affection, far from presuming to acquire any right of reward from so good and so merciful a Father, must after all its efforts remain dissatisfied with itself, and be content to ascribe all it has been able to do to his free grace alone.

III. It is again to confound these false teachers of works that St Paul adds, in the third place, that he desired, with the righteousness of Christ, to know "the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."

125 These people against whom he argues boasted of enhancing the value of good

works by the opinion of their merit, and pretended also that believers were bound to the observance of legal ceremonies, such as abstinence from certain meats, distinctions of days, &c., as plainly appears by the Epistle to the Colossians. And you know that at this day those who maintain justification by works support their opinion in two ways: by accusing the doctrine of grace of cutting the very nerves of holiness; and by commanding various carnal observances of fasts, of feasts, voluntary poverty, pilgrimages, and such-like devotions, which they practise (they say) for the mortification of the flesh; so much the same at all times is the spirit of superstition. To the efficacy of their pretended doctrine of merit by works, St Paul opposes the power of Christ's resurrection, as being incomparably more capable of sanctifying us. To their legal exercises he opposes the part we have in the afflictions of the Lord, suffering in his name, and after his example, in various ways. These (he observes) are my fasts and my mortifications; the gospel fast, predicted by the Saviour to his disciples, when he warned them that after the Bridegroom should be taken from them, they should fast and mourn, Matthew 9. And the apostle explains this discipline to which we are subject during our earthly pilgrimage in his usual splendid manner, calling it "to know" (that is, as we have already said, to understand by experience) "the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." The sufferings of the Lord are the things which he has suffered for us, and especially upon the cross, as appears by the apostle's adding, "being made conformable unto his death." These sufferings may be considered in two ways: first, as expiatory of our sins, borne by Jesus Christ in our stead in his quality of Surety. And of these we are partakers, inasmuch as, embracing them by faith, God imputes them to us, as though we ourselves had suffered in our own persons; and he communicates to us the fruit thereof, namely, that Divine and perfect righteousness whereof we have spoken above; by which, absolved from all our sins, we become acceptable to God as his dear children, and can never more be called to endure any meritorious or expiatory sufferings as were those of the Saviour. But these afflictions, besides this first and primary object, have yet another; inasmuch as they are the models, the patterns which Jesus has left us to follow, having submitted to them with this view, as our elder Brother; and inasmuch as they are the first#fruits of death, showing us the path by which it is the good pleasure of the Father to conduct us to salvation. And thus we are partakers with him, being called to suffer after his example. And this fellowship may also be considered in two ways: first, as interior; second, as exterior. The first is the mortification of sin within us, the crucifixion, so to speak, of the old nature upon the cross of Christ, transpiercing it with his thorns and nails, drinking of his vinegar, and thus putting it to death by degrees; in which the passion of the Saviour is represented within our hearts. And in this sense St Paul is to be understood, when he says "that we have been planted together in the likeness of his death;" and "that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin," Romans 6:5–6. In the same manner, in another place, he tells us that "he is crucified with Christ," and "that they who are in Christ have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts," Galatians 2:20; 5:24.

The second fellowship in the sufferings of the Lord, and which we have called exterior, is the part we have in the afflictions and persecutions of the church, for the confirmation of the truth of God, for the glory of the name of Jesus, and for the edification of men; according to that we are taught in the Epistle to the Romans, that we are "predestinated to be conformed to his image," chapter 829, evidently in this respect of suffering; and again, "All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," 2 Timothy 3:12. This is properly the "fellowship of his sufferings," of which the apostle is speaking in the text; and he also mentions "a conformity to his death," because it was an image of that which he suffered, when he endured with humility and patience the death to which he was condemned by the persecutors; nobly finishing his course, and sealing the truth with his own blood.

Behold, then, the two principal fruits of our justification by Christ Jesus, deeply to feel and experience, first, the power of his resurrection; and secondly, the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. This is the path by which God conducts us to the third and highest point of all happiness; it being very certain that if we suffer and die with Christ, we shall live and reign with him. And this the apostle teaches us in the last clause of the text, adding, "if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

IV. It is quite clear that by this expression he does not simply intend the general resurrection of the dead. For, speaking literally, all men shall rise again, even the wicked, though in shame and ignominy. But he especially intends the resurrection of believers, with all the glory and blessedness with which they are to be crowned; and our Lord himself often uses these words in the same sense, promising to those that believe in him, and eat his flesh and drink his blood, that "he will raise them up at the last day," John 6:39; that is to say, that he will give unto them eternal life. And, in fact, since the term resurrection properly signifies a re-establishing of that which was decayed and fallen to pieces, the word is hardly suitable to the reappearing of the wicked, who only rise from the tomb to be hurried into the abyss of destruction.

The enemies of the doctrine of the assurance of believers conclude from this clause in the text, "if that by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead," that St Paul was not certain of his salvation, since he speaks of it doubtfully and with an "if." But how can that agree with what he says elsewhere? "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day," 2 Timothy1:12; and, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day," 2 Timothy 4:8. Again, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Romans 8:38–39. These, and similar passages, are so clear, that even those who object to the doctrine of assurance except St Paul from the number of doubters, supposing that by a special privilege he had been assured of his perseverance in Divine grace. What are we to say then

to the passage before us? Dear brethren, we must say, first, That the expression used here of "if by any means" does not necessarily signify the doubtfulness and uncertainty of an event, but it rather denotes the difficulty as well as the diversity of ways and means by which it is to be brought about. And we must add, secondly, That which takes away the whole difficulty, namely, that one of the most learned Greek grammarians remarked several centuries since, that the best and most ancient writers in that language use the term which the apostle here employs simply to signify, *in order to, to the end that;* and he adds, that those who lived in the earliest ages were familiar with this expression: as, "I hasten, if by any means I may finish this,"[1] signifying simply, "I hasten in order to finish this." From this you will see that there is no real difficulty in this passage; the apostle, by the words, "if that by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead," not intending to express any doubt or distrust, but simply the desire and endeavour of his mind, exactly as if he had said, "in order to attain to the resurrection." 126

Such, my brethren, is the gain which the apostle found in Christ. First, He obtained a perfect and assured salvation, a righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ. Secondly, A blessed and happy experience of the power of the resurrection of his Lord. And, thirdly, The glorious fellowship of his sufferings, in order to attain at last to the resurrection and eternal life. Judge, then, if, to possess so great an abundance of precious things, an eternal and solid peace with God, the honour of dying and being raised again with Christ, and of entering at length into his glorious kingdom, he was not right in renouncing the pretended merit of Phariseeism, and the ceremonies of the Jewish superstition. My beloved brethren, let us imitate the wisdom of this holy apostle; and let us leave all to embrace Jesus Christ. Let us spoil ourselves of all that we possess, in order to be clothed with this precious Lamb, and be willing to lose ourselves that we may be found in him, not having our own righteousness, but his. Our righteousness, how perfect soever it may appear, is soiled with many spots, and is totally incapable of sustaining the examination of the piercing eyes of Divine justice, which discovers blemishes in the sun itself, and which "charges the very angels with folly." There is no righteousness but that of Christ that can be acceptable to the Almighty. Clothed in that, I may boldly appear before the throne of God, without fearing either the accusations of the enemy; for what can he say against the blood and obedience of the eternal Son? or the thunders of the law; for with what can the law threaten me, since its curse has been abolished by the cross of my Lord? or the horrors of death, since my Saviour has disarmed it of all that was terrible to me. With this righteousness I shall enter heaven, and converse with angels without a sensation of shame. With it I shall obtain all the promised blessings of God, his Spirit, his paradise, his eternity. The Father can refuse nothing to a righteousness which he himself ordained, and which has been proved perfectly acceptable to him by his having already crowned it, in the person of our Head, with all the glory of his heavenly kingdom.

1 See also Eustathius in Iliad ψ, p. 1286, and in Iliad ω, p. 1350, Edit. Romans See in 10. p. 1350. 65. and p. 1016. 1. 46; and in Odys. 3. p. 1556. 1. 2.

And here, I entreat you, say not, Who shall descend into the deep, or who shall mount up to the heavens, to bring me this precious righteousness? This righteousness is not, like that of the law, difficult and laborious, or, to speak truly, impossible to obtain, being altogether beyond our reach; but it is nigh unto us, in our mouth, and in our heart. It is, says the apostle, "by faith." "If thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe with thy heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Only take care that your faith is lively and sincere, that it is not a mere illusion, a fancy, an idea, but a firm persuasion, an entire assurance of the truth of the gospel. Let it be a faith like that of Abraham, and of the apostle. Whoso has this faith has Jesus Christ dwelling within him, and no man has the Son without being a partaker of his righteousness, of his life, and of his salvation. It is for this that the righteousness of Christ is given us, that he may dwell within us, and strengthen us in order that we may know the power of his resurrection, as the apostle declares. Far from us be the ideas of those profane persons who abuse the doctrines of grace, and turn them into licentiousness. Such people have never known the righteousness or faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. If they were members of his body, they would be animated by his Spirit, they would be dead and raised again with him, they would live his life, that is, not an earthly and carnal, but a heavenly and spiritual life. And although, by God's grace, our doctrine is entirely innocent of their misfortune and crime, rejecting certainly the supposition of merit, but in such a manner that it retains and establishes the necessity of true sanctification, yet, nevertheless, as error and superstition continually lay this blame to our charge, as they formerly did to St Paul, let us study with the utmost care to refute their calumny, not with the pen or tongue, but with that which is much more effectual, namely, the holiness of our lives. Let our life be a manifest proof of our faith. Let our conduct be so pure that our adversaries may be constrained to recognise in us the Spirit of sanctification. Let the "power of Christ's resurrection" shine forth through us. Christian, the power of this Divine resurrection can never be experienced while you are buried in the sepulchre of vice, having your heart wallowing in the mud of voluptuousness and carnal delights; admiring the vanities of this world, and seeking your happiness therein; or sighing after gold and silver with your affections swallowed up in the mines from whence those metals are drawn. The resurrection of Christ detaches all who feel its power from such miserable follies. It makes them breathe the air of heaven, and see the light of the glory of God. It fills them with Divine love, and thereby purifies their affections and desires. It changes their habits, clothes them with light, and produces a heavenly life and walk; in a word, it transforms them into the image of Jesus their Lord.

Let us then, dear brethren, seek to receive this Divine power in our hearts. Let us attentively contemplate this beautiful and glorious life, which he has placed before our eyes by rising from the grave holy and immortal, and in which is every thing that can be desired to render us perfectly happy. And having seen so beautiful an object, how could we have any affection for the trifles of earth? O unhappy earth, where time and death consume all things, none but Christ my

Saviour has escaped thy vanities! Thy chains were unable to enslave him. He broke thy bonds, and instead of the weak animal life which thou didst take from him, he has obtained another, Divine and incorruptible, which has no need of thy elements, no fear of thy changes and alterations. And he has not taken this Divine life for himself alone. He will communicate it to us also, (for we are his,) but according to the method arranged by his wisdom, and of which he has given us an example in himself. For he was tempted; he died before he could revive. And herein is he our model. Let us not fear, then, to travel that road wherein his footsteps can be traced. Let us be partakers, not with patience merely, but with joy, of his sufferings and of his death. Let us believe that these sufferings, and this death, will add to our glory and happiness, since they render us conformable to the Son of God, and conduct us to the enjoyment of his immortality. What if the flesh find them 127
difficult to bear; they are sent to mortify it, to disturb its pernicious pleasures, to extinguish its passions, and to humble its pride. They also exercise our piety, they awaken and revive our faith, they inflame our affections, quicken us in prayer, and produce in us a deadness to the world, and more ardent desires after heaven. They try our patience, and prove our faith in Christ. They confound Satan, and cause angels to rejoice. They glorify God, and edify men. And, after all, they will soon be over. Jesus was but six hours upon the cross, and now reigns for ever in heaven. Let us then cheerfully support these light afflictions which quickly pass away, that we may attain to the resurrection, the blessed end of all our sorrows and trials, and the joyful commencement of our true happiness; when our glorious and gracious Lord, who now gives us his righteousness, and makes us to know the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, will give us a share in his glory, transforming our bodies into the likeness of his own, putting a crown upon our heads, clothing us with immortality, and granting us an everlasting abode in his palace; allowing us to eat at his table, and to live and reign in his court with him and his holy angels for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXI.

Verse 12–14.

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

In the books written by the ancient Greeks, which have been preserved from destruction, we read that one of the most esteemed amusements of that nation was the sight of the games and combats which were celebrated from time to time with great solemnity. Companies of persons were established among them, the best qualified to judge of the trials of strength made in the circus; they named the reward proposed to the conqueror; they fixed the day, and appointed the place for the combats, to which multitudes came from all parts of Greece, who regarded the games with extravagant delight, and honoured those who excelled with acclamation and applause. The victors were crowned by the hands of the judges in the presence of all their countrymen. Their names were engraven on plates of brass, and registered by command of the magistrates in the public archives, to mark the time. They were conducted back, and received by their fellow citizens, with as much pomp as the generals and commanders of armies in their triumphs, and they and their descendants enjoyed ample privileges, with which the public had honoured them.

Dear brethren, God invites us to-day to a spectacle much more beautiful than those which I have described; to a combat, instituted, not by vain men, but by the eternal Father, in which is to be seen, not a Greek nourished and exercised in the halls and plains of this world, but an apostle trained in a heavenly school; running a race, not level and smooth, but rough and difficult, and strewed with thorns; not before the eyes of a single nation, but in the sight of God, of angels, and of men; not for a corruptible crown of leaves and flowers which fade in a day, but for a crown of immortal life. Bring hither, then, your mind awakened and purified. Consider the strength, the valour, the courage, the address, the zeal of this Divine

champion. Be careful to observe all his steps, not just to feed your eyes with a vain amusement, which was all the fruit reaped by the Greeks at their spectacles; but rather in order to imitate the course of this holy man, to enter the same career, to follow him courageously, to place your feet on the traces of his footsteps, and arriving with him at the goal, to receive with him, from the hands of the eternal Judge, the glorious reward provided for the victor.

This same Paul, who formerly undertook, and so happily completed, this celestial course, represents it to us to-day in the text which you have heard. His design is to induce the Philippians to embrace Jesus Christ alone, to content themselves with him, and, without lending their ears or hearts to any other, to fix and concentrate all their thoughts, affections, and desires on this Prince of life, convinced that in possessing him they possess every thing. To persuade them to this, he sets before them his own example, showing them how, renouncing all other things, he had given himself entirely to Christ, despoiling himself of all that he possessed in order to be found in that sovereign Lord, clothed with his righteousness, transformed into his image, dead and raised again with him. He, however, adds here that he had not arrived at his desired end; he had not yet comprehended in all its fulness the power of this Divine resurrection; so deep, so grand is this study, so inexhaustible are the riches of this knowledge. For which reason he subjoins that he is always endeavouring to go forward, and that, leaving the things that are behind, he reaches forth incessantly towards the goal, every day making some advance in his heavenward course, in order at length to receive the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Thus you see how diligently it behoved the Philippian converts to study the gospel, since their master, the great apostle, who was so far beyond them, had not been able, with all his zeal and devotion, to exhaust its riches; and how it also behoved them to forget, like him, the things that were behind, and to press toward the mark, whereby they might attain the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

But this lesson, my brethren, belongs to us, as much or even more than to the Philippians, because, if we compare our progress with theirs, it will be found that they were more advanced than we are in the fear of God, and in the knowledge of his gospel. Let us, then, listen attentively, that we may practise carefully; and in order more fully to comprehend our subject, we will consider separately, with the blessing of God, the two points which here present themselves to us. The first is the declaration of the apostle, that he has not yet arrived at perfection, contained in these words: "Not that I have already attained, either am already perfect. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended." The second, which regards the efforts he was making to arrive at perfection, is expressed in the following words: "But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

I. As for the first point, it explains itself, as you must perceive, in two ways. (128)

First, in these words, which relate to the verses preceding, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." For having protested above that he had renounced all things to be "found in Christ, having the righteousness of faith; that he might know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, and that he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (words which allude as well to the sanctification as to the glory which Christ gives to the saints); lest any should imagine that he already possessed these things in full perfection, he anticipates this idea, and declares that he thus spoke, not to signify that he had already apprehended, or that he was already perfect, but rather that he was following on to apprehend them perfectly. The same truth is then again advanced, though expressed in a somewhat different manner; for, addressing more especially the Philippians, "Brethren, (says he,) as for me, I count not myself to have apprehended." It is clear that in both these sentences the apostle meant to assure them that he had not yet apprehended, and was not yet perfect.

Will it be asked what it was which he had not yet apprehended or understood? It is true that in the words immediately preceding he was speaking of the resurrection of the dead. But it does not appear that he alludes to that; for "to have apprehended the resurrection of the dead" must signify one of two things, either to have received from God that blessed resurrection, or to have embraced the hope of it as certainly as if it were already possessed. St Paul here is evidently not speaking of either of these subjects. Not of the first; for although it was true that in this sense he had not yet apprehended the resurrection, yet there was no occasion to say so in this place; because, having said it, why should he say it the second time? It would have been very useless, and utterly unworthy of this great apostle, to say to the Philippians, to whom he was writing, and who knew that he was living at Rome, that he was not yet raised from the dead; and then to protest again, Brethren, as for me, I am not yet raised from the dead. For who could suppose that he was? Who could imagine it for a moment?

Neither was he likely to say that he had not yet apprehended the resurrection by faith, that is, that he was not assured of it; for how could he say that, who declares in another place, "God has raised us up together with Christ, and has made us to sit together in the heavenly places?" Ephesians 2:6; speaking of the resurrection as of a thing so certain that it is (as it were) already accomplished; and so assured was he of the fact, that he says in 2 Timothy 1:12, "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

No, brethren, the apostle's words in this place relate to quite another thing than to this last effect of the grace of God towards us; they relate not to glory and immortality, but to that knowledge of Christ, of the power of his resurrection, and of the fellowship of his sufferings, of which he had been speaking. It is this which he tells us he had not yet apprehended or understood; and by reason of this, he adds, that he has not yet been rendered perfect. For the first of these words[1]

1 Ἔλαβον

is often used in the Greek language to signify *a perfect apprehension, in which nothing more is wanted*, and would express a thing so thoroughly well known and understood, that there remained nothing more to be known. This it is the apostle intends by saying that he has not yet entirely "apprehended" (the power of Christ's resurrection, the fellowship of his sufferings, and the knowledge of himself); that is to say, he had not yet received all the blessed effects of the power of the death and resurrection of Christ, in such a manner and degree that he did not fail in any point, and that he could make no more progress in the divine life. Indeed it is very evident that he speaks not here of a simple and naked knowledge, but of an experimental acquaintance with Christ, as we have before explained. And for this reason he adds that "he has not yet been made perfect." For this term, which, according to the different subjects for which it is used, signifies different degrees of perfection, may here be taken for the last and highest, when believers fail in no point or degree of sanctification which the power of Christ crucified and raised again ought to produce in them; precisely in the same manner as the apostle is to be understood in his Epistle to the Hebrews, when he speaks of "the spirits of just men made perfect," Hebrews 12:28 (for in this passage he makes use of the same word). It is this state of holiness, as perfect as that of the saints in heaven, to which he alludes, when he says he "has not yet been made perfect," signifying that he had not come to that; that however advanced he might be in some respects, yet in others he still failed, and had not therefore yet attained to this last and highest point. And because believers who saw in him such an admirable zeal, and a life so ardently devoted to the service of Christ, might find this his humility strange, and might be astonished at his classing himself with those disciples who were still learning, and endeavouring after perfection, instead of with those who had arrived at that point, he repeats his words, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended;" as though he had said, Your charity perhaps judges otherwise, but as I know myself better than any other person can know me, and as I have some idea of the holiness to which the power of Christ's resurrection and fellowship with his sufferings conducts, I cannot consider that I have yet arrived at this high point of perfection.

There are those who suppose that the apostle alludes to some among the Philippians who boasted of being perfect, (and you know that they who desire to be justified by their own works often attribute to themselves perfection,) and that it was to humble their pride that he says, "Brethren, as for me, I count not myself to have apprehended;" as if he would say, Though there are some among you who imagine they have attained the highest degree of perfection, yet, for my part, I have not that opinion of myself; I confess freely, that I have not yet perfectly apprehended the sanctifying power of my Lord, and. that I am still in the number of those who learn and advance in this study. In the same manner, a master, who saw some of his scholars puffed up with a foolish opinion of their knowledge, imagining they had nothing more to learn, might say to them to humble their vanity, My children, for my part, I do not consider that I know all things; I learn

something every day: the science we have embraced is so deep that I discover daily some new wonder wherewith to enrich my mind.

But whatever design the apostle may have had in this discourse, thus much is evident, that he confesses he is not already perfect, and he repeats this twice, that we may remark it as a matter of some importance. And in fact it is a secret of great use in religion; for the opinion of our own perfection is a very dangerous error, and has two most pernicious consequences: the one renders us guilty of pride, the disposition of mind most at variance with salvation, God giving grace to the humble; the other relaxes the nerves of devotion, for he who supposes himself to have attained the highest degree of sanctification will not labour to advance further, but will be contented to remain where he is. Now what remedy can there be more efficacious in curing men of this baneful distemper, than the truth which the apostle here teaches and repeats twice, namely, that he himself was not yet made perfect?

129

If to the advocates of presumption we speak of Noah and Job, if we bring forward David's prayer, "Enter not into judgment with me, O Lord," they have the boldness to answer that these personages lived under the old covenant, whereas they are living under the new. But truly this pretext is vain. For we shall be judged in the same manner as believers in former days: there is one and the same tribunal for them and for us, before which we must all appear, and be there judged by the same law; as is evident from St Paul's arguments respecting our justification and theirs; so that if David cannot plead the merit of his works, which are confessed to have been imperfect, neither can we allege the merit of ours. But although this answer of the advocates of merit is absurd, yet there are too many who avail themselves of it. As for St Paul, however, he cannot be reproached with like presumption. His example deprives them of pretext or excuse. For if there ever had been any man in the world who could pretend to perfection, it would be, without doubt, this great apostle, who had been instructed by Jesus himself when living and reigning in heaven; who had been snatched up into paradise, and had heard and seen there the unutterable things of the heavenly kingdom, and brought back with him to earth a lively and perfect faith; who, conducted and animated by this Divine light, had renounced all that the world calls delightful, in order to devote himself entirely to Christ, whose cross he carried and planted in all parts of the world, spending his life so religiously in this holy exercise, that there never was and never will be any minister, bishop, or even apostle, who can compare with him. And yet, after all these great combats, these glorious victories, these admirable triumphs, hear him saying with deep and heartfelt humility, "Not that I have already apprehended, either am already perfect: no, brethren, for my part, I count not myself to have apprehended." Who is there, after this, sufficiently bold to speak of his supposed perfection? Where is he who dares attribute to himself that which Paul confesses he had not? Nay, none should be ashamed to acknowledge with him, that in some things he still fails. The force of this example has, however, been in some degree felt, and they who would exalt themselves above David have been ashamed to do the same by Paul, judging well, that if they did, no one would be able to endure

their arrogance. What then do they? Why, to render their presumption less odious, they make St Paul guilty of it, and pretend that he did attain in this life to that perfection of righteousness, in all points, in which they make their boast. Paul says he has not yet; they maintain that he has. St Paul cries, "Brethren, for my part, I count not myself to have apprehended;" these men assert that he has apprehended. Now which shall we believe, them or Paul?

But the height of their injustice is, that to make their own cause good, they distort his words, and would fain make us believe he has not said what he has said; interpreting this passage in a way unheard of in the church of God, or the schools of real Christians. They say that the apostle is speaking of the continuance of his race or combat, which was not yet finished; and that he does not intend to say that his sanctification was not complete in itself, or that he w as not altogether perfect, but merely that he had not persevered as long as was needful for him, and that his holiness had not lasted a sufficient time. But this explanation cannot be right, either as it regards the thing itself, or the words of the text. For, with respect to the first, St Paul had no occasion to say more than that he should continue some time yet upon the earth to preach the gospel; and that the course of his life and ministry was not yet likely to be finished; in the same manner that, being on the point of finishing his ministry, he warned Timothy of it, saying, that he was ready to be offered, and that the time of his departure was at hand; that he had fought the fight, had finished his course, and had kept the faith, 2 Timothy 4:6–7. But he certainly is not speaking thus in this place. For why should Paul say again to the Philippians what he had already said in the first and second chapters? "I know (said he) that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith." And again, "I trust in the Lord that I shall shortly come to you." After this, what could be more unlikely than that he should repeat that the course of his life and ministry was not yet ended, and not satisfied with that, should add also, "Brethren, for my part, I do not consider myself arrived at this point?" Besides, what connexion could there be between this idea and the preceding verses, "I have suffered the loss of all things, that I may be found in Christ; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings?" To what purpose could he add, "No, I am not near my death, my race is not yet run?" As if they who truly embraced the Saviour expected to die immediately after, or as if some of the Philippians held that opinion. But the apostle's words will not allow of this interpretation. For the word "apprehend" cannot be thus translated. Now what is it which the apostle says "he has not yet apprehended?" Is it the knowledge of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Certainly it is. But who has ever heard that to apprehend these things was to have ended the occupation of preaching, and to have finished his course and his ministry? No, these expressions can only signify what we have already said, to have felt and experienced in perfection the sanctifying power of Jesus, dead and raised again for us. Could it be the prize of his high calling, namely, the resurrection from the dead, which the apostle says he has not yet apprehended? Is it possible any thing could be less to the point than that? that Paul, living at Rome, and writing from his prison in that city to the

Philippians, should declare to them that he had not yet received his crown, that is to say, was not yet raised again from the dead? Beautiful idea, well worthy of so grave, so solemn a pen as that of our apostle! But the other word employed in the text, "to be made perfect," is not less incompatible with this interpretation. It is true that "to be made perfect," sometimes signifies *to be rendered so by death*; as when our Lord said, "Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected," that is, my work will be completed, Luke 13:32. But it is evident the apostle does not speak in this sense. For to what purpose could he inform the Philippians that he had not yet been put to death? Besides, "to be made perfect" signifies always the degrees of perfection, and not its duration or extent; for if it were otherwise, one might say of the angels that they are *not yet perfect*, and of the saints after the last resurrection that they are *not yet perfect*, because their perfection has not completed its duration: and, in a word, one might then say that neither the blessed, nor the angels, nor our Lord Jesus Christ himself, would ever be made perfect, because their holiness will continue eternally without end or diminution; and this would be, as must be plain to every one, extravagant language, not to say blasphemous and scandalous. If, however, the sanctification of the apostle had been at the highest point of perfection, as is that of the angels and glorified saints, he would not have said in this Epistle that he was not y*et perfect*. Nevertheless he does say so. We must, therefore, of necessity, confess that his sanctification was not yet arrived at the point to which some suppose it had. And this is in fact the way in which all Christians understand the passage, and the generality, as St Jerome[1] tells us, draw from it the doctrine which may most clearly be deduced, i. e. that no believer is ever so entirely sanctified in this life, as that he does not fail daily in some point. And I do not think that the interpretation which we have refuted, or the error which gave rise to it, namely, that believers can attain here below to the highest perfection of holiness and inherent righteousness; I do not think, I say, that either one or the other is to be found among the writings of any other Christians than the Pelagians, and the modern enemies of the eternal Divinity of Christ. And the authors of this interpretation object to us, that the apostle says in another place that he has "fought the good fight, has finished his course, and has kept the faith." True, but he does not say that he never received a blow in the fight, or ever made a false step in his course. St Peter could say as much touching his death, and yet we know that his life was not passed without falls. David also could say the same, nevertheless even they must confess that his righteousness had not been perfect.

130

St Paul, then, describes in these words the constancy and perseverance of the believer in the gospel doctrine and practice, who goes forward to the end, and is at last victorious, though he may have often fallen and been wounded. This perseverance excludes impenitence and apostacy, but not all sin; it excludes only those sins which are not followed by repentance. But, say our adversaries, if St Paul had not been perfect, why did he expect the crown of righteousness from God?

1 Dialogue I. against the Pelagians.

Because, I answer, God is faithful, and righteous, and true. Now he has promised to save whosoever shall continue to the end in the faith and obedience of his Son, and in repentance for his daily failings. But, say they again, as the perfection of Paul was the end of his course, it follows that he was perfected when his course was finished. Who doubts it? He is so clearly after that, because he is then entered into heaven, the place of our perfection, and there he knows even as he had been known, that is to say, in perfection, and not in part, and darkly.

Let us therefore rest assured, that the sanctification of the apostle, however excellent it might be, was not perfected in all points as long as he remained on the earth. From whence it follows that no man living is perfected here below. This the Scriptures, the ancient church, and the feelings of our own conscience, so loudly witness, that it is wonderful men can be found so deafened by the love of self that they hear none of these voices. Does not the Scripture tell us that "no man living can be justified before God?" Why not, if there are some perfectly righteous? That every believer, though he were a confessor or an apostle, must thus pray daily to God, "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive them that trespass against us?" Why thus, if there are some who never sin, and therefore need no pardon? Does it not say that "in many things we offend all?" How so, if there are some faultless? Does it not say that "now we know but in part, and see through a glass darkly?" How so, if holiness, which is the fruit and effect of this sight, is not in part, but in perfection? Does it not say that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and that these are contrary one to the other, so that we cannot do the things that we would?" But how can this be, if there are those who sin no more? Does it not say again, that "if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us?" Could it possibly say any thing more express against this error?

The ancient church also teaches by its most illustrious organs, that "we speak truth when we confess ourselves sinners; that the true wisdom of man is to know himself; that he is imperfect, and that all the righteous who are in the flesh have an imperfect perfection.[1] That not one of the saints while he is in the body can possibly have every virtue; that there are righteous men on the earth, some of whom are great, or strong, or prudent, or chaste, or patient, or pious, or merciful, or who suffer all sorts of evil humbly and meekly; but there are none without sin; and none are foolish or arrogant enough to think they need not say the Lord's prayer on account of sin, though in comparison with other men their sins may be few.[2] That he has greatly profited in that holiness during his life, which shall one day be perfected, who has discovered as he advanced his distance from the perfection of righteousness: that it is by the wisdom, not by the impotence, of God that no believer is ever perfect here below; the Lord so conducting the saints in this life, that there should always remain something either to give them freely when they ask, or to pardon them mercifully when they confess to him: and that the reason of this is hidden from us in the depth of his wisdom, in order that the

1 Ibid.
2 Augustin de Peccat. Merit, et Rem.

mouth even of righteous men may be stopped in regard to their own glory, and may be opened only for the praise of God."

Our own consciences likewise, if we consult them, will witness also for this truth. For it is evident from the greatness of the Divine Majesty, from the excellence of those benefits which we daily receive from his bounty, and from the express declaration of his word, that we ought to love him with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, and to employ all we have to his service and glory in so strict a manner that not one word, thought, or act should escape us that is not conformable to his will. Now, where is the believer, however perfect he may be considered, who, entering seriously into himself, and examining without disguise the whole tenor of his life, can discover no faults, not merely in his words, thoughts, and affections, but even in his actions? Where is he whose heart has never desired or loved any thing but what was pure and holy; whose tongue has always uttered words not only true, but also useful, and to edification; whose eyes and other senses have apprehended only that which is reasonable and righteous; whose hands and other members have neither done nor attempted any thing but what is good; whom temptation has never staggered; who has never coveted; whose flesh has at all times rendered a full and entire obedience to the dictates of the Spirit, without resisting his motions, without murmuring against his orders, without struggling against his illumination? If you make no inward war against this enemy, sin, how is it you are not ashamed? If you do, why not confess that you are not perfect? To employ the words of St Augustine on this subject, "Certainly it is either stupidity not to be aware of such palpable imperfection, or effrontery to deny it."[1] 131

But it is time to leave the vain and false teachers to enjoy the glory of their supposed perfection, and to return to St Paul, who, acknowledging and confessing "that he is not yet made perfect," studies earnestly to render himself daily more and more perfect, saying of himself, "I have not yet apprehended, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend." He stops not in his course. His progress had been great; but he is not therewith contented. He cannot remain as he is; he desires, if possible, to arrive at perfection, and to lay hold entirely on Jesus, so as to experience in himself all the power of the life and death of his Divine Master.

For this cause he adds, "for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." The original word[2] might be rendered, *as*, or *being*, or *because*, "I am apprehended of Christ Jesus; but this would give the sentence nearly the same meaning. If you take the first translation, St Paul is setting forth the design for which Jesus unites us with himself, namely, that we may grow from faith to faith, from hope to hope, suffering no day to pass by without making progress in his fear and love. If you understand it in the second form, it is the rule which the apostle proposes in this exercise, namely, to apprehend the Saviour in the same manner as he has been apprehended of him, not weakly and in part, but perfectly, as the Lord in his goodness has apprehended us, drawing us out of our own path, and placing us in

1 Augustine in Julian, B. II. c. 106.
2 Ἐφ᾽ ᾧ.

his, by the power of his word, and the teaching of his Spirit. St Paul makes use of a like expression in another place, where, to signify that in heaven he should know God perfectly, he says, "Then shall I know even as also I am known," 1 Corinthians 13:12.

Lastly, if you read it in the third sense, because "I am apprehended of Christ Jesus," this would signify the motive which urged the apostle to aim with ardour at perfection; and this motive is the wondrous grace of the Saviour towards him, which had stopped his mad career in the way of error and of death; and had taken him and changed him into a vessel of honour, for the glory of God and the conversion of the Gentiles.

II. But to explain more clearly the efforts which he was making to advance in his heavenward race, he adds, in the last verse of our text, "One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He compares, in this and several other places, the object and endeavour of a Christian to a lawful race; so familiar was this image to the Philippians and other Greeks, among whom these exercises were very frequent, as we have already remarked. The superintendent of this mystical course is God, who instituted it by his Son Jesus Christ. The path in which it is run is the path of faith, of repentance, of holiness, of every Christian virtue. The time allotted for the race is during our life. The moment of our conversion is the commencement of it, and is (as it were) the barrier from whence we start, each in his turn, as soon as the heavenly voice has called us; and the place where the race is finished is the moment of death, when we quit this world. The goal to which it conducts is the perfection of our sanctification, of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, of the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship with his death; and to this we can only attain in departing from this life. The steps by which the Christian advances, are prayer, study of the word, love, watchfulness, and patience. The Christian graces, as we acquire them, and as they are strengthened by labour, prayer, and meditation, are the spaces or intervals of this course, each one being more or less advanced, according as he attains to a greater or less perfection of holiness. The rewards bestowed upon the winner are immortality and glory in the life to come, and this the apostle terms "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," because it is God who calls us to it from on high, who keeps it for us in heaven, and will one day bestow it; being himself the Institutor, the Judge, and the Rewarder of the race. And the apostle adds, "in Christ Jesus," in order to show us that it is by the Son of God, dead and raised again for us, that this career is opened, and this crown of glory offered; and more, that it is by him we receive all needful strength at once to enter upon and persevere with our design; and finally, that it is through his great love that the prize to which we aspire shall be given to us.

Such is the Christian race. Paul entered upon it when called by the voice, not of man, but of Jesus himself, who cried to him from heaven, "Saul, Saul, why persecutes! thou me?" and who not only called him to the common salvation, but also to the apostleship of the Gentiles. It would be superfluous to inform you

of the progress he made in the course, having, in a short time, not only reached, but passed by, those who had begun to run before him; and having advanced in such a manner and with so much energy and courage, that nothing could be more miraculous; casting aside, with irresistible power, all that opposed him on the right hand and on the left, so that nothing was able to arrest, or even retard, his progress in the least degree; although both men and devils did all they could to cross the designs of the devoted runner. You know his history. Behold in what manner he writes concerning himself in this Epistle to the Philippians. First, he says, "This one thing I do." He has cast aside every other idea; this race is now his only thought. He has, with Mary, chosen the good part, the one thing needful, without having "a divided heart," like those who endeavour to unite heaven and earth, flesh and Spirit, God and the world, Christ and Belial. Secondly, he says, "I press towards the mark;" that is, he pursues his point; he perseveres in his pious design. For it would be of small avail to enter the course, if he were again to quit it directly, without continuing to the goal; it being evident that in this case, besides having no part in the promised reward, he would be the scorn and jest of every beholder. So, in the service of Jesus Christ, it is useless, nay more, it is hurtful, to enter it merely to quit it again. Unless we persevere to the end, all the efforts we may make are useless. Again, the apostle says, "I press towards *the mark*." For as the race-course is marked clearly, even to the goal, and to run beyond the lines which conduct to it, in the least degree, would be useless, not to say dangerous; so with the believer, Jesus is the mark towards which he should press, having his eye directed to him, in order to advance in the knowledge of him and his Divine power. It is Christ alone who should regulate all his motions, and whoever loses sight of him, or does not direct his steps straight towards him, wanders from the true path.

Again, the apostle says, "Forgetting the things which are behind." So great is his desire to advance, that he thinks no more of the past than if it had never been. And as those who ran in the games never amused themselves by casting their eyes here and there, and still less by looking round to ascertain how much progress they (132) had made, because it would have been but losing time; so the apostle thought no more of what he had once been. He had banished such thoughts from his mind, as completely as if he had lost the remembrance of his former self. For weak believers are often retarded in their progress, by considering what they were, or what they might have been in the world, before they were called unto Christ. Sometimes also the way we appear to have made satisfies us, while looking over the path we have trodden, and we become lazy and inert. The apostle, however, resolved to forget all, whether it were the progress he had made in Judaism or in Christianity, and to run as zealously as though he had not yet made a single step. If he occasionally recollected his former condition among the Jews, it was but with a shudder, and he hastened onwards more firmly. If his progress in Christianity recurred to his mind, it lifted up his heart in praise to God alone.

But, pursues the apostle, "pressing onwards towards those which are before;" that is, (as we have already said,) to the highest and more exalted Christian virtues,

doing all that was possible to attain the very summit of holiness. And the word[1] which is here employed is extremely emphatic, signifying literally, "reaching forth," "throwing himself forward," as they do who run with most energy.

Finally, he informs us of the rewards which await him at the end of the course, and these he calls, for the reasons we have already given, "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The advocates of human merit vainly endeavour from these words to draw an argument in favour of their erroneous notions. For if the prize is elsewhere called "grace," 1 Peter1:13, "mercy," 1 Timothy 1:16, and "gift," Romans 6:23, it is evident that it is not bestowed on account of our merit, but rather because God has promised it of his great goodness and love. And truly there is as little proportion between our works and the celestial glory with which God will reward us after this life, as there would be, should a monarch bestow an entire kingdom on a man for having run two or three hundred paces. This would be the prize to be obtained, but it would be a prize according to the liberality of the giver, rather than the desert of the receiver. Our adversaries again often press us to say why St Paul laboured so much to arrive at perfection, if it were not possible for him to attain to it during this life. But for my part, I must answer their question by asking them why Paul and other true believers studied to attain a perfect knowledge of God, since they could never really know him in this world? They laboured because it was their duty, because therein consists the perfection of their nature, its excellence, its happiness. But, perhaps you will say, they never could hope to arrive at the highest and last point. Although they might never attain it, yet they might daily approach nearer to it, and the nearer they were, the happier for them. Would it be wise to neglect to exercise the body or improve the mind, because the one could not arrive at the perfection of strength, or the other of science? Would it be wise for an invalid to refuse to obey his physician, because he could not hope to attain perfect health? Do not the masters who instruct men in eloquence, philosophy, and the other arts and sciences, teach us that it is not possible for any mortal to acquire an art or a science in perfection? Yet they never intend thereby to dishearten their pupils, and disgust them with study. It is a vanity which almost amounts to folly to be unwilling to embrace the study of any thing because we are not likely to attain perfection in it. And although the Christian will not in this life arrive at perfection, however he may desire it, yet he will attain unto it hereafter. And therefore, as we do not neglect the instruction of children, under pretence that they cannot fully comprehend what they are taught, until they arrive at maturer years; so we also now are in our infancy, and must wait for the "age to come" before we are full grown men.

Let us then, dear brethren, never neglect to cultivate the growth of the new man during its infancy, to form it for good, and to give it all the instruction of which it is capable. And although it may not attain in this life to the perfection which you desire, it surely will hereafter in heaven, when the presence and light of its Divine

1 Ἐπεκτεινόμενος.

Lord will be reflected in the perfect man. Imitate then the example of our great apostle. Shun like him both presumption and negligence. Whatever progress you may have made in the way of life, never imagine yourselves to have arrived at the goal. Whatever failings you may discover and acknowledge in yourselves, never cease to labour and advance in this race. For thus St Paul has taught us in this place. He had laboured more than others, and yet this holy man feels and declares that he has not yet apprehended, that he is not yet perfect. Christians, let his modesty instruct you in humility, and teach you not to be ashamed to confess your infirmities. If this sun had its spots, be not ashamed when you discover spots in yourselves. If our father Jacob was lame, (as the Hebrews were accustomed to say,) let none of his posterity be surprised if they also sometimes limp.

God permits these infirmities to maintain their power, to keep us humble, and to show us that if there is any good in us, it is the gift of his grace, and not the fruit of our corrupt nature. He allows this remnant of the Canaanites to remain in the land, in order to exercise us continually, and that we may have constant recourse to his mercy, and seek our salvation in him alone. But this imperfection should urge us forward more and more towards perfection. It should produce in us a hatred of this world, this sojourn in Kedar and Mesech, this place of our weaknesses and our combats, and a sighing after heaven, the place of perfect bliss and perfect holiness. It should be to us as a continual spur to urge us onwards to that happy world. For it would be indeed strange if the very feeling of our own imperfection caused us to love it, or prevented us from endeavouring to cure it.

And as it behoves us to follow the example of the apostle in acknowledging our faults; so also should we imitate his zeal and firmness in struggling against them, and we should do so with the more care, on account of our doctrine being accused of relaxing our efforts after holiness. But, O adversary, you are wrong in blaming our faith. We condemn nothing in you but your presumption. It is the leaven of pride which displeases us. As for the rest, we recommend and preach, as much or more than you do, the mortification of the old man, the vivification of the new; diligence, vigilance, constancy in prayer, in fasting, in alms; and the continual exercise of works of piety and charity. We only desire that the believer should present these Divine fruits to God, crowned with modesty and humility; that he should look to it carefully, lest they become spoiled and tainted by the presumptuous notions which you teach, of having fulfilled the law or deserved paradise. But, my dear brethren, it is better to refute calumny with works than
133 with words. Let us therefore live as did the apostle; let us run diligently as he ran. Let us also forget the past, and hasten onwards. Let us press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. This is the only path that will conduct us to life and immortality. You must enter, you must persevere therein, if you wish to attain to perfect bliss. What do you not owe to that blessed Saviour who has called you to it, who has apprehended you when you thought not of him, arresting you, as formerly he did Paul in the way to Damascus, when in the career of superstition or vice, and placing you in the path of life! And this is a special favour, not done to all. Behold the majority of mankind walking, or rather running,

in the broad way which leadeth to perdition, labouring night and day for riches, honours, pleasures, for worldly knowledge, for earthly and hurtful things, which lead to hell and eternal misery. But, O believers, have you less desires after heaven than they have for earth? Do you take less pains for your salvation than they do for their ruin? Do you employ less time and study to become eternally happy, than they employ, or rather lose, to become eternally miserable?

The first injunction given by the apostle is to leave the things that are behind; see then that you efface them from your memory and heart as entirely as if they had never been. God has forbidden you not only to retrace your steps, and return to those things from which he has drawn you; or to plunge again into the vices and superstition from which you have been delivered: those who do so are no Christians; they are out of the path of Jesus Christ; and, not content with losing themselves, they endeavour to decoy others into the snare, and unfurl the standard of revolt among the people of God, in order to induce them to go back to Egypt, from whence they have been miraculously brought out. But, O Christians, to do your duty faithfully, you must banish from your heart even the thoughts of these things. While thinking of the onions, and the melons, and the flesh of Egypt, you will sigh and desire some of those sad snares of Satan; and, ere long, desires and sighs will form themselves into murmurs and rebellion against God. Remember Lot's wife, and learn from her the danger of looking back. And yet it is not sufficient to be on your guard against looking behind you; you must also have the eye and the foot, as it were, in advance. Instead of receding, you must go forwards. It is only a top (as said one of old[1]) that can remain spinning in the same place; but a Christian should be always advancing and pressing towards the mark.

Never, then, allow a single day to pass without making some progress: add (as says St Peter) to your faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; to patience, godliness; to godliness, brotherly love; and to brotherly love, charity. If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise; if there be any thing true, holy, pure, lovely, and of good report; adorn yourselves therewith, therewith enrich your conversation, for thus has Jesus, the sovereign Lord of the race, commanded. It is to this that you are called, and surely the prize which he holds in his hands shall be placed on your heads if you run lawfully, as he has ordained; to you shall then be addressed, before the assembly of heaven and earth, those glorious words, "Come, good and faithful servants; come, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; enter ye into the joy of the Lord." Amen.

1 Gregory Nazianzen.

SERMON XXII.

Verse 15–17.

Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

It is very desirable, brethren, both as a reward for praiseworthy actions, and for the instruction of men, that the memory of persons of exalted virtue should be honourably preserved among mankind. Even the pagans, involved as they were in the darkness of ignorance, acknowledged the propriety of this, and considered it so necessary a duty, that, in order to fulfil it, (as we learn from the Greek and Latin authors,) they were accustomed to draw from the life portraits of the most illustrious men in the country, or to make statues of them in marble or bronze, and place them in the most public and conspicuous parts of their cities, that by the continual view of such objects the citizens might be inflamed with the desire of imitating the actions of those extraordinary personages. This artifice, however, was not merely defective, inasmuch as the body, which is the weaker, and not the mind, which is the nobler part of our nature, was thereby represented; but it was also highly dangerous, (as the event has fully shown,) by arousing the inclination to idolatry, which dwells in every heart, and by insensibly leading thereto. And on this account our God, whose wisdom is infinite, banished the use of such images from among his people, and provided other means both for honouring his servants and for our instruction. For instead of these cold and dumb representations of their bodies, he has taken care to draw to the very life in his holy word the portraits of their minds; there portraying by the pen of his Spirit their piety, their faith, their charity, and other virtues, in a way which neither the pencil, the crayon, the colours, the metals, the marble of human artists are able to express; and has erected these divine statues in the books of Scripture, as it were, in celestial niches, exposing them to the eyes and observation of all believers; so that they are enabled to contemplate and admire the true images of those holy men, in order to imitate

by every means in their power, in the station in which they are called, the virtuous examples thus set before them.

But among all the exquisite portraits to be found in the Scriptures no one is more laboriously executed, and more highly coloured, than that of Paul, the great apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ. He occupies, as you well know, a large part of the book of the Acts; and in several of his own Epistles this holy man, guided by the Spirit of his Master, has himself placed before our eyes the principal events of his life. In this very chapter (Philippians 3.) he has drawn his own portrait, representing to our view both his character as a Pharisee, before the Lord had touched his heart, and as a Christian; not the outward appearance of his Christianity, but its true nature, form, and essence: and it is in the consideration of this latter character that we have employed the four last discourses. You have seen the humility of his great mind in renouncing all his natural advantages; his spiritual wisdom, resolving to lose all in order to win Christ, the only; source of true peace; his love for that Divine Saviour, manifested in his willingness to be despoiled of all things that he might be 134 transformed into his image; his modesty in acknowledging his own imperfection; his ardour and constancy in the Christian race, always forgetting the past, and reaching onwards to the goal, in order to attain the prize of his high calling. Now he discovers to us the design of his discourse, and teaches us that it is in order to show the Philippians by his own example what ought to be their sentiments and deportment in the school of Christ. That church, as we explained in the commencement of the chapter, had been attacked by teachers of the circumcision, who advocated the observance of the Mosaic law, as necessary to justification and salvation. And although their efforts had not entirely succeeded, yet they had made great impression on some; so that there were in the nock two kinds of people: the first, firm and stedfast, resolved to mingle nothing with Jesus; the second, more weak, who, insnared by the artful discourses of the false teachers, were unable to comprehend the utter inutility of the law after the light of the gospel had arisen. The apostle in the text speaks to each party separately, and afterwards to both conjointly. To the first, whom he calls "perfect," and in whose number he classes himself, he recommends to hold themselves continually in the path described to them by his own example: "Let us, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." To the second, whose faith was not so advanced, he adds this consolation, "And if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." He then goes on to give them in common two warnings: the first, To unite themselves together, and strive mutually after the same end: "Let us mind the same rule, let us walk after the same thing." The second, To imitate carefully the good examples set before them, both by himself and other faithful servants of their Lord: "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." These four subjects we propose (the Lord willing) to treat of in this discourse.

First, The duty of perfect believers.

Second, The humility and hopes of weaker believers.

Third, The mutual concord and union of both. And,

Last, The care which all should take to follow the examples of St Paul, and other holy men of God.

I. Respecting the first point, the apostle explains it in these words, "Let us, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." And here a difficulty presents itself, in that the apostle calls himself, and other believers, "perfect," whereas he had said in the preceding verses that "he had not yet apprehended, neither was already perfect," making use of a term similar to the one employed here, and thereby apparently denying what he now affirms. Some, in order to explain this seeming contradiction, say that St Paul in speaking thus, "we who are perfect," has not regard to the thing itself, because no one is *perfect* in any respect; but that he speaks in accordance with the opinion of the false teachers, who esteemed themselves perfect, and that, allowing them to retain their self-allotted title by a figure called in schools "concession," he meant to declare that by whatever name they were known, or however good their opinion of themselves might be, if they wished to be real Christians, they must have the sentiments which he had been labouring to inculcate. But it appears that this explanation is not correct, because the apostle places himself in the number of those of whom he speaks, "Let us, as many as be perfect." Besides, in understanding it thus there appears a species of irony in his language, which would be very much out of place here, where he is showing simply to the believers in what their duty consists. It is therefore vain to teach that he does not here give to believers the designation of "perfect," when in many parts of Scripture they are so called by St Paul himself, and the other sacred writers; as in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect," chapter 2:6; and the Epistle to the Hebrews often gives to Christians this appellation. St James also says, that "if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." And David in an infinite number of places, speaking of himself and other believers, says that they are "perfect and entire."

In fact, this word "perfect" is, in a certain sense, equivocal; for although it signifies always the highest point of a thing, yet as the highest point of things is different in their different states, so the perfection which is attributed to them differs also. Thus the perfection of infancy differs from that of manhood, and in schools for the instruction of youth each class has its distinct perfection. So, in like manner, a person may be perfect in one sense, and not so in another; because he may have attained perfection in one point, while he fails in another. The people of God have been dispersed through all ages, and to each a distinct form of perfection belongs. Under the Old Testament the church was in its infancy, and (as it were) in the lowest class in the school of God. Under the New, it is in its manhood, and in the highest class: so that when the earlier believers are compared to the later, it is evident that with regard to them they were imperfect; and therefore the apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, says, "They without us could not be made perfect," chapter 11: 40. Our Lord also declares, that although John the Baptist was the greatest of the prophets, yet the very least in the kingdom of heaven (i. e. in the church of Christ) is greater than he.

But, notwithstanding this, it is most probable that, under the Old Testament

dispensation, there was a standard of knowledge and sanctification, to which he who had attained might truly be called *perfect*. Even in the New Testament school there is a diversity of grades among believers, and though they all in common have a perfection to which none could attain under the law, yet, when considered as individuals and compared one with another, there are certainly those who, in the comparison, may be termed imperfect. For while some are but commencing, and have to learn the very rudiments of Christianity, others more advanced have their senses exercised to discern good and evil; the first are learners, the second teachers. On this account the apostle, to mark the distinction between them, speaks of some as "babes who have yet need of milk," and of others as "perfect men, able to digest strong meat."

Some have supposed that this mode of expression was taken from the language of the ancient Greeks, who had in their worship certain sacred ceremonies called *mysteries*, to the sight and participation whereof none were received until after long preparation: such as had been admitted to the mysteries were styled *perfect*, while others were considered but as novices or learners. But there is no need to seek for the origin of these words among foreigners. They were taken, as was much of the apostle's language, from the customs and terms of the Jewish church, in which were several classes: some lower, in which were taught the first rudiments of doctrine; others higher, wherein were unfolded the deeper mysteries; and this latter part of their theology was designated by a word which signifies *perfection*,[1] because they considered it the very summit of their religion; and those who were instructed in it were likewise called the *perfect*.[2] 135

It is from thence that the holy apostles have taken these words, applying them to the gospel, the last and highest revelation of God, to which alone truly and justly belongs that epithet of *perfection* which the Jewish rabbis vainly gave to their traditions. It is in this sense that St Paul uses the word *perfect* in our text, meaning thereby a man perfectly instructed in the gospel, who 'was acquainted with and had embraced all its truths, without any mixture of error; and this is evident from his adding, "and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." For you see that to these *perfect* ones, of whom he is speaking, he opposes those who have still some diversity of sentiment, and to whom God has not yet revealed all his mind; an evident proof that by the *perfect* ones he understands those to whom the Spirit of God had given knowledge and faith in all the doctrines of his word. If, then, you call to mind the state in which the Christian church was at that time, you will easily comprehend who those were whom the apostle calls *perfect*, and who they were whom he was unwilling to honour with such an appellation. For there were then believers who, although they had received the gospel, and acknowledged in Jesus the true Messiah, the only Saviour, yet retained the observance of the ceremonial law, esteeming it, if not absolutely necessary, at least very useful, and conscientiously opposing in this respect, as we

1 Gemara
2 Gemarim.

learn from many parts of the New Testament, not only the most esteemed doctors of the Christian church, but even the holy apostles themselves. Other believers, on the contrary, contenting themselves with Jesus, added nothing foreign to his gospel; and having discerned in the light of truth the real value of all things, held legal observances both useless and superfluous, as indeed they were. These, doubtless, were the men whom the apostle calls, in this place, *perfect;* and whom in another, for the same reasons, he designates as *strong*, saying, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves," Romans 15:1; while to those who have still a difference of sentiment, and who have not received the whole truth, he gives the appellation of "weak in faith."

From hence it appears, first, That there is no contradiction in the apostle's language; for when he said, above, that "he was not yet perfect," he spoke of *simple*, *absolute* perfection, which we can never have but in heaven, as he himself has distinctly declared in another place, saying, "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away," 1 Corinthians 13:10; whereas now he is speaking of perfection, so called by comparison; not absolute, but with regard to other believers who have not received certain truths which we already know and acknowledge. For although the believers of the Old Testament, considered with respect to the dispensation under which they lived, are frequently called *perfect* and *entire;* yet, in comparing their light with that of the gospel, they can and must be esteemed *imperfect*, inasmuch as they failed in those advantages which New Testament believers possess: so, in like manner, the apostle and those who received his doctrine were called, and justly, *perfect* in the sense we have explained, yet nevertheless they supposed not that they had attained the highest point of Christian excellence; and in comparing their condition on earth with what they expected to be in heaven, it was most true that they "had not yet apprehended, nor were already perfect."

Secondly, You see how the teachers of perfection make use of this and similar passages, where such eulogiums are given to believers, in order to establish their own presumptuous doctrine. For if all that is said of David and many others under the law, that they were "perfect, entire, after God's own heart, just before him, and walking in his commandments and ordinances blameless," does not indicate (as these adversaries themselves confess) that there remained in them no spot and imperfection; but, on the contrary, they were incapable of appearing before the tribunal of Divine justice, and had cause to cry unto the Lord not to enter into judgment with them; it is evident that the praise given here and elsewhere to Paul and all his true disciples of being *perfect*, in like manner does not signify that they were clear from all spot or stain of sin, against the express doctrine of Scripture and the church, as we showed at length in our last discourse. At the same time, we most willingly confess that this perfection, though not entirely exempt from sin and infirmity, is notwithstanding something more than a vain and empty title, as worldly-minded Christians imagine. It is a reality, an excellent thing, a fruit of the Spirit of God, a work of his hand, the impress of his wisdom and righteousness. Although there are spots on the surface of the moon, her light is not

the less beautiful, and clear, and perfect in its kind, and so it is with the holiness of the church; though, while here below, it has its blemishes, yet is it nevertheless excellent and glorious, and even in a certain sense *perfect*, And our adversaries of Rome, who give to the church the title of *Holy*, because of the profession she makes of a divine and holy doctrine, spoil her of her most beautiful and necessary mark. If there be one among us (which God forbid) who has this imagination, and who supposes that, in order to be holy and perfect, it is sufficient to live in communion with God's people, to participate in their sacraments, and to mingle his voice with their prayers and praises, let such a one be delivered from his error; or, if he persevere, let him know that we are innocent of his misfortune, protesting to him now openly that no man is a true Christian who is not truly sanctified, whose flesh is not mortified, who has not love to God and charity towards his neighbour. We wait certainly the highest point of this Divine work to be completed in heaven; but we hold that it begins and advances on earth, and that nothing will be completed on high which has not been begun below. This is the doctrine of Paul, who desires, in the text, that "as many as be perfect be thus minded." For this "mind" of which he speaks is nothing less than the exercise and practice of all that he has represented to us in the seven preceding verses, on which this last depends. I know there are persons who suppose this word to relate only to what the apostle had said, i. e. "that he had not yet apprehended, and that, forgetting the things which were behind, he pressed onwards to those that were before," saying this is what he wished that all should do; that the most perfect should feel their imperfection, and acknowledge that they were not yet at the goal. But it is doubtless best to extend this sentiment which St Paul requires in us generally, to all the dispositions which he before represented to us in his own person. He wishes that, like himself, we should renounce all the advantages given us by nature, that we should despise at once the lustre of our nobility and the pride of our knowledge, the dignity of our station and the supposed innocence of our morals; that we should reject all these things, which form the happiness of worldly men, as vanities fit only for the dunghill, in order to embrace the knowledge of Jesus Christ our blessed Saviour. (136) He desires that, naked and despoiled of all other, we should clothe ourselves with his salvation; that, putting aside our own righteousness, we should seek and desire his alone, being found in him and not in ourselves. He desires that our whole lives should be spent in tasting the power of the cross of Christ, in receiving in ourselves the marks of his life and death, the wounds of his crucifixion, and the consolations of his resurrection, in order to be transformed into the image of this dead yet living One. He desires that after all we should be deeply sensible of our infirmities, thinking and speaking of ourselves with humility, acknowledging that we have not yet apprehended, and that there yet remains much of the race to run before we can arrive at the goal. He desires that this feeling should be to us as a continual spur, urging and hastening us onwards; so that, forgetting (as it were) the past, as though we had yet done nothing, we should run with all our strength towards the mark and prize of our high calling of God in Jesus Christ. This is that which the apostle demands of them who are perfect: "Let us, as many as be perfect,

be thus minded." Therefore, lest any one should suppose that such sentiments and discipline were only for novices, being the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, he recommends them expressly to those that are perfect; as the true and only rule which all the disciples of the Lord, the more advanced as well as the younger converts, must follow. The admirable wisdom of the apostle manifests itself here. For superstition always daubs her inventions with the false paint of perfection. She confesses that the doctrine and discipline of our Lord Jesus Christ is good and holy, but she pretends that the observances she would add thereto serve to perfect it; that in order to be a Christian it is sufficient to do what the gospel enjoins, but in order to be perfect we must submit to what she prescribes to us. I am persuaded that those false teachers, whom the apostle combats in his Epistle to the Colossians, had not failed to employ this precept to give authority to the observances with which they loaded the believers, and which had, as he said, "a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body," Colossians 2:23; and it cannot be doubted that those also, against whom he argues in this chapter, maintained the necessity of observing the ceremonial law in order to be entirely perfect. No, no, says the apostle, this is not the study and endeavour of those who are perfect. They have enough in Jesus Christ to occupy them, without troubling themselves with such things. Our true perfection consists in dying to ourselves that we may live to him; in a word, in acting according to the sentiments I have declared to you.

From all this you see, brethren, how vain is the distinction drawn by our opponents of the Romish church, between the *precepts* and *advice* of the evangelists. They say that the first relate to all Christians, but the last to the perfect only; and in this class they place celibacy, monkery, and all their dependences. It is a most preposterous idea to make essential to the perfection of the Christian religion ceremonies which were formerly in vogue among pagans, and at this day form part of the worship of divers false religions; to suppose that walking without shoes, dressing like a Capuchin, begging, eating nothing but fish, and such things, can procure true spiritual perfection. But be this as it may, it is clear that the apostle directs his perfect ones to very different exercises than these people. He commands neither beggary, nor dirtiness, nor a monkish habit. He does not forbid either marriage or the moderate use of meat. He neither teaches them to boast of being at the height of perfection, nor to presume upon their merit. All the discipline that he recommends is to embrace Jesus, to seek in him both justification and sanctification, to die and rise again with him, to run continually towards the prize of their high calling; things, as you plainly see, which have nothing in common with the hood and the sackcloth, the orders of Benedict, or Francis, or Dominic, or Ignatius, the pretended teachers of Christian perfection. Let us then, beloved brethren, leaving all these fanciful institutions, cleave only to those of the apostle; and if we are perfect, as we ought to be, having so long been instructed in his pure doctrines, let us be of his mind, and practise what he commands.

He adds, secondly, "And if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." By calling those perfect who were of one mind with himself, he places his doctrine above discussion, and shows it to be an indubitable and

certain truth, since it was an imperfection not to receive it entirely. And although, by thus speaking, he sharply stung those who were of a different opinion, declaring that they could not be reckoned among the perfect and finished disciples of the Lord, yet, at the same time, he gives them encouragement by telling them that he hopes "God will reveal this unto them also," that they may prepare themselves with meekness and humbleness of mind to receive the true light of the gospel. We have already shown who they were of whom the apostle speaks, viz. the weak, who were unable to enjoy the full liberty of the gospel, considering themselves obliged to perform certain legal ceremonies. On which we have to remark, first, that God does not always communicate the whole light of truth at once to his believing people; but often, while bestowing a part, still leaves for a time some error in their understanding, even as you know that the apostles themselves were a long while under the idea that the partition wall between Jew and Gentile continued in force after the coming of Christ. As this is the case with individuals, it may also happen with entire flocks; and you are aware that it did happen in the days of our forefathers: many churches received not the whole light of truth, but retained both in doctrine and discipline errors and corruptions which they have now cast off.

II. The example of St Paul shows us the manner in which we ought to conduct ourselves towards individuals of this description, guarding us against two extremes into which men commonly fall on such occasions, flattery and harshness. We ought to testify constantly for the truth, and boldly lay before the weak believer the error in which he stands, as does the apostle here, not concealing from those who were not of one mind with him, that they failed in this respect, and were consequently far from Christian perfection. But, at the same time, it is not necessary to tear and persecute our weaker brethren as though they were lost without resource, or to flee from them as excommunicated persons, the instant we remark in them any difference of sentiment. Let us rather hope, with the apostle, that God, who is good and powerful, will in time reveal his truth to them also. Let our kindness induce them to think, and give them reason to judge favourably of our cause.

Further, we learn that God alone is the Author of all the knowledge we possess of his blessed truth. It is he who gives it in the commencement; it is he alone who preserves it in us; it is he who restores it to us, when we have lost some of its rays. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase. He that planteth is nothing, and he that watereth is nothing, but God that giveth the increase. Far 137
from hence be those who imagine that God is said to "reveal his truth to us," because he places before our eyes the things of the gospel, and that it is our part to receive them or not. Had such been the case, the apostle would not have spoken here of the revelation of God. For he was not arguing respecting some new thing which had never been made clear to the Philippians, but rather of the persuasion of a truth which they had seen and rejected. When, therefore, the apostle says that "God will reveal this unto them," he means that God will so discover it to their heart, and cause them to feel it so deeply, that instead of rejecting, as heretofore, they will gladly receive it in the obedience of faith.

Again, let those who are weak learn from hence never to be puffed up in

their ignorance, rejecting and casting from them the light of truth, but let them humble themselves in the sight of God, and desire to listen to his instructions with meekness and affection, in the conviction that the blessed Lord never fails to hear all who pray to him; but teaches his ways to the blind, opens to them that knock, and gives to them that ask; while, on the other hand, he resisteth the proud, and increaseth the darkness to those who love the night, sealing error upon them who receive not the light of truth.

Finally, learn here the pitiable weakness of our understandings, since those already so far instructed in the gospel, that St Paul calls them "brethren," were yet incapable of unravelling a question which appears so easy, or of acknowledging their error, gross as it was, until the God of heaven should himself reveal to them the things of which they were ignorant.

III. But I must come to the two last points, which the apostle recommends to all believers in common, whether perfect or weak.

The first is contained in these words, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." It would be an excellent thing, brethren, if believers were so perfectly agreed, that there were among them one only sentiment with regard to religion. But this happiness being rather to be wished than expected, because of the infirmity of our minds while we remain on earth, the apostle here commands us to restrain ourselves in such wise, that if there arise a diversity of sentiment among us, it should produce no bitterness in our feelings, no disturbance of our concord. And to understand his meaning well, it must be remarked that he is not in this place speaking of all diversity of opinion. For there are some from which we ought to separate, viz. those which would shake the very foundations of the faith, inculcating impiety towards God, or vices contrary to that charity due to our neighbour. After having warned and exhorted such as hold views of this nature, unless they turn from them we ought to banish them from our communion, for fear lest their false doctrine should injure the truth of God. But if this difference of opinion should not interfere with the foundations of our faith, obliging us neither to fail in the service of God, nor in love to man, then must the apostle's commands here be brought to bear. They are, first, That they who have the truth on their side should encourage a holy and charitable hope that God at some future time will reveal it also to those who differ from them. Secondly, That each party should consider the other as brethren, and, notwithstanding their opposition of sentiment, live in harmony together; they who know the truth not rejecting or despising those who know it not, nor they who are ignorant allowing themselves to be puffed up against those who are instructed in it.

That to this end each party ought to remember the principal truths on which they are agreed, and to the knowledge whereof they have come by the grace of God alone. Such truths should be the very bond of union; they should mutually defend them, and firmly maintain their common creed, taking care not to separate from that, and continually rendering one another, on this foundation, all those duties which charity enjoins; thus living in the constant exercise of holy friendship and piety.

Such is the apostle's meaning in this expression, "whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule." He calls the points on which we are agreed together, "that to which we have already attained," and the "rule" by which he would have us walk is the knowledge or belief that we possess in common. This he would have us take for the rule of our intercourse and conversation with others.

He adds further, "let us mind the same thing;" that is to say, with regard to those subjects on which we agree, let us carefully retain them, without allowing the enemy to increase our differences, or extend them to the principal and fundamental articles of our faith.

There are those who suppose these last words to signify the result of the apostle's commands, and they would translate them thus: "Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, in order that we may mind the same thing." And this exposition is not bad, that the securest method of maintaining perfect harmony amongst us is to hold ourselves strictly united in the principal points in which our common faith consists. If we conduct ourselves thus, God will not fail to bless our moderation, and enlighten the minds of those who err, so as to cause all differences to cease.

The apostle also adds this condition to the hope which he holds out to weak believers, "God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule as though he would say that they should without doubt receive this grace from God, provided meanwhile they were not seduced away from fundamental truths, but continued in harmony and kindness with their brethren in respect to those subjects on which they held a common creed.

Wonderful meekness! Admirable wisdom of the apostle! How much is it to be lamented that this Divine rule here given has been so little acted upon in the churches of Christ! Had it been followed, the enemy could never have produced all those ravages and disorders which have conducted most of them to ruin and destruction. Christendom would not have been so often embroiled for some trifling difference of opinion; ministers of Christ hurling against one another excommunications and anathemas; the people, led on by the example of their spiritual guides, tearing each other in pieces, and even brethren becoming to their brethren as wolves and tigers. Sometimes, I must confess, they who had truth on their side did not conduct themselves as they ought, but rather irritated than healed the wounds already made by their haughty and intolerant deportment. But, generally speaking, it has been the case that where the greatest error existed in doctrine, there also has it been most manifested in practice, and they who were most ignorant of the truth have shown the least charity towards others; and this was especially seen at the commencement of the Reformation, when they who continued in error invariably proved themselves the most violent and obstinate enemies of peace.

Let us then profit by the weaknesses of others, and rejoice with thankfulness in that perfect union which God has preserved among us, in spite of all the effects of those who endeavour to disturb it: let us put on the bowels of mercies 138

recommended to us by our Lord in order to bear the infirmities of such brethren as feel differently from ourselves; and while hoping and waiting for them to be enlightened from above, let us walk by the same rule with them in that to which they have already attained.

IV. To this we are directed by the excellent example of the apostle, which he himself conjures us all to follow, whether we be strong or weak, perfect, or of those who have not yet attained, or indeed of what condition soever we may be: "Brethren, be followers together of me." He often reminds the believers, to whom he writes, of this duty: when representing to the Corinthians that he had begotten them through the gospel, he adds, "Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me," 1 Corinthians 4:16; and afterwards, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ," 1 Corinthians 11:1. He also praises the Thessalonians for having been his imitators: "Ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Ghost," 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2:3, 7. Again, in another place, he tells them that he had abstained from things lawful in order to be to them as an ensample. But here he desires further that the Philippians should unite together with one accord, and endeavour to imitate his conduct, each one in his own life. This therefore was the design of God in causing him to endure so many trials, that there should be no virtue of which he has not left us a noble example. Happy minister of Christ, whose perfect consciousness of his own innocence enables him to propose himself boldly as a pattern to his flock! even as a good father does not fear to set forth his life to his children as the model for theirs.

But, not satisfied with setting before the Philippians one excellent example, St Paul exhorts them to regard also the other servants of God who, like him, lived in pureness and holiness, and devoted themselves faithfully to their appointed work: "Mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." He does not wish that they should carelessly copy all who present themselves with the name and outward appearance of the Lord's servants; for the messengers of Satan are sometimes disguised as the ministers of Christ. But he desires them to examine them first, and if they find upon them the mark and character of the apostolic life, the coin (as it were) of Heaven, the same form of sound words, then to endeavour at once to follow them. From this we learn that Paul and the other apostles were designed by God to serve as models in the Christian church, both with regard to doctrine and practice, according to our Lord's promise, that they should sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. It is to their rule all things must be brought, and then be rejected or received according as they coincide with that. However excellent and esteemed a minister may be, before we follow him, let us carefully examine whether he walks according to the pattern of those holy and excellent servants of the Lord, who faithfully transmitted to us the example they had received from Jesus. Neither does the change of time exempt any one from this rule. Although the authority of those who are set before us may be very ancient, yet must we examine their doctrines in the apostle's light. For the same law that he gave then holds good now, "Mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." If we desire to walk with assurance, and without fear of falling, we must take this holy

man for our model, whether with regard to our faith or conversation. It is for this purpose that Divine Providence has so distinctly engraven his image in many parts of holy writ; for this purpose is it preserved to us until now. Let us receive nothing into our creed which did not appear in his. Let us be careful to reject whatever cannot be found in his preaching, and let us hold him accursed who shall preach any other gospel than that he had preached, though he be a prophet, or an apostle, or even an angel from heaven.

There are who complain that it is difficult to discern the *truth* of Christianity from the many errors men have mingled with it. But behold a short and easy method, if we seek it in Paul; if we content ourselves with his rule, and do not weary ourselves to discover what he has not taught us; if we maintain the resolution to believe and do like him; for this apostle did not preach with the mouth and pen only, as too many do who philosophize, but with the tongue. His whole life is a sermon, a living law, exemplifying and authorizing, in his own character, all that his mouth and his pen had declared.

To be then his perfect and accomplished disciples, we must imitate him in this respect. For it will little avail us to have our faith founded on his word, unless our lives are also conformed to his. You well know that the Lord of all will judge men, not by their profession, but by their works; and justify their faith by the fruits it shall have produced. Let us, then, continually place before our eyes the conversation of this great apostle, his zeal, his love, his humility, his charity, his patience, and all the other virtues which shine out in his life. Let our manners be cast in this heavenly mould, and formed exactly after this beautiful pattern. Let us, like him, obey the voice of Jesus, and leaving for ever the evil way in which vice or ignorance had enthralled us, let us faithfully serve that blessed Saviour who calls to us from heaven. Let him be henceforth all our desire; let his glory be the only aim in our conduct, and the love of him the one law of our life. Let us no longer consult with flesh and blood, but let their interests be trampled under our feet. Let the world be crucified to us, and all its pomps and vanities he held in abomination.

Observe also the love of the apostle towards men; how he yielded and changed his manners in outward things in order to win their souls; how he pitied their blindness, and even wished himself accursed for their sakes; what interest he felt in their welfare, even forgetting his own trials, and caring neither for prisons nor chains, if assured of the prosperity of his brethren. How shall I describe his constancy and the strength of his courage, which enabled him to despise the most bloody persecutions, prisons, shipwrecks, stripes, and to support all, however dreadful, not only with patience, but even with joy! regarding death with calmness, wishing for rather than fearing it, and triumphing over whatever appeared most formidable, whether in life or death. But in the midst of all this how meek, how humble is this holy man! He esteems himself as nothing; he condescends to mean things; he hesitates not to work with his own hands like a poor artisan; to say nothing of his sobriety, temperance, and the purity of his private life, withdrawn not merely from injustice or dishonesty, but even from allowed pleasures.

Dear brethren, how far are we yet from this standard! we who hate our

neighbours; who despise and outrage them; who make our profit of their ruin; who make it our pastime to injure them; who persecute our brethren instead of wishing well to our enemies, and often offend our neighbours in entertaining strangers; who, forgetting the teaching of Christ, the example of Paul, and the very laws of
139 nature themselves, feel no horror in openly practising iniquities against those whom we ought to honour and cherish even more than ourselves! How far are we from this model! we who cannot suffer affliction without being almost in despair; who upbraid Heaven and murmur against its decrees at the least trial! we who are often ashamed of the gospel, and instead of being ready cheerfully to seal its truth with our blood, are unwilling to expose ourselves to the smallest inconvenience for its sake! we who are so filled with self-love, that we imagine every thing ought to yield to our interests; and so little habituated to the moderation of the apostle, that the excess of our pleasures and luxuries is only in conformity to the manners of the age! Christian, is this imitating Paul? Is it thus you follow the example he set before you? O let us henceforth efface from our life this vile likeness to men of this world, and let us manifest a conformity to the apostle. Let us give ourselves no rest until we have copied, if not his entire portrait, at least a little sketch of the love, patience, humility, candour, and moderation of that holy man. And although in him shine forth all the features of true Christianity, yet let us not copy him alone. Let us also contemplate the other saints who, in various ages and countries, have lived after the same rule. And as it is said that a famous painter of former times once assembled around him a number of handsome countenances, in order to copy the most beautiful feature in each, that he might thereby produce a perfect face; so let us assemble in our hearts the portraits of the most eminent servants of God who flourished either under the Old or New Testament. Let us choose the most beautiful feature in each character, and so copy it that it may be manifested in our conversation. Let us imitate the faith of Abraham, the love of Joseph, the cheerfulness of Moses, the patience of Job, the zeal of Elijah, the purity of Daniel, the ardour of Peter, the mildness of John, the obedience of Matthew, the repentance of Zaccheus, and the devotion of Stephen. Let us leave no plant in the garden of Scripture from which we may gather a flower to adorn our life; so that having faithfully followed and imitated here below the conversation of these holy men, who were set before us as models, we may also partake of the glory, honour, and immortality which they enjoy in the bosom of Jesus Christ, the author of their and our salvation, the first and sovereign model of all perfection; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, true and only Lord, blessed for ever, be honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

SERMON XXIII.

Verse 18–19.

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

We read in the Gospel of St Matthew that our Lord, among other parables wherein he set before his disciples the mysteries of his kingdom, proposed to them that of a man who had sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, so that when the wheat was grown up, then appeared the tares also.

This, my brethren, is a striking picture of what is daily occurring under the preaching of the gospel. The man who sows is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the great Teacher, the Redeemer of the world. The seed which he sows is the word of life, the pure and wholesome doctrine that he plants in the hearts of men, as his field, by the hand and ministry of his servants. The fruits produced thereby are faith and piety, which render men Christians and the children of God, instead of the wretched slaves of sin and death, which they were by nature. The enemy is the devil, the prince of darkness, who, burning with hatred against this holy work of God, crosses and combats it with all his power. The night, wherein he does his work, signifies the artifice and disguise in which he wraps himself that he may pass undiscovered; and the sleep of men, during which he so artfully labours, is the negligence of believers, who, too often, having their minds overcharged with the affairs of this world, do not give sufficient attention to the object of their high calling. The pernicious tares which he sows in the midst of them signify the heresies, false doctrines, and schisms which he spreads among those who make profession of Christianity.

Such is the picture which the Saviour draws of the state of his gospel and church here below; and every succeeding century has justified the truth of the prediction. For never has the gospel of Jesus been faithfully preached in any place, but the devil, that fierce and mortal enemy of the church, has also scattered his bad seeds, raising up false teachers, opposing, by their means, truth with error, and endeavouring to darken the faith of believers by pernicious impostures. Thus, at

the present day, there is no part of the Christian field in which the tares, the work of the enemy, do not manifest themselves.

Such was also the experience of our fathers, when, in the midst of their useful labours, so many evil#workers arose, who disturbed the church and scandalized the world by their false and destructive inventions. The holy apostles, the first ministers of our Lord, were not exempt from this sort of persecution; Satan having, even in their time, brought in various strange doctrines to disturb and perplex the early Christians. And from that period until now, if you consider every age of Christianity, you will find none without this sort of warfare; for the enemy never sees the heavenly seed sown by the Lord but he immediately endeavours to scatter his tares.

You may hence judge, my dear brethren, with what vigilance we should watch, and with what earnestness we should exercise our senses in discerning the production of heaven from that of the earth, the seed of the Son of God from the tares of the enemy; not confounding them together because they spring out of the same furrow or in the same field.

It is for this reason that the apostle Paul repeats in the text the injunction he had before given to the Philippians in the preceding verse, to mark them who walked like himself in the perfection of Christian doctrine: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." It is not without cause that I would open your eyes to examine attentively, by the model that I set before you, those who come to labour among you, for you must not suppose that all you meet with in this field are the seed and servants of God in Christ. Often do his enemies conceal themselves under his name and livery, and in this disguise ravage his flocks and ruin his innocent sheep; hating and fighting against that cross which they pretend to adore, and carrying
140 on their warfare in a manner the more dangerous as it is hidden and unsuspected. And therefore, in order that the Philippians might hold such wicked and unhappy instruments of Satan in abhorrence, the apostle represents them in their true and lively colours. For after having said that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, he adds in the next verse, "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."

The warning here given to the Philippians shall form (if it please God) the subject of my present discourse. And in order that you may be enabled to understand it the more fully, I purpose to treat the two heads distinctly and consecutively: First, The form and fashion of the warning, "I have told you before, and now tell you even weeping." Secondly, Its matter and substance; and this divides itself into five points, or distinct qualities, possessed by these evil-workers of whom the apostle speaks.

First, "Enemies of the cross of Christ."

Second, Their "end is destruction."

Third, Their "God is their belly."

Fourth, Their "glory is in their shame."

Fifth and last, They "mind earthly things."

I. With regard to the first subject, the apostle reminds the Philippians that he

does not now for the first time warn them of the numbers and errors of those false teachers of whom he advises them to beware: "I have told you often." From whence it appears to be the duty of every faithful minister of Christ, not only to preach the truth, but also to reprove error, and combat those who endeavour to corrupt and hinder the right preaching of the gospel. St Paul, who here teaches us this by example, gives it as an express command to Titus his beloved disciple, "Exhort, rebuke with all authority," Titus 2:15; and in like manner he tells Timothy, among other duties, to reprove and rebuke, 2 Timothy 2:4.

Every church may be compared to a flock of sheep, and the ministers thereof may be called the shepherds. Now the duty of the shepherd is to watch for the safety of the flock, and to guard it from wild beasts. For this reason the prophet Isaiah compares those inert ministers, who see false teachers creeping in, without rebuking them and opposing their efforts, to "dumb dogs who cannot bark," Isaiah 56:10.

I know very well that these false teachers complain, and accuse of bitterness and want of charity, all those who, unable to endure their doctrines, warn their people of them, and put them on their guard, by pointing them out clearly, and hiding none of their evil qualities. But it is by no means remarkable that the barking of the dogs should annoy the wolves. Let them cease to be wolves, and we will cease to rail against them. But if they persist in persecuting our flocks, it is natural that we should have at least as much courage and constancy in defending ourselves as they have in attacking us. They may, if they please, accuse us of violence; it is sufficient that we have the apostle's example whereby to justify ourselves. He was not satisfied with once warning the Philippians against the destructive doctrines of the false teachers; no, says he, "I have told you often;" and having given them these many warnings by his voice, he repeats the same thing in writing, "and now tell you again." For while the enemies of our salvation are continually prowling around us, like Satan, whose example they follow, and who is described as "going about like a roaring lion," 1 Peter 5:8; while they are never tired of attacking us, but, however repulsed and driven away, have always the boldness to return again to the assault; the faithful pastor also must not spare himself. He ought to be continually defying them, and with invincible courage should oppose them in spite of their malice, employing in so honourable a cause not only the lips and voice, but also the hand and the pen; as did the great apostle. Such is his command to Timothy, "Be instant in season, out of season," 2 Timothy 4:2. In so pressing a duty it becomes us rather to be importunate than indifferent. The Lord gives a similar order to his prophet Isaiah; "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet," Isaiah 58:1. And again, describing the ministers that he would appoint over his church in Jerusalem, he predicts that "they shall never hold their peace day nor night," Isaiah 62:6. But here it is worthy of remark, that the apostle adds that he has given these warnings to the Philippians in *weeping*. He testifies in another place that he had used the same weapon with regard to the Ephesians: "By the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears," Acts 20:31. For this holy man was not of that hard and pitiless sect, which in former times was in such repute among

the pagans, where the heart and affections of the philosopher were steeled and dried as well as his tears; he was of the humane and tender school of the Lord Jesus, who moulded his followers to such exquisite charity, that they could not behold the evil ways of a fellow creature without being touched to the quick, and feeling the deepest sorrow; who was not himself ashamed to weep when he met with objects worthy of his tears. Besides that, weeping is a necessary and natural consequence of pity; for it is impossible that a soul can be deeply touched without affecting the body, and instantly opening that secret spring of tears which God has placed in our hearts as a sign of the softness and kindness of that nature he has given us; man alone, of all animals, having the faculty of weeping: besides, I say, these tears, which in themselves appear a trifling thing, are often very useful, and produce more effects than the most formidable strength. How often have they weakened the firmest courage! How often have they brought about that which neither reason nor violence was able to effect! Minds that had resisted all other efforts have been subdued and won by tears, and after having stood firm against the rudest shocks, have yielded to this apparently feeble weapon.

But, to say no more respecting the merits of tears generally, it cannot be denied that those of Paul, and of such servants of God as, after his example, have shed them on like occasions, were very necessary; for they proved their zeal, and were an evidence that it was neither envy, nor hatred of men, nor any unkind feelings, which animated them against these evil-workers, and inspired them with such sharp and bitter censures as they applied to their doctrine and morals. They proved that their warmth was but the legitimate offspring of their love, and the effect of a holy grief. And, of a truth, the case before us might well draw tears from the apostle's eyes; for he saw on the one hand the misery of those whom he reproves, and on the other their danger to whom he writes.

He weeps for either party. For with regard to the first, is it not a lamentable thing when they to whom God has granted the knowledge of himself abuse that knowledge to their own perdition? when, after being marked with his seal and enrolled under his banners, they desert to the service of his enemies, and fight against himself? when they endeavour to corrupt by their secret poison those whom open enemies could not subdue by force? Is it not a spectacle worthy of our tears, to behold those whom the Son of God has redeemed by his blood clenched in the claws of Satan? to see such as he would elevate to heaven trampled in the very
141 dust? to find flesh and blood triumphing over the seal and teaching of the Spirit of God? The hardest heart would behold with pity the downfal of a man from an honourable station to indigence and sorrow; what then must be our emotion when we contemplate these unhappy ones who are falling from heaven into the abyss of woe, becoming teachers of error after having been followers of the truth, and, from the glory of being children of God, drawn into the ignominious condition of the servants of corruption!

But besides their own ruin, well calculated to excite compassion, the apostle would consider still more the danger in which their malice placed the church of Christ; these impostors boldly occupying the place of true and faithful teachers,

and disguising their odious designs under the most attractive colours. For their doctrines had charms, and the more, because we all naturally desire that which they promised to their followers,—peace with the world, the favour and friendship of those from whom true Christians had separated, and who every where stirred up against them the most cruel persecutions.

St Paul, seeing his converts, whom he had begotten in Christ with so many afflictions, whom he had placed in the true light of life by means of such bitter pains, in such imminent danger, was unable to restrain his tears; like a tender mother, who cannot see her beloved children threatened with misfortune without terror, groans, and weeping.

Brethren, let us imitate the apostle's holy example. Let the error of the false brethren, and the danger of true believers, awaken in our hearts sentiments similar to his. When, in the midst of the church itself, vipers are produced who devour the entrails of their mother, and disturb the communion to which they belong, we have need to weep and not to laugh; to pray to God that he would so admonish men as to prevent the effect of an injurious doctrine; and to warn each of the brethren to beware of the enemy, and not be deceived by the mark he wears. This the apostle does in the text; and besides his tears, in order to give the Philippians a just horror of the false teachers, he unfolds in a few words all the mystery of their iniquity, and tearing away the deceitful mask with which they covered themselves, exposes them as they really were to the eyes of true believers.

In the first place, he tells them that "many walk," that is, among the Christians; and this would add to the anxiety of the Philippians, for it is evident that the greater the number of enemies, the greater the danger, and the greater should be our vigilance. The Holy Spirit does not feed us with vain promises; he does not conceal from us the danger in which we are, or the number of our enemies; he warns us of every thing so faithfully that we have no right to plead being taken by surprise.

And here I would observe, brethren, how inevitable this sort of trial appears in the church. For if, at the commencement of Christianity, and under the very eyes of the apostles, there were not few, but many, evil-workers, as we have just seen, certainly the multitude of errors, contradictions, troubles, that disturb Christendom in our day, should not surprise us, or raise a doubt in our minds respecting the truth of our religion; but, on the contrary, should confirm it to us, as an evident mark that it is the religion of the apostles, since it is exposed to the same adversaries. For Satan leaves those who follow lies quietly to themselves, being well assured of their perdition. Those whom he opposes are generally followers of the truth, because they alone of all men are likely to disturb his reign, and are capable of destroying it. On this account there have been many more heresies and schisms in the Christian than in any other religion: in the Mahomedan, for instance, there are very few; so also the popish faith reigned in Christendom in peace in that respect, before the Lord revealed the light of truth. As soon as that bright sun arose, immediately thousands of serpents and venomous reptiles manifested themselves, and continue to this hour to scandalize the church of God.

II. Let us now observe particularly the apostle's description of these men; their marks, their manners, their condition. As I have already said, this description comprises five distinct subjects.

First, They are "enemies of the cross of Christ." I confess (says he) that they *speak* of Christ and his cross; but in reality they are his enemies. They paint his emblems on their banners, and profess to follow him; but in secret they deny him and injure his cause. For do not imagine, brethren, that the men of whom the apostle speaks were Jews or pagans, that is, open enemies; no, they had been baptized in the name of Christ, and they also baptized others. They boasted of following the gospel, and of teaching it better than any. Yet, notwithstanding these appearances, St Paul cries respecting them, "They are enemies of the cross of Christ;" that is to say, of the most sacred of his mysteries, the loftiest trophy of his victory, the most salutary doctrine of Scripture. And this should teach us to judge of men rather by their works than words, and not to recognise as followers of the Lamb all who boast of being such. It often happens that the very people who in words most honour the cross, in deeds the most insult it. They worship it in name, but they deny its power. They exalt it in profession, but they darken its glory, unwilling that it should be the only justification of man, the only expiation for sin, the only sacrifice capable of appeasing the wrath of God. And as for these of whom the apostle speaks, judaizing teachers, mingling the law and the gospel, they were certainly enemies of the cross in many ways; they taught that man can be justified by the law, an error most offensive to the cross of Christ, since it takes from him his highest glory, that of saving men, as St Paul has elsewhere declared, "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain," Galatians 2:21. Again, the motive which induced them to publish this doctrine was nothing less than fear of the hatred and persecution of the Jews, as we learn from the apostle; when speaking of them he says, "Lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ," Galatians 5:21. It was the fear of being called to endure, for the gospel's sake, those sufferings to which its true disciples are exposed, which inspired them with the love of so pernicious a doctrine; so that, although in outward appearance and profession they worshipped "Christ crucified for us," yet in fact they were enemies of his cross; that is, both of the afflictions to which his people are subject, and which are frequently called his cross; and of the principal cause of them, namely, a firm reliance thereon. Again, after living as slaves to the flesh, and worshipping the belly, as the apostle mentions below, it is very evident that in this respect also they were the enemies of the cross, which has nothing more inimical to it than the flesh; for it was elevated to humble the flesh, and to cure us of the bite of that wily and deadly serpent; to destroy its lusts and bind its passions: and they who have truly tasted the virtue of the cross become new creatures, dead to sin and the flesh, but alive to God and the Spirit: so that they who follow the flesh and minister to its desires, whatever profession they may make, are really the enemies of the cross of the Saviour of the world. Added to this, the *cross*, which is the foundation of every doctrine of the gospel, is often, by a figure of speech, put for the gospel altogether, from whence it follows, that people

142

who corrupt its holy mysteries in any way, whether in belief or morals, are rightly denominated enemies of the cross.

It appears, therefore, that we must place in this class, not only those who deny the death of the Saviour, (as do the Turks,) or its merit and atonement in being the perfect propitiation for sin, (as heretics,) or who rob it of its glory (as the papists) by insisting on other sacrifices besides that of the cross, or who teach justification partly by works; but likewise all those who endeavour, by artifice and dissimulation, to avoid the afflictions to which a faithful profession of the gospel always leads; or who, by the luxury and dissipation of their lives, deny the power of godliness, notwithstanding that outwardly they retain the appearance of Christians.

And although this description of the false teachers, viz. that they "were enemies of the cross of Christ," might be sufficient to excite a just horror against them in the breast of every real servant of the Saviour, who loves nothing so ardently as the glory of his cross, the only source of his felicity and his life; yet St Paul, in order more deeply to impress the Philippians with the necessity of fleeing from such people, adds,

Secondly, That their "end is destruction." I acknowledge that the word "end," which the apostle uses here, sometimes signifies the design and intention of a man, the end that he proposes, the object at which he aims; and indeed it may not be inappropriate thus to understand it, for the design of these men was certainly the ruin and destruction of all who allowed themselves to be seduced into their errors; in the same manner as eur Lord says that "the thief cometh but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy," John 10:10.

But it appears more suitable to suppose that the words relate rather to the destruction of the seducers themselves; that they describe the horrid and endless ruin in which their malicious labours were plunging them.

And in this light the word "end" may be understood in two ways: first, as salary or wages. For Scripture employs it sometimes in this signification; as when the apostle, speaking of the sins to which men are prone in a natural state, says, "The end (that is, the wages) of those things whereof they were now ashamed, is death," Romans 6:1. Some also interpret St Peter's words in the same way, "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls," 1 Peter 1:9. Here, in like manner, destruction is the end of these evil-workers; all the wages they obtain for the trouble they give themselves and others being, nothing less than perdition. O sad, but most just retribution! O blind and senseless madness, preferring to labour for so unhappy a reward, rather than to aspire after the precious wages reserved for the truly pious! It is true these unhappy people toil much, that cannot be denied; the discipline they teach is difficult to endure; yet all the recompence they shall obtain is eternal damnation. Probably they do not imagine this. Probably, intoxicated with delight at their own vain works, they already in imagination divide among themselves, like the mother of Sisera, the spoils of the world, and conceive that their great and laborious designs will be crowned with eternal glory. But the apostle, the faithful interpreter of the oracles of God, promises them no other wages than destruction.

The same thing is however signified, if by this word "end" we understand the issue and success of a matter; as the apostle himself takes it, when, speaking allegorically of the world, (that is, man,) which produces only briers and thorns, he adds, "whose end is to be burned," Hebrews 6:8. And our Saviour also, in the parable already quoted at the commencement of this discourse, denounces these evil-workers in the same terms; saying, "They shall bind the tares in bundles to burn them," Matthew 13:30. Again, it is said the "end" of such evil-workers as transform themselves into ministers of Christ will be "according to their works," 2 Corinthians 11:15; in other words, that having lived and laboured as the enemies of the Lord, they would hereafter be treated as such. And, in fact, these people always go on from bad to worse. They fall from one precipice to another, the justice of God pursuing them, and awfully witnessing that they have never really loved the truth; so that, after descending into various depths of sin, they are at length hastened into the abyss of death and everlasting damnation. O believers, if we tremble at their end, let us also beware of their error; and, in order to avoid their doom, let us also avoid their crime.

But the apostle, after having shown us the "end" of these people, in order to justify such a consummation, proceeds,

III. Thirdly, to represent to our eyes the enormity of their sin. Their "god (says he) is their belly." In another place, speaking in a manner similar to this, and which may serve to explain the text, he reproaches them for the same thing, saying, "These serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly," Romans 16:18. For when he says in the text, their "belly is their god," he does not mean that they literally believed their belly to be a god, and that so feeble a part of the human frame could really be a partaker of the Divine nature, as the pagans supposed with regard to their false gods. Such a supposition is too carnal to dwell in the mind of any man. But the holy apostle intended to signify that to please the belly, to indulge and gratify the flesh, was their ultimate object; and that so unholy a passion for the things of the flesh, subjecting all their thoughts and desires, was the same thing as though the belly had been the divinity they adored. For nothing was permitted to interfere with its gratification; but, on the contrary, every thing was sacrificed to it. And as we might say of an avaricious man that money is his god, so the apostle, in like manner, expresses himself, saying that a "covetous man is an idolater," and that "covetousness is idolatry," Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5. For as we ought to love our God supremely, and consider his will rather than our own, preferring his service to every other consideration, it is with much elegance St Paul gives the name of God to that which men most esteem, and to which all other things are forced to yield.

Perhaps he also referred to the language of these men, who boasted of regarding nothing but the will and glory of God and his Christ in the alterations they were endeavouring to make in the church. The apostle therefore declares that the god to whom they made these great sacrifices was really their belly, and not the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, or Jesus Christ himself, because, in fact, (as we have already shown,) seeing with what rage the Jews persecuted Paul, and that it was mot possible for them to preach the gospel purely without kindling a like fury against

themselves, in order to be exempt from this, and find their preaching subservient to the flesh, (being above all things desirous of its repose,) they retained circumcision, and mingled the law with the gospel of Christ.

IV. Fourthly, The apostle adds, their "glory is in their shame." Some suppose (143) that he intends here the fame which these teachers enjoyed; for it often happens that people of this sort, by the boldness of their address, and the arrogance of their behaviour, so impose upon the simple, that they even prefer them to the true and faithful servants of God. St Paul therefore protests that this vain idol of glory and fame is in truth but ignominy and shame; and that the colours with which it is decked at present will be torn away by the just decree of God, who will expose it in its true light. In the same manner Hosea speaks, "I will change their glory into shame," chapter 4:7.

But this interpretation, though good, and followed by authors of respectability, appearing rather strained, it would seem better to apply the words differently, and read it thus, "their glory is in their shame," meaning, they glory in those things of which they ought to feel ashamed, which are rather shameful than honourable. For it is usual in the Holy Scriptures to give the name of a thing to the causes which produce it, and on which it depends. Thus Jesus is often called "our life, our hope, our glory," because he is the Prince and Author of life and glory. In this sense Wisdom speaks, "Whoso hateth me loveth death," Proverbs 3:6; not that such people actually and literally desired death, (that is opposed to our nature,) but it signifies that they loved earthly things, and would thereby be conducted to certain ruin.

So the apostle, when he says in the text, "the glory of these false teachers is in their shame," does not mean that they were ashamed of what they did, and that in such shame consisted their glory, (this would be a most extravagant idea,) but rather that those things in which they gloried were worthy of shame and blushing instead of boasting. We read in the Epistle to the Galatians, (chapter 6,) that among other things they gloried in the flesh of those whom they persuaded to be circumcised; as though it were a good action to have corrupted the faith of a Christian, and placed the Lord's free-men again in a state of slavery; whereas, in reality, this was an action worthy of blame rather than praise. It cannot be doubted that they boasted also of having amalgamated the religion of Jesus with that of the Jews, whereas they should have wept for having so unhappily mingled the kingdom of heaven with the elements of the earth. Again, it is probable they talked loudly of the peace and friendship with the Jews, which they had procured for the church by their amiable yielding; yet this in reality was nothing less than purchasing ease and security to the flesh, at the expense of the truth of God, and peace of conscience; the most shameful and infamous bargain of which man can be guilty. Behold how St Paul casts down with a word the glorying of these unhappy men, changing their boasting into confusion, and their trophies of honour into brands of disgrace, and making their awful arrogance manifest to all. For although it is an evil thing to be guilty of dishonourable and deceitful conduct, yet does a blush at the remembrance of evil deeds make some small amends for having committed them; but, on the

other hand, to glory in them and rejoice in boasting, instead of asking pardon on the knees, is doubtless the very height of insolence.

V. Lastly, The apostle gives the fifth mark of these false teachers, saying they "mind earthly things." Now some suppose that this relates to the Mosaic ceremonies which these people wished to retain, and which St Paul elsewhere calls "the weak things of the world," opposing them to celestial things, meaning thereby the mysteries and service of the gospel. But, having said that their god was their belly, and adding, in the following verse, "our conversation is in heaven," it is clear that the words must be taken in a general sense, as in other parts of Scripture, especially Romans 8:5, "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh." His meaning there I conceive to be this, that these people possessed gross and sensual minds, attached to this world and its pleasures, without raising their eyes higher, without being inwardly moved by the Spirit of God, or having one true and lively feeling of that pure and spiritual glory which Christ has purchased and now lays up for us in heaven. For these earthly things of which he speaks are such as relate to the ease, and convenience, and pleasure of the flesh, of this weak and mortal state in which we now are, whether they be riches, honour, or pleasure.

Thus much, beloved brethren, for the explanation of our text. In order to draw profit from it, we must treat it in a different manner from the preceding one. In that we considered the character of the holy apostle, set forth as our pattern; now we must examine that of the false teachers, that we may carefully avoid their snare. Then we endeavoured to copy the features of that beautiful portrait on our own minds; now we have to efface from them the resemblance of this; and if we have arrived at this point, that we do not find in our opinions and actions some (at least) of the marks described by St Paul, we may be considered to have made no small progress in the heavenly course. God grant it may be so! And certainly we ought to be thus advanced, considering the honour we have of living in the church of Christ, the Prince of life and Author of immortality. But, alas! our conduct too plainly shows that we are yet far from this. There are in the very house of the crucified One those who hate his cross; there are to be found there, O shame! people who adore the belly, the most infamous of idols, and who glory in their shame. There are to be found in the school of heaven those who savour only of the things of earth, and in the abode of life and salvation unhappy beings whose end is destruction.

We boast of loving the cross of Christ, and ascribe to it the glory of having redeemed us. If this language be true, whence comes it that we still serve sin, which this cross has destroyed? Whence comes it that the lusts of the flesh still live in our members? If we love it, why do we listen to its enemies? Why do we favour them? Why do we betray its glory? Why cast down its trophies, denying its virtue, and changing it into an instrument of corruption, as though it were of no other use than to procure for us a licence to sin with impunity? Dear brethren, let us put away from our hearts this infamous idea. Let us truly love the cross of Christ, because it is indeed lovely, though in appearance so frightful. Let us embrace it as the sole instrument of our salvation, as that which has appeased the wrath of God, silenced the demands of the law, shut up hell, abolished sin, opened heaven,

and obtained for us eternal life. Let every action of our lives bear its impress, and our conversation be altogether sanctified by it; and while we leave its vain and dead images to idolatry and superstition, let its wondrous virtue be manifested in our members. Let this cross drive far from them the lusts of the devil, the love of sin and of the world. May its thorns and nails pierce our old nature, and its holy efficacy be upon us in such wise as that each of us may be, as it were, living copies of the crucified One, who on it accomplished the work of our redemption. Let us for ever renounce the service of idols, which this cross has abolished; not such alone as the pagan in his ignorance worships, but those also which the world worships now in the very face and light of truth. 144

The flesh is, of all others, the great idol which maintains its dominion over the larger portion of mankind. For this monster the arts are put in requisition; for it men tread the desert land, and brave the stormy ocean, dreading no tempest, no danger, for its gratification. Its will is so completely obeyed, that for it the service of the true God, and the salvation of men's souls, are utterly neglected. At its desire, in former days, Esau bartered his birthright, and its accompanying blessings, for a mess of pottage. It is in the service of this idol that so many unhappy ones barter heaven and eternity for a morsel of bread. This it was which so subtilized the minds of these false teachers against whom St Paul is here arguing, and which instigated them to the proposal of a pernicious agreement between Judaism and Christianity. This it is which is the author of all those things which bring scandal on the church, the inventor of the artful snares with which Satan entraps the world, and the most dangerous assistant he has in the destruction of men's souls. Who can describe the injustice, the outrages, the enormities, the excesses of this filthy, this greedy creature? who recount the robberies of time and money committed by it against the service of God; the alms ravished from the poor; the maladies incurred even by itself as a reward of its deeds; the paralysis with which it strikes the mind, laying low all the nobler faculties; the health of which it deprives the soul, plunging it into perdition that it may be entirely a slave to the flesh?

Christians! suffer not yourselves to be governed by such a monster. Remember that you have within you another and better part,—the soul, formed in the image of God, capable of immortality; unlike the flesh, which will be destroyed with its aliments. It is the soul that should govern and command; it is the soul that ought to direct your conduct during life. The belly was given to be the servant and not the master of your other members. Keep it in subjection. Suffer it not to transgress the laws of God. You are not forbidden to nourish it, but you are forbidden to worship it. We may take due care of it, provided we never allow it to interfere with the glory of God, the edification of our neighbour, or the salvation of our own soul. For were we reduced to this extremity, (which indeed could rarely occur,) it would be better that the belly, with all its meats, should perish, than cause the least prejudice to the interests of the soul. And what I have here said with regard to the belly is equally applicable to all earthly things, for their value is no greater than it, nor their nature more excellent. There are none capable of rendering us happy, or of guarding us from those real evils, the pangs of conscience, the wrath

of God, death, or damnation. There are none capable of withstanding the secret ravages of time, which must inevitably consume them all; and even now are they passing quickly away. They fly—they perish while I am speaking. Oh when shall we cease to desire so vain, so perishable a possession? How long are we to build on so sandy a foundation? How long shall we continue to grasp air, clouds, smoke, shadowy forms which elude our embrace? O believers, let us raise our hearts above the earth. Let us use this world without abusing it. It is disgraceful for persons called to a heavenly inheritance, and separated for the enjoyment of eternal life, to amuse themselves with mud, and delight in earthly things: nay, it is more, it is highly dangerous; for the apostle most clearly shows that everlasting destruction is the end and reward of such slaves of vanity. If, then, we have any consideration either for our safety or our consistency, let us renounce for ever this infamous, this ruinous bondage, and serve from henceforth the sovereign God alone. Let us sigh for the happiness he promises, and desire only such things as will conduct thereto.

May Jesus Christ, the author of our salvation, give us this grace; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honour, glory, and praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

Verse 20–21.

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.

Dear brethren, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, the mystery of which we have this day celebrated, produce in those who truly participate therein two principal effects. First, This mystical food changes carnal and earthly men into spiritual and divine. For while the natural food which we take for the nourishment of our bodies loses its own form, and becomes a part of our substance, the body and blood of Christ, on the contrary, by their wondrous power, transform those who receive them into their nature, and produce in them a likeness to the Lord; clothing them with his love, his patience, his purity, and his other heavenly qualities. Secondly, This spiritual food delivers us from corruption, and renders us immortal, according to the promise of our Lord, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day," John 6:54. For as the tree of life in the garden of Eden had this virtue, that it shielded from death and perpetuated life in the man who fed thereon, so also the Lord Jesus, the true Tree of life, the joy and happiness of the second paradise, gives immortality to him who partakes of his sacred fruit, his body and blood which he has given for us. But while the life of Eden was terrestrial, animal, and subject to change, as the event has shown, that which the flesh and blood of Christ gives is celestial and unchangeable. Having then this day been partakers of this sacred food and living water at the holy table of the Lord, I consider that it is suitable after partaking of this banquet to exercise ourselves in the meditation of the two excellent fruits which it is calculated to produce in us, in order that we may more effectually understand the value of this grace.

For this purpose I have chosen for the subject of my discourse the passage of St Paul which has been read to you, wherein that great apostle describes these two mysteries:

First, Our condition after having been brought into communion with the Lord: Citizens of heaven, men whose conversation is in the new Jerusalem.

Secondly, The life we look for: Our vile bodies changed into glorious bodies.

For the apostle having in this chapter combated certain evil-workers, who endeavoured to subject Christians to the Mosaic law, and having declared that they were enemies to the cross of Christ, that their belly was their god, and their glory confusion, as men who desired only terrestrial objects; the apostle, I say, now (145) opposes to such men the temper, condition, end, and hope of true believers. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself."

Therefore, as I have already said, I purpose treating of two subjects in the present discourse: Our citizenship and heavenly conversation, and the change hereafter to take place in our bodies at the second and glorious advent of our Lord, when they shall be conformed to his body.

And may God enable us so to meditate on these things that our souls may be edified and built up, that being, while here below, citizens of heaven, we may hereafter participate in the Divine nature of the Lord Jesus, the sovereign Prince of life. Amen.

I. Touching the first point, the apostle explains it in few words: "Our conversation is that of citizens of heaven."[1] The word here employed[2] may be interpreted two ways; for it occasionally signifies a republic or state; the author of the book of Maccabees uses it in this sense, when he says that Judas, being vexed with the perfidy of the inhabitants of Joppa, resolved to destroy their republic, 2 Maccabees 12:7, that is, to ruin their state; wherein he makes use of the same word employed in the text. If then we understand it thus, the apostle's meaning will appear to be that our state or republic is in heaven. But as this word is derived from another, which signifies to converse, live, and conduct ourselves in a certain manner, agreeably to the customs of our fellow citizens; and as St Paul uses it in this sense, both in the Acts, (chapter 23:1,) where he declares that he has *lived* in all good conscience towards God, and in this Epistle, (chapter 1:27,) desiring us to have our *conversation* as it becometh the gospel of Christ; it is evident that the word may be understood as referring to conversation, character, and manner of life. And thus it has been translated in the Vulgate, and by most of the ancient Greek and Latin fathers. Now although both these interpretations are good, yet, if I may venture to give an opinion, I consider that the first is more simple, rich, and beautiful than the second. Our French version has united the two expressions, and translated it thus, "Our conversation is that of citizens of heaven;" and by the expression "citizens of heaven" is signified that our *city* or *state* is in heaven.

1 French translation.
2 Πολίτευμα.

This, then, is our first subject, and afterwards we have to consider the necessary consequence of this, viz. that "our conversation also is in heaven."

By a city or state we understand a multitude or society of people, united in one body, governed by the same laws, enjoying the same rights, subject to the same prince, and having among them the same form of policy. From whence it is evident that the Christian church, that is to say, the multitude of believers who receive the gospel of our Lord as proclaimed by the holy apostles, is a *state*, since all these conditions belong to it; all believers composing but one body, living under the same teaching, having the same laws, privileges, customs, and habits, the same form of government, and being subjects of the same King.

But this holy republic differs entirely from the kingdoms of the world in many respects, but more especially in this, (which indeed includes all the others,) that it is in heaven, whereas all others are on the earth. On this account Daniel, predicting the foundation and establishment of this kingdom, contrasts it with those of the world, of which he had been speaking: "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever," Daniel 2:44. And therefore it is that this state is frequently denominated "the kingdom of heaven," an appellation as you well know of constant use in the Scriptures, and employed by the Jews themselves to signify the church of the Messiah. This holy kingdom is also called "the city of God," Hebrews 11:10; "Jerusalem which is above," Galatians 4:26; and "the new Jerusalem which descendeth out of heaven from God," Revelation 21:2. And herein it differs not only from the kingdoms of the world, properly so called, but even from the state of the first Adam in Paradise, and from the ancient Jewish republic in the land of Canaan.

This divine city is really in *heaven*, first, because Jesus, its Prince and Builder, is heavenly, not only as regards his Godhead, but also as regards his manhood, according to the doctrine of St Paul, who says that the second man, viz. the Lord, is *from heaven*, 1 Corinthians 15:47; not formed of earth and dust, like the first Adam, the head of the first republic; not by virtue of flesh and blood, like Moses the lawgiver and founder of the Jewish polity; but formed of celestial mould, and animated by the Holy Spirit. And as his origin was heaven, so also is his abode there; there is his court, and the seat of his empire, whether you consider his Divine or human nature. For although as God he is every where filling all space with his essence, yet Scripture particularly insists upon his presence in the heavens, because there is no place in the universe where that presence is so gloriously manifested, to the utter exclusion of sin, death, and sorrow. It is true that in the flesh he conversed for a season on earth, but this only on account of the work of our redemption; and that finished, he was immediately raised up into heaven, his natural element, from whence this Divine Lord governs his empire: whereas the palaces of princes, how magnificent soever they may be, are all here below; and even the Paradise destined for the habitation of man, though delightful and happy, was yet terrestrial; so also the country of Canaan, the place of the Mosaic republic.

And as our King is in the heavens, so from thence is the root of our extraction, the source of our blood. From thence are all true believers, not sprung from dust, as was the first man; not from the loins of Abraham and Jacob, as were the Israelites; (these were of earthly original;) but from the eternal Spirit, after the pattern of Christ: and this we learn from John, chapter 3:3, 5, "Who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" and also from our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." For the Holy Spirit, rendering the word of life, which is the seed of our regeneration, fertile within us, forms us into new creatures, fit to enter into the heavenly state.

Further, in heaven is our home and rest; we live on the earth in the character of pilgrims and strangers until the work of our trial be completed. Then will the Lord gather us into the celestial garner, in order that where he is there we may be also. There already dwell the first-fruits of our society, the spirits of all the holy brethren who are gone before. There they now dwell with the Lamb, and there in due time will the remainder of the happy citizens assemble. Heaven is the eternal city to
146 which we aspire; the true Canaan, flowing with milk and honey, and abounding in delights, towards which we are now travelling. There the archives of our state are kept, the sacred registers in which the name of every citizen is enrolled. In heaven are also to be found the armies of our state; not weak soldiers armed with wood, or even iron, whose fidelity may be corrupted by the artifice of the enemy, whose strength may be weakened by illness or a thousand casualties, and whose life may be taken by the sword; but immortal warriors, millions of angels clothed with wisdom and strength incorruptible. They watch over us night and day, and are sent here and there upon errands of mercy to us by our gracious Prince. Lastly, in this same place are our dignities and honours preserved; the thrones on which we shall hereafter sit; the cities of which our Master will give us the dominion in reward of our faithfulness; the incorruptible crowns with which he will ornament our foreheads; the kingdoms and priesthoods with which he will invest us; the manna on which we are to feed; the rivers of delights whereof he will grant us to drink; the robes of fine linen, white and clean, in which he will clothe us; in a word, all those rewards and blessings which will console us for our labours, and are comprised in that blessed word, "eternal life," now *concealed*, as St Paul saith, "with Christ in God."

Thus, brethren, you see the holy apostle had a good right to say that "our city," or our state, "is in heaven." But "our conversation" is also there. I do not speak of the time which our souls shall pass in heaven from the moment of death until the "last day," nor yet of the blessed eternity which we shall spend in the same place, and when these truths will be made evident and clear. But I say that even now, if we are truly Christians, we have our conversation there. For they who are such "have been crucified together with Christ, and have been raised up together, and are sitting with him in the heavenly places," Ephesians 2:5–6, as the apostle also witnesses elsewhere. I acknowledge that their body is on earth; but their life, their conversation, is in heaven, each being truly able to say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ

liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and hath given himself for me." And as the conversation of the Israelites was in the temple of Jerusalem, however distant they might be from it with regard to the body, because to it their thoughts and affections turned; towards that place they lifted their eyes in prayer when absent, and from thence expected the required succour, no captivity, no misfortune obliterating the memory of that holy sanctuary, the source of all their joys: so also the Christian beholds in heaven the true Ark, the Lord Christ, where all the fulness of the Godhead dwells, not in types and figures as in the Mosaic ark, but in truth and reality; the Ark truly worthy of adoration, the only source of joy, the living spring of happiness, where God communicates with them, and manifests himself to them; where he receives their prayers, pronounces his instructions, and distributes to them grace, life, and blessing. Having this treasure in heaven, there is also their heart; and the heart being found there, there they have also their life. In heaven their faith dwells, their hope rests, elevated above all terrestrial things, penetrating within the veil, anchoring upon the Rock of ages. There dwells the soul in love; and beholding throughout the rest of the universe nothing but vanity and sin, it retires continually into this heavenly palace, where it may worship the Lord in spirit and in truth. There it feasts upon the sight of him, holds converse with holy angels and departed spirits, and endeavours to stamp upon its own character the impress of theirs; imitating their purity, their zeal, their devotion, their earnestness in prayer, their warmth of love towards God and man, and, in fine, aspiring after that immortality which they enjoy. This is the conversation which the apostle commands: "Seek the things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth," Colossians 3:1–2. To have one's "conversation in heaven," is to seek heavenly things and love them ardently. Such is the sense in which the apostle says, "Our city and our conversation is in heaven."

And with regard to the first of these truths, viz. that "our state is in heaven," you see how they deceive themselves, who, by a strange blindness, would transform the church into a visible monarchy with an earthly dominion, wishing her to possess a king, princes, magistrates, armies, cities, dignities, and glory in the world. Certainly they have not drawn the idea of this imaginary state, where heaven and earth are mingled together, from Scripture, but rather from their own passions; which would fain establish, under the name of Christ and his kingdom, the interests of avarice and ambition, and would miserably plunge in the earth, or, to speak more plainly, in the mud, that holy republic, which the Lord Jesus has elevated far above all heavens. For what can be more earthly than their state, the head of which is a man, a plain man, like the other princes of the world, whose seat of government is still the same which in former times so long and so cruelly tyrannized over the universe, whose strength is in flesh and blood, whose only support is from the earth, metals, gold, iron; where all that is distributed is earthly, riches, honours, dignities; where the government is but carnal, founded entirely on human maxims? And as the Jewish rabbins called the earthly empire which they foolishly supposed

their pretended Messiah would establish at his coming "the kingdom of heaven," so these people likewise are not ashamed to give the name "Christian republic," "Catholic church" to their carnal state, which has been built up by degrees from the ruins, and wrecks, and spoils of earthly empires.

As for us, dear brethren, who know that the kingdom of our Lord is not of this world, and that his empire is in heaven, God forbid that we should receive as the sovereign of his church any earthly man. Our Head and Sovereign is in heaven, where is also our citizenship.

But as we have seen, secondly, that the conversation of Christians is heavenly, it plainly follows that there should be nothing carnal in all their polity, whether with regard to religion or manners. I say with regard to religion, because during the Mosaic dispensation there was something carnal and terrestrial in the worship of the people of God; as, viz. their sacrifices, their circumcision, their abstaining from certain meats, their feasts, and other ceremonies. All this was well so long as the church was linked to earth, and dwelt in Canaan. Now we have no other city but a heavenly, and all our worship ought to be heavenly and spiritual. And this, no doubt, is one of the designs the apostle had in view in representing here to the Philippians that our conversation is in heaven, viz. to show how vain were the pretensions of the false teachers of whom he spoke at the commencement of the chapter, who were endeavouring to re-establish the law of Moses among Christians. Be watchful then, brethren, against the seductions of those who fill this heavenly city of the Lord with carnal ceremonies, whose worship is quite
147 earthly, while the true worship of a Christian is Divine and spiritual. A Christian should worship the Lord in the same manner as the angels and the spirits of the just serve him in heaven; not by a distinction of meats and days; not with images, and chaplets, and sackcloth, and chastising of the body, and holy water, and such like; but in righteousness, and peace, and joy of the Holy Ghost, in faith and love, by holy and honest thoughts, by fervent prayer, by an ardent charity, and by the continual exercise of all the virtues that depend thereon. And this is the second part of a Christian's service, consisting in the sanctification of the life; that as our city is in heaven, there our affections and desires may also be; so that neither the world, nor any thing belonging thereto, shall henceforth be the aim or object of our life. This is certainly the intention of the apostle in declaring to the Philippians that our conversation is in heaven; for he had just before blamed the false teachers because their belly was their god. Now therefore, in order to show that we should have no communion with such, he adds, that the conversation of true Christians is in heaven; whereas these miserable people have their conversation plunged into the filth of the world. And from this you perceive how false is the opinion of papists, who acknowledge as members of the Christian church those who, under the profession of the name of Jesus, conceal a life corrupted by the passions and lusts of this world; whereas St Paul admits none into the communion of the city of God, but such as have their conversation in heaven, and whose profession of faith is accompanied by a conduct worthy of heaven, and by a mind purified from the corruptions of the earth.

But the apostle is not satisfied with saying that our city and conversation are in heaven; he gives a proof of it, and establishes the fact in the words following, wherein he adds, that it is from heaven we expect the Saviour, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ. This reasoning is drawn from the intimate union we have with this sovereign Lord; for since he is our Head, and we are his members, making together one mystical body, it is evident that it must either be said that the members are separated from the Head, (a monstrous and impossible notion,) or that we are where he is, and have our conversation there. Now he is in heaven; and since he is our life and our happiness, it follows of necessity that our souls must be where he is. This discourse of the apostle clearly shows that the Lord is not on earth, contrary to the dreams of such as suppose that his body is yet here below, whether in all places, like those who hold its *ubiquity*, whether on altars, or in the mouths and stomachs of such as receive the sacrament, as our adversaries of the Church of Rome maintain. If it be on earth as well as in heaven, (as these people suppose,) who does not see that if his presence is not in heaven, neither can our conversation be there? For, according to this doctrine, we could be with him as the members with the head, as those who love with the thing loved, without raising ourselves above, because he would be in the earth; nay, in more places therein (according to Rome) than in heaven. For what need were there to quit this earth in order to converse with him, if we have him here present with us, yea, dwelling in our bodies, as our adversaries hold. Now St Paul declares that our conversation is in heaven because Jesus Christ is there. Certainly then it cannot be true that the Lord Jesus is on earth. And as he says "we expect the Saviour," it is clear that he is not with us. For one cannot be expecting things which are not absent. We have already such as are present. And a person would be considered almost insane who should say he was expecting one already with him. Though such language might be considered rational by our opponents, it is at least clear that St Paul counted it absurd, saying, in his Epistle to the Romans, "What a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" Romans 8:24. Now he says himself that we are expecting the Lord Jesus. He therefore did not believe he was already present. And with regard to the Saviour's promise of being with his people even to the end of the age, and of being present in every assembly where two or three were gathered in his name, what Christian does not know that this is to be understood of the power, and teaching, and blessing of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and not of the bodily presence and human nature of Christ? as the ancient fathers of the church have clearly explained. For respecting his body, Scripture teaches us that it is in the heavens; St Peter telling us that "the heavens must receive it until the restitution of all things," Acts 3:21; and St Paul, that in the sacrament of the Lord's supper "we do show forth his death *till he come*," 1 Corinthians 11:26, and that we are "looking for him from heaven;" and again, "looking for his glorious appearing," Titus 2:14; and, lastly, it is the creed of Christians, that "he shall come to judge the quick and the dead:" so that the words of our Lord to his disciples must be understood with regard to the body, "And now I go my way to him that sent me," John 16:28; and again, "Me ye have not always," &c., John 12:8.

It is for this reason that the holy apostle commands us elsewhere to "seek those things which are above and the ancient church warned the faithful, when speaking of the communion of the body of Christ, "Lift up your hearts an evident token that, in order to embrace and enjoy him, our souls must mount up to heaven, for this could not be said were he yet below, descending to earth with the passions and nature of a mortal man.

Let us then firmly retain this holy doctrine, and, rejecting the illusions of those who, in spite of sense and reason, and even of the declarations of the word of God, would persuade us to believe that the body of Jesus is yet here, let us seek it in heaven, which he really inhabits; and let us be satisfied with the apostle's assurance that he reigns there in the midst of angels and blessed spirits, without inquiring with vain curiosity respecting the exact situation thereof, whether it be towards the east or the west, or whether he be sitting or standing, or making other questions of like nature, matters of importance which Scripture has not revealed. The Holy Scripture tells us what it is indeed of infinite importance to know, both for our edification and consolation, that Jesus shall come *from* heaven in like manner as he was seen to go up *to* heaven, in order to judge the world in righteousness, and render to every man according to his deeds. This St Paul most distinctly declares in our text, saying, "From whence" (viz. from heaven) "we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." Oh the wonderful advantage of believers! Other men tremble at the coming of Jesus Christ, believers desire it. They expect him as their Saviour, others fear him as their Judge. On this account the apostle here specially gives him the title of Saviour. True, he may be called the "Saviour of all men," as in point of fact St Paul gives this appellation to God, inasmuch as he calls all men, without distinction of age, sex, nation, or condition, to the reception of his grace by the faith of the gospel. But with regard to his appearance at the last day, he can only be called "a Saviour" to believers. All others shall be destroyed, the time allotted to faith and repentance being past. And the sense of the name Saviour must be
148 especially and entirely restrained to believers in interpreting these words, "from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ;" that is, in order to fulfil towards us the truths promised in that name, delivering us from all evil, and from death, the last enemy, and bestowing upon us every good thing. Thus the title of Saviour, here given to the Lord, is not given vainly. It explains the whole passage, showing us that we have good reason to have our conversation in heaven, because it is from thence alone we look for salvation and the author of our happiness, all other things, wherever we turn our eyes, being contrary to us. The apostle also declares elsewhere that we are "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," Titus 2:13; and again, in another place, (Romans 8:19–22,) he treats this doctrine more at length, saying that "we who have the first-fruits of the Spirit" are groaning within ourselves while waiting for the adoption; yea, even that the whole universe is sighing for that day, and expecting with fervent desire the revelation or manifestation of the sons of God, hoping at that time to be delivered from the bondage of corruption and sin to which they are now subject, and permitted to share in his glorious liberty. For

this second coming of our Lord, whom we are expecting from heaven, shall be the accomplishment of his promises and of our hopes. It will be the consummation, by giving us possession of that heaven to which we have *now* only the claim and hope, instead of the actual enjoyment.

II. This the apostle declares in the second and last clause of the text, saying that this blessed Lord, being revealed from heaven according to our expectation, "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself." There is nothing in the world which so strongly resists belief in the citizenship of heaven to which we are called as the condition of our body. Our soul being spiritual, and capable of conceiving and desiring immortality, it does not appear strange to us that this glory should be promised to it; and there have even been wise heathens who, enlightened solely by the light of nature, have elevated their minds to this, and have boldly taught that the human soul was a celestial substance, and that heaven was its true home. But when we cast our eyes upon this poor flesh which clothes us, subject to a thousand infirmities, and finally to death, which destroys its beauty, we are at a loss to comprehend how those who partake of so weak a nature can be citizens of the sanctuary of immortality; this principle being deeply graven in our heart, and St Paul himself expressly declaring it, that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither can corruption inherit incorruption," 1 Corinthians 15:20. To the end therefore that this idea may not prevent us from receiving what he has just taught, namely, that our city and conversation are in heaven, he here sets forth a truth which instantly clears away the whole difficulty, viz. that this body, which indeed in its present state is incapable of entering heaven, shall be changed by the mighty power of the Lord, and clothed with those qualities which are needful to it, in order that it may enter into the kingdom of glory, being made conformable to his own body. This is the chief and last difference between believers and other men. All must rise in order to be judged; but all will not be changed. That will be the case with such only as are destined to be citizens of heaven, that is to say, with true believers. The apostle here briefly touches upon each part of this great mystery: First, The author of our change; this shall be "the Lord Jesus Christ." Secondly, The subject of this change; "our vile body." Thirdly, Its form rendered conformable to his glorious body." And fourthly, The power by which it shall be accomplished; "according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself."

With regard to the first, the Lord Jesus attributes to himself the glory of this work, when he repeats several times in St John's Gospel, that he will give unto us eternal life, and will raise us up again at the last day. He has already given us the type in his own resurrection, having raised up at the end of three days the temple of his body, destroyed by the Jews; and having established it in glory, as he expressly foretold.

The subject which shall be glorified is this same body in which we now dwell, as the apostle clearly proves by calling it "vile;" and in another place for the same reason he calls it an "earthly tabernacle;" and Job speaking of this subject declares

the body to be "a house of clay whose foundation is in the dust." Certainly it cannot be denied that the Lord has shown incomparable wisdom and power in the composition of the body; in the structure and union of its parts; in their disposition, symmetry, and proportion; in the multiplicity of its faculties; in the diversity and exquisite arrangement of its organs; in the form of every member, and wonderful adaptation to its use; the whole conducted and managed with so much ease, that it is beyond a doubt that the human body is the most beautiful and the most perfect of all bodies; so much so that a barbarian philosopher has said that it is a miracle surpassing the elements and the heavens themselves. And one of the servants of God, rapt in the contemplation of this subject, exclaims, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made," Psalm 139:14. This great subject has also supplied to the first physicians and sages of the world matter for excellent books, in which these mysteries of the body are set forth and admired. And in this respect I must confess that our body should not be called "vile," but rather held as the chef d'œuvre of creation, as a mirror in which we behold the Creator reflected, and as an excellent proof of his wisdom and power. In respect to this we may maintain that there is nothing low or vile in the works of the Lord; all manifest the utmost wisdom, even to the smallest herbs which adorn the fields, or to the minutest insects which range through the air or creep upon the earth. But although, absolutely speaking, all the creatures of God are wonderful, yet, in comparing them one with another, a marked difference appears, so that, without disparaging the Divine Majesty, some may be considered low and vile in proportion to others. In this manner the apostle speaks of our *body*, calling it *vile* in comparison with the heavenly and glorious body of the Lord Jesus. For it is evident that in this respect it is a thing very weak and base, far below the beauty and excellence of his admirable body. Its weaknesses are of two kinds; some may be called innocent, being natural to it from the creation, others are the consequences of sin. Among the first I would place the requirements of the body in order to sustain life, such as food, sleep, &c., and all the infirmities which these requirements produce. Among the second I would place sickness, sorrow, and a thousand casualties to which sin has subjected our bodies; and, lastly, death, the greatest of all our evils, which brings the whole machine to ruin, tears it, as it were, in pieces, mars its beauty, renders it an object of horror and disgust, and at length reduces it to so imperceptible a powder that
149 it appears almost nothing. These infirmities are common to all men; neither can the glory of a sceptre, or an empire, exempt any from a participation in them. But believers appear peculiarly exposed to these infirmities; their bodies being subject to the insults and outrages of the wicked, who omit nothing in order to disgrace them as much as possible. But be comforted, O ye bodies of believers. How vile soever you may now be, the apostle assures you that you shall one day be clothed in the glory of the Son of God.

Far, far from us be those heretics, whether ancient or modern, who would snatch from us this sweetest hope of our hearts; pretending and teaching that these same bodies in which we now dwell are not those that shall rise again and reign in heaven, and many other similar inventions of their own brain. The apostle secures

us from being carried away with such delusions, saying, "The Lord shall change our vile body, that he may fashion it after his glorious body." He declares that it shall be changed, and not destroyed; transformed, and not annihilated. Its vileness shall be taken away, but its substance shall be preserved. Otherwise it would not be "our vile body" which is made like unto the body of the Lord. For that which no longer exists can be rendered conformable to none. And the term "transform," made use of by the apostle, sufficiently shows that this change is only in its form, and not in its nature itself. The example of our Lord's body, after which model ours is to be renewed, clearly proves the same truth; the evangelists informing us that the body which Jesus showed to his apostles after his resurrection was the very same that had been crucified and buried in the sepulchre. It retained its substance, its essential form, its lineaments and features. It was changed only in its qualities, having become, instead of weak and mortal, glorious and imperishable.

St Paul, in another place, touching it, as it were, with the hand, and showing us that it is of our own bodies he is speaking, declares, "This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality," 1 Corinthians 15:53. And the Holy Spirit explains to us this mysterious truth in the words of Job, saying, "Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another," Job 19:26–27. Be it then conceded, that this same body which we now behold in so base and sad a state, shall be stripped of all its weakness and vileness, and rendered "conformable to the glorious body of the Lord Jesus." See, brethren, how far the love of God is carried. He intends that every part of your being should feel his benevolence and goodness. This body, which appears an unworthy thing, the sport of time, the food of worms, shall have a share in his gifts. He will raise it from the tomb, he will snatch it from the hands of death, and from the dust to which death has reduced it, to reestablish it in life; and surely more than this you could not have dared to hope: nevertheless, this is not all. Besides life, he will bestow upon it glory; and, that you may not be kept in suspense, he declares he will adorn it with his own glory, rendering it conformable to his own body. O marvellous goodness! O mercy truly Divine! The body of a poor creature made like the body of his great Creator! Is it possible that there can be in the whole world a Pharisee so proud or so hardened as to pretend to deserve so great an honour, and to accuse God of injustice in case he is given a glory less than that of the Son?

The Gospels, and the book of the Acts, teach us what sort of body the Lord's was, after his resurrection. First, That it was a true human body, having flesh and bones, visible and palpable, with its members and features appropriate, but gifted with all those perfections which are not incompatible with its nature: bright, and shining, and immortal, and imperishable, and sustaining itself by the power of a living spirit, without any need of eating, or sleeping, or any other requirement of animal life. Such, then, shall our bodies be after the blessed resurrection. They shall continue in the nature of real human bodies, but clothed with heavenly light, vigour, beauty, and immortality; for which reason St Paul calls them "spiritual and celestial bodies," 1 Corinthians 15:44. We may form some idea of their glory, from

the fact, that when the Lord showed the *pattern* to his three disciples on Mount Tabor, they became as men entranced, and completely dazzled with the splendid sight. This the Scripture teaches, Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2. Let us not however be curious beyond the fact revealed; let us not inquire concerning the interior of these bodies; whether they will still have bile, and phlegm, and such-like humours, and of what use such members will be in heaven, which now serve to maintain the functions of animal life. These would be useless questions; time alone can elucidate them; let us therefore be satisfied with knowing that our bodies shall be perfect in all points as the Lord has promised us.

And let us not doubt of our happiness from the idea that such a change is incompatible with natural causes. I freely confess that it requires a power no less than infinite to raise a body from dust, and restore it to life, and I acknowledge a like power to be necessary in order to transform a vile body into a glorious body. But, my friends, let it never be forgotten that this Jesus, from whose hands we expect the miracle, has infinite power. This the apostle declares in the last verse ot my text, saying that the Lord will render our bodies like unto his, "according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." There is nothing in heaven or in earth which is not subject unto him. Do not then consider it impossible that the elements should, at his command, faithfully return the matter of our bodies of which each had possessed itself; nor that this matter should receive without resistance the form he intends to bestow; nor that vileness should give place to glory, and weakness to strength, so that they may be raised up divine and glorious bodies instead of earthly and terrestrial ones. To raise a body from the dust is not more difficult to the Lord than to form it out of nothing. He will therefore clothe them with power and glory as easily as, at the first, he adorned the sun with the light wherewith he shines; for as the apostle speaks of his mighty power in upholding all things, it follows clearly that it was he who created them; as no one can possess a sovereign right over them except him from whom they have their being.

Believers, as this great God uses his goodness and power for your happiness, exert in his service all the power that you possess. Embrace his precious promises, and live up to so high a calling. Place continually before the eye of faith the glory and eternity of the future state. Remember that you are citizens of heaven, and do nothing unworthy of such a citizenship. Look upon this earth as a foreign country. Envy not its pleasures. Covet not its good things. Shut your eyes, and ears, and senses to the delusion of its charms. These pleasures which the world lays before you with so much pomp are but vain things which soon pass away. They charm and dazzle the eye, but there is nothing real or solid in them. And if nothing else will convince you of their weakness and vanity, this at least must, their short duration. For do we not see them perish every instant? Where are now all
150 those great empires whose glory formerly resounded through the world? Scarcely may the ruins of them be found, and it cannot be doubted that those we now see will pass away in the same manner. How then can private houses and families promise themselves that stability which belongs not to the greatest monarchies?

But whatever may be their general condition, thus much is certain, that neither the wealth nor the honours of this world can guarantee their possessor from death or any other misfortune. There is no possession but that of the new Jerusalem which frees its citizens from death. As it is eternal, continually subsisting amidst all the wrecks and ruins of the world, so also it renders all those who have the right of citizenship immortal. Since then God has honoured you with this right, and even to-day has given you the token thereof, O do not envy worldly men the vanities and shadows which they embrace with so much ardour. Mingle not your designs and affairs with theirs. What has the disciple and citizen of heaven in common with the men of this earth? Elevate then your thoughts, your affections, your hopes, to the eternal city which is above. There is your country; there Jesus, the Prince of your sal vation, reigns; there dwell, in profound peace, far removed from the storms of this life, the angels your friends, the prophets, apostles, patriarchs, and the spirits of the just made perfect, the first-fruits of our race. There you shall also be gathered after this pilgrimage shall be ended. There peace, which no war can disturb, eternally reigns, a calm without fear of trouble, a tranquillity without danger of a storm. There alone true bliss can be found, holiness, content, knowledge, love, glory, immortality; in a word, that sovereign happiness we have elsewhere sought in vain. Neither sin, nor ignorance, nor weariness, nor tears, nor sorrows, nor death, can have entrance there. To this then, dear brethren, let us aspire. Let this holy and glorious city be henceforth all our desire. Let us make it the object of our hopes, our thoughts, our endeavours. Let our conversation on earth show forth its holy image. Let us in such wise live as that every one shall acknowledge us to be citizens of heaven, brethren of the angels. Let their love, their charity, their purity, their holiness, henceforth shine among us. Let us, like them, be attentive to the voice of our sovereign Lord, continually contemplating his holy and glorious countenance, admiring his wisdom, adoring his goodness, burning with affection for him, loving his commands, and freely and cheerfully obeying them. These are the manners of citizens of heaven: not to worship flesh and blood; not to run after the wind; not to be clothed in rags or smeared with mud; not to adore shells or shining bits of glass, or other elements of earth: these are the vain and puerile occupations of the children of this world. Should the world ridicule your aim instead of applauding it, should it be offended rather than admire you, remember that strangers are frequently treated thus. Their customs are considered trivial and absurd by those who do not understand them. If the world, piqued at a mode of life so contrary to its own, will not give you a share in its honours or employments, consider that this again is a calamity to which they who travel in distant lands are subject, and comfort yourselves by the remembrance of the dignities that you possess in the house of God. Having the privilege of being citizens of heaven, you need not regret that you are not citizens of the earth. Though men despise you, how much has God done for you! he has chosen you for his priests, his ministers, companions of his angels, brothers of his Christ. All the indignities and endurances of this world can never counterbalance the glory that awaits you in another. And since our bodies are to partake of this glory, being made conformable to the

body of their Lord, let us, brethren, purify them also, and carefully keep them as vessels consecrated to God, as the temples of the Lord, in which hereafter his glory shall shine. Let us early adorn them with all the beauty of which their nature is capable; with purity, chastity, sobriety. Let no vice ever soil them. Let them have no communion with effeminacy and luxury, with vanity and self-indulgence. Let them serve none but Jesus their legitimate Lord. Let them labour in his cause and carry his cross. Since he has created and redeemed our bodies and souls, washed them in his blood, and sanctified them to his service, and since he will honour them with a share in his glory, rendering them like unto him by the greatness of his power, it is most reasonable that we should devote both to his service, and glorify him with our whole being, body and soul. Now to him, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, truly and only God, blessed for ever, be glory, honour, and praise, world without end. Amen.

CHAPTER 4.
SERMON XXV.

VERSE 1–3.

Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved, I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord, And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow labourers, whose names are in the book of life.

DEAR brethren, as there is nothing so grand or so glorious in its aim as Christian piety, so also there is nothing more self-denying and laborious. Besides the quality of the things themselves, far exalted above our natural power, of which it enjoins the study and practice, the malice and resistance of powerful enemies enhance our difficulties. For the world and the devil never cease working and endeavouring as much as possible, both to prevent men from embracing the gospel, and to counteract and check their labours when they have embraced it; so that the believer has, at one and the same moment, to repulse the enemy and to advance the work of piety within himself; in like manner as the Jews of old, who returned from Babylon under the conduct of Nehemiah, were obliged at once to build the walls of Jerusalem, and be prepared for an attack of the adversaries. If there be any profession in the world which requires extreme caution and vigilance, firm resolution, assiduous labour, and indefatigable constancy, without a doubt it is yours, O Christian. The majority of other labourers can quit their work when they please, for their recreation and amusement; and when they again apply themselves, they find it as they left it. But it is not so with you. When you leave your work it is often spoiled, and not to advance in it is to go back; like a man who by strength of arm swims against the current of a river; should he relax, even a little, the water immediately carries him back, and snatches from him, in a moment, the advantage he had gained with so much time and trouble. Thus is it with you. This torrent of vice and corruption, against which you swim, will carry you again in a moment to the abyss from which the Saviour has drawn you, if you venture to relax the efforts and vigour of your minds. The holy apostle Paul, one of the best masters in this school, who well knew this truth, does not

151

content himself with teaching the doctrine of love among believers; he exhorts them earnestly to persevere therein; and having planted them in the courts of the Lord, he there shuts them in, and arms them carefully against all the efforts of the enemy, who continually seeks to draw them away. This is the office he is now rendering to the Philippians in the text you have just heard read. He sees them full of faith and zeal, boldly retaining the wholesome doctrines he had taught, in spite of the endeavours of the false teachers to corrupt and insnare them. This, it cannot be denied, was much, and merited approbation; but St Paul was not ignorant of the infirmity of our nature, or of the obstinacy and perseverance of Satan and his emissaries; and therefore, before concluding this Epistle, he once more reminds his flock of the duty of continuing unto the end, holding fast the truth, enjoying more and more of the peace of God and the grace of the Holy Spirit, and of living in the daily exercise of every Christian virtue. Then, having thanked them for the charity they had shown towards him, he finishes this letter in his usual manner, with the most friendly salutations. Such is the summary of this last chapter. And in order to give the exposition of its commencement, which I have just read to you, we will consider, with the Lord's help, the three portions separately which present themselves to our notice. The first is the exhortation addressed generally to all the faithful in that church to continue stedfast in the truth: "Finally, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."

The second, in the following verse, is a prayer especially addressed to two females in the church to continue also in the same sentiments: "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord."

And lastly, the third is a prayer of the same description to an individual whose name he does not mention, but whom he exhorts, by the zeal of these two women, to assist them, and render them, as opportunity may offer, all the good offices needful for the furtherance of their piety and love: "And I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow labourers, whose names are in the book of life."

I. Respecting the first of these subjects, you may remark with what kindness he insinuates himself into the hearts of the Philippians, manifesting, on the one hand, such tender and warm affection, and, on the other, bestowing the truest praise to which a Christian can aspire. First, he calls them "brethren," an appellation the most affectionate and kind that can be used, and one rendered sacred both in the ancient and modern church, being employed to signify that holy and divine union which links its members in one common bond. He drops the words "children" and "disciples," which the privilege of being an apostle allowed him to use; and descending from the throne on which the Lord had seated him to judge the twelve tribes of Israel, he mingles among them, calling in sweet humility "brethren" those who were in reality "children," since he had begotten them in the gospel. And, as if fearful that this word would not sufficiently express his affection, he adds two others, calling them, not merely his brethren, but his "dearly beloved brethren,"

and "longed for;" and, not yet satisfied, he repeats one of these epithets at the end of the verse, "Stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." Now you must not for an instant suppose that these expressions were artfully used, as worldly men are wont to use them, calling them brothers whom they hate, and often professing the greatest friendship for those they are about to deceive. There was yet more affection in Paul's heart than in his mouth; and of this he had given the Philippians such proofs that they could not doubt it, having sealed with blood the love he bore them, by placing his life in peril in order to communicate to them the truth of God. It is thus that ministers of the gospel ought to love the faithful whom they instruct, regarding them as brothers, as the best beloved and longed for throughout the world. For do they not owe this love to them whom the Son of God, their Lord and Master, so greatly loved, that for their life he was willing to die upon the cross? And besides this general reason, the marks of their own ministry, the effects of their preaching, which they see among them, must produce an especial affection towards them. Nature itself has given us this feeling, that we bear particular love to those to whose production or preservation we ourselves have contributed in any way. This holy love is the only weapon (after the truth of the heavenly doctrine) by which good pastors insure obedience. St Paul here sets them an example, treating the Philippians as brethren, not as slaves, and linking them to the Saviour's yoke, not by the fear of anger and the severity of punishment, but by the cords of love, and with the bands of a man. Force and threats may make hypocrites, but they will never make true Christians.

But while these first words express the affection of the apostle, the following witness, to the piety of the Philippians, whom he calls his "joy and crown." For as this holy man found happiness only in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the world being crucified to him, to say that the Philippians were his "joy" was to bear witness that Jesus reigned among them, that the faith of his gospel was in full vigour, and triumphed in them over the vices and follies of the world. The zeal and perseverance of this church comforted the apostle in the midst of his sufferings. The spiritual prosperity of the Philippians alleviated the anguish of his temporal afflictions. Yet with regard to this joy, every church, by what hand soever it might have been planted, was equally capable of imparting it. That which follows, however, where he calls the Philippians his "crown," can only belong to the flock which he had assembled and established by the labour of his own preaching. For he meant to say that they were the subject of his honour, glory, and ornament, in the same sense as we say of a child well brought up, or a scholar well taught, that the one does honour to his father, and the other to his master. Thus the devotedness of the Philippians worked to the glory of Paul. Their constancy and virtue in the profession of the gospel proved how excellent must be the ministry of which they were the fruits. It was always to the apostle a token for good to behold his children so well formed in the fear of the Lord. Those within blessed him for it, and such as were without were constrained to acknowledge his worth by the effects of his preaching. But besides the fruit he now reaped by their obedience, he has respect to that which they should bring him at the judgment-day, when the Lord should

152

crown his labour and reward him for his work by bringing forth the Philippian church as one of his chef-d'œuvres, and should crown him therewith as with a precious jewel. For we must understand this ornament of the apostle to extend even to that day, as he himself teaches us in the second chapter of this Epistle, where exhorting the faithful to live as becometh the gospel of Christ, and to shine as lights in the world, he expressly gives this reason, That I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain," Philippians 2:16. He says also of the Corinthians that they "are his rejoicing in the day of Christ," 2 Corinthians 1:14. This praise, my dear brethren, is grand and magnificent. For what title more glorious than this can be given to a church, to say that it is the crown and ornament of so great an apostle? He honours few churches in like manner. That of the Thessalonians is one: "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" 1 Thessalonians 2:19–20.

From whence you see, on the one hand, what should be the ambition of the ministers of the Lord; not to rule, not to abound in riches and worldly pomp, but rather that holiness may abound in their flocks, and (as St John expresses himself to the lady in his Second Epistle) to have their "children walk in truth." This is their true glory and crown. And, on the other hand, you see what is the first and highest acknowledgment that flocks owe to their pastors; it is to hold them in honour, to form their life and conversation on the word preached, so that God and men may bless them, and that their ministers may say of them with truth, "You are our joy and crown."

After having won their hearts by these sweet and affectionate words, he proceeds to his exhortation, "Stand fast in the Lord." He often uses the word[1] which has been translated "stand fast," to signify perseverance in the faith of the gospel; as in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 5:2, "We have access by faith into this grace wherein we *stand*, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Again, in the Epistle to the Galatians, chapter 5:1, in a like exhortation, he says, "*Stand fast* in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Again, Romans 14:4, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he *standeth* or falleth:" and so in several other places. It may be taken in this same sense in the passage before us; "stand fast in the Lord," or, persevere with constancy in the faith of Christ, and in his holy communion, without suffering any thing to stagger you, and cause you to lose so happy a footing. But what is the apostle's meaning in saying "*so* stand?" Some understand this word to relate to what he had just taught them, that it is the duty of a Christian to renounce all confidence in the flesh and in himself, in order to embrace the Lord, and seek in him alone justification and glory, accounting all other things as nothing; to which he now adds, *so* they must stand fast in Jesus Christ: this they maintain to be the sole and only signification. But it appears to me more simple that it should relate to the present state of the Philippians: "So stand fast in the

1 Στήκετε.

Lord," that is, as you stand now, without lending an ear to false teachers, or adding their poison and bad leaven to the holy doctrine which you have received and retained until this day. He thus praises their fidelity, and approves their purity, which they had preserved until then, and prays them to maintain it in future without any foreign admixture. But we must weigh carefully the word with which the apostle commences this exhortation, "Therefore, my brethren, so stand fast in the Lord and this plainly proves that it is drawn from what he had before said. Dear brethren, you must remember that this was the last instruction in the preceding chapter, that perdition was the end of those false teachers who endeavoured to seduce them, that they had the belly for their god, that their glory was shame, and the earth all their desire, whereas the citizenship of Christians is in heaven, from whence they expect the Saviour, who shall transform their vile bodies, and render them like his glorious body. Who does not see that this doctrine involves clearly and necessarily the duty to which St Paul now exhorts them? For since it is to heaven that the Saviour now calls them, since it is to heaven he will raise our bodies in order to transform them like unto his glorious body, is it not reasonable that we should fly as pests those who would detain us on earth, and keep us under carnal and earthly instruction? and that we should endeavour to continue firm in the communion of that blessed Lord who is preparing for us such exalted glory, without suffering the pure and holy faith we have received from the apostles to be altered and sophisticated by the garbling of false teachers? This, then, is the exhortation St Paul gives to all the Philippians in general.

II. He then turns more especially to two individuals whom he mentions by name: "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." There is no mention of these two persons in any other part of the New Testament. But it is evident from this that they were two women of considerable influence in the Philippian church. And this is further manifest by the testimony the apostle gives them in the following verse of having faithfully and diligently served the Lord in his gospel. I confess that we never ought to suspect things of which we have no proof, more particularly with regard to the manners and conduct of believers. At the same time, there is much probability, although the apostle does not expressly mention it, that these two women had lent an ear to the false teachers, and had suffered themselves either to be deceived and seduced away from the faith, or at least to be tried and embarrassed by their subtleties. For why should the apostle warn them so especially as he does to be "of the same mind," unless they had been drawn away from the common faith, or were in imminent danger of being so? To say that theirs was not a difference upon religious matters, but some misunderstanding between themselves upon domestic subjects, is trivial. For that he should condescend thus to name them expressly in a public Epistle written to the whole body of the church, proves (to me) most clearly that this difference was of much greater consequence than a mere private dispute. Then, again, the place where this exhortation is found sufficiently proves the same thing. For after having exhorted all the Philippian believers generally to remain firm as they had done hitherto, he immediately adds, that he prays these two women to be (153)

"of the same mind." Why, then, should these be named unless they had appeared to be of another mind? And to this must be added the frequent mention made in this Epistle of "dogs" and "evil-workers;" an evident sign that there were some persons in the flock who had allowed themselves to be deceived by the seducers. And, lastly, the term employed in this place by the apostle evidently proves (to my mind) that it is to be understood thus; because he does not simply exhort these two women to be "of the same mind," but he adds expressly "in the Lord:" which shows that the unity of sentiment to which he would bring them regards Jesus, and not the world; the interests of the house of God, and not those of their families. St Paul, having understood that they were in this state, that is to say, that they had either embraced error, or (which I consider most probable) were in danger of falling into it, through the subtlety of these deceivers, prays them expressly, calling each by her name, to withdraw from those teachers, and continue with the faithful in the common belief of the Christian church.

This therefore being presupposed, we have, brethren, to remark, first, that the most exalted and excellent among believers are not always exempt from the trials and importunities of error. The two women of whom we are speaking were so influential, that the apostle, in the following verse, does them the honour of associating them in the work of the Lord, saying that they had laboured with him in the gospel. Yet, notwithstanding this, they had listened to the seducers. Be not surprised, then, sometimes to see those who have laboured in the gospel with the apostles carried away themselves, or persons considerably advanced in the truth seduced by false teachers. As snails will soil the brightest flowers, so Satan and his ministers endeavour to spread the filthiness of their errors and extravagance in the purest and most esteemed minds. They have the boldness to attack the stars, and hurl their wickedness into the highest and most sacred places in heaven. There is no person in the church who is not exposed to this warfare. Since, therefore, we are in a common danger, let us all stand upon our guard to repulse the enemy courageously, if ever we should be attacked.

And although this exhortation may be addressed generally, yet the sex of Euodias and Syntyche seems to counsel Christian women to apply it more particularly to themselves. It was to Eve that Satan addressed himself in Paradise, and St Paul says that the woman "being deceived was in the transgression," 1 Timothy 2:14. The success of his first temptation is the cause of the father of lies continuing to use the same stratagem by attacking the same sex. And the apostle has told us plainly that these false teachers, of whom he complains so much in his Epistles, "creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth," 2 Timothy 3:6–7. Certainly we read in the history of the church that women were the first who, under the semblance of devotion, commenced the worship and adoration of the Virgin, and some centuries after introduced veneration for images. Two Greek princesses, Irene and Theodora, were so resolute to establish this latter abuse, that they gave themselves no rest till it was done. Christian women, it is not to brand your sex that I mention these errors, but rather to show you how carefully

you should resist the enemy who has induced you to commit them. As he has more especially endeavoured to seduce you, be more resolute in your opposition and resistance of him. Reject his allurements, suspect all his devices. Shut your ears against his errors, and let all your senses be controlled by the gospel of Jesus, so that he cannot take advantage of the sweetness and tenderness of your natural disposition, either to ruin you, or to seduce your neighbours. Never listen to his discourses against the word of God, nor in opposition to the congregation of his people. And if the Lord has lodged you in his paradise, if he has given you grace, as to Euodias and Syntyche, to serve him in his gospel and fight for his glory, preserve your crowns with all diligence against the snares and schemes of the crafty serpent. Follow the first and not the last actions of these two women. Imitate their excellence, and take warning by their weakness.

But while the example of Euodias and Syntyche may be useful to women, that of Paul may be profitable to pastors; who should consider with what kindness this great apostle, not satisfied with exhorting and instructing the church generally, addresses himself particularly to persons who had need of his reproof. He testifies of himself in like manner in the church of the Ephesians, saying that during three years he had ceased not to warn every one, Acts 20:31. And it is worthy of remark, that he did this not only when present and by word; here, as you see, he breaks the thread of his discourse in this Epistle, addressed to the entire body of the church at Philippi, to warn more particularly two persons, and those women, because in the Lord there is no difference of sex. The safety of a soul, to whomsoever it may belong, ought to be very precious in our sight. And from this passage you may perceive how erroneous is the opinion of those who maintain that only men, or indeed only privileged men, should read the Epistles of St Paul. Certainly the apostle's intention is very different. For in several parts of his writings he speaks generally to women, setting forth the especial duties of their sex and condition, and here, as you have heard, he mentions two more particularly by name. Why, for what purpose, if he did not intend them to read his letter? And if believing women were then capable of reading his Divine writings, why not at present? Are the holy books more obscure and difficult now? or are the minds of Christians more gross and darkened than they were then? Dear brethren, this cannot be: the heavenly word must always preserve its original purity and clearness; and the instruction and edification of believers must be the same in every age. It is the interest of the church of Rome to snatch St Paul from the hands of the people, because she well knows the abuses which she has invented and established will not be found in the Scriptures. Follow up, then, Christian souls, of whatsoever condition you may be, the intentions of the holy apostle. Make no scruple of opening the letters which he has addressed to you, and in which he speaks to you. Read diligently and attentively what he has written, without fear of meeting with any thing useless or bad. You will find there holy and salutary truths, the doctrines of heaven, alone capable of leading you to God and eternal life.

But observe again here with what gentleness this great apostle warns the two women of their duty: "I beseech Euodias, and I beseech Syntyche, that they be of

the same mind." O wonderful and truly apostolical goodness! How far beneath this model is the pride of many who boast of having succeeded this great apostle, and yet think it too great condescension to speak, not merely to simple women as these were, but even to queens and princesses! St Paul does not merely speak to them,
154 but he entreatsthem, and softens his remonstrance by the most excessive kindness and humility.

Lastly, We must not forget that the apostle expressly desires that our perseverance and our union should be "in the Lord." This is the band, the centre of true concord. It is but to divide and cause schism if we are united *out* of him. I acknowledge that uniformity of sentiment is a beautiful thing, and worthy to be desired; but always with the proviso, that Jesus is the foundation thereof. To agree without this foundation is a conspiracy rather than a real union; and if we could have no peace with the rest of the world, except by being deprived of Jesus, it would be a thousand times better to wage an eternal warfare with the universe itself than to lose this precious and salutary communion. And these, dear brethren, are the remarks that the second part of my text have elicited.

III. The apostle, however, not satisfied with having exhorted the two Philippian women to union, further recommends them to the charity and care of another person, whom he prays to render them all sorts of kind offices, thus addressing him: "And I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow labourers, whose names are in the book of life." The wording of this passage is extraordinary, and it is difficult to say with precision who the person addressed thus by St Paul could be, and whose assistance he requests in behalf of Euodias and Syntyche. And what augments this difficulty greatly is, that the ancient Greek scholars say that many understood the words as addressed to a woman, translating them "true yoke-fellow;"[1] and considered that St Paul was married, and that his wife having stopped for a time in this city of Philippi in Macedonia, he recommends her to take especial pains with these women, in order to bring them back to the communion of the church. In fact, a very learned and ancient Greek author, Clement of Alexandria, who lived about two hundred years after the birth of our Saviour, thus understands the passage, as we learn from Eusebius,[2] who flourished more than twelve centuries ago; and as we may ourselves read in the works of Clement,[3] which are still extant. And this opinion has been followed by many authors of our own communion, as well as by several learned and esteemed cardinals[4] of the Romish Church. Now this supposes two doubtful things: (to me, I confess, very doubtful:) the first, that St Paul was married when he wrote this Epistle; the second, that his wife dwelt or sojourned in the city of Philippi. With regard to the first supposition, which is the most important, it is very difficult to reconcile it with the apostle's writing in another place, where, advising unmarried persons to continue in celibacy, he adds,

1 "*Ma vraie compagne;*" and in fact the original words are capable of bearing this signification.
2 Hist. Eccles. 1. 3. c. 30.
3 Strom. 1. 3. p. 4486.
4 Cajetan.

"It is good for them if they abide even as I," i. e. in the same condition in which I am. "But (he continues) if they cannot contain, let them marry," 1 Corinthians 7:8–9. Why should he speak thus if he were married himself? True, two ancient authors aver that Paul was married. One is Ignatius,[1] pastor of the church at Antioch, a man who had seen the apostles; and I confess that if it were ascertained that this testimony was really his, its weight would be considerable. But those who have studied the ancient authors without prejudice, have acknowledged that the works which go by his name were written above a hundred years after his death. The other is Clement of Alexandria, of whom we have spoken above. But it is worthy of observation, that he has not affirmed St Paul's marriage upon the valuable and certain testimony of any writer, but gathers it solely from a certain part of Paul's Epistles, i. e. 1 Corinthians 9:5, "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" For Clement reasons that he would not have spoken in this manner unless he had had a wife, although he did not lead her about like the rest of the apostles. This argument, however, is extremely weak; for though St Paul were not married, he might with perfect propriety have used this language, maintaining that he had a right to marry, and take his wife with him to the various churches he had planted, as well as other apostles. Thus you see that the word of these two authors is scarcely enough to convince us that Paul was married. I must, however, beg you to remark, before I proceed, that although we do not consider this testimony valuable and worthy of credit, still the very fact that these writers were of opinion that St Paul was married, proves most decisively that in their time, that is, nearly two hundred years after Christ, the ministers of the New Testament were not constrained to a life of celibacy, as is now the case in the Church of Rome. And as these authors believed of St Paul, so also both they and all the ancient fathers held that St Peter, St Philip, and other of the apostles, were married men; an evident token that at that time the church retained the apostolic maxim, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed unde filed," without excluding persons of any condition whatever from this holy institution of the Lord.

But, to return to my subject, supposing that Paul was married, still it is no wise evident that he had left his wife in the city of Philippi, to which place he had been only twice in the course of his travels, and had each time made but a short stay; it is by no means probable, I repeat, that he should have left his wife there, far from her home and country. Thus you will easily perceive on how weak a foundation the opinion rests, that the person to whom these words were addressed was a woman. It is much more probable to have been a man, as the sentence[2] is translated in our Bible. Some ancient authors have supposed that the exhortation was addressed to the husband of one of the Philippian women just mentioned. Some moderns again maintain that it was to Epaphroditus the bearer of this very Epistle that the apostle makes this request, praying him to aid Euodias and Syntyche when he should

1 Ep. 46.
2 *O mon vrai compagnon.*

arrive at Philippi, and calling him his companion in the sense in which he had before spoken of him; "companion in labour and fellow soldier," Philippians 2:25. But as it is not customary to address any words in a letter to the bearer thereof, (for it is to be supposed that he who sends it has had sufficient opportunity to communicate with and instruct the person by whom it is sent, without charging his despatches with messages to him,) it appears to me that the words are addressed to one resident at Philippi, who, whether a minister or a principal member of the church, having laboured with the apostle in the great work, was easily recognised by the title given to him, "my true yokefellow." And this is all we can surmise, his person and qualities being entirely unknown to us. But it is not necessary that we should know more. It is enough that he was a man of some merit and consideration, in the church; which appears from the appellation "true yokefellow," with which the apostle honours him, and from the commission with which he charges him, i. e. to labour for the edification of Euodias and Syntyche. "Help
155 them," says he, that is to say, hold their hand with me, and endeavour to draw them from the snare which entangles them. Conjure them to think of their duty, and consider the prayer which I have written to them. We ought to be always ready to assist in this way believers who have fallen, or are on the point of falling, into error. And in this respect we should make a distinction among those who wander from the communion of the church, and conduct ourselves towards them according to the difference of their errors. There are those who sin through weakness, and allow themselves to be insnared innocently, as it were, or who are surprised through pure negligence. Such were the two Philippian women, and such are they whom the apostle would have us assist. There are others who, through malice and with unblushing pride and insolence, fight against the truth, and these are not only seduced themselves, but they undertake to seduce others; such are they whom the apostle calls "evil-workers:" of such he says, "Beware and our Lord also, speaking of this sort of person, says, "Throw not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you," Matthew 6:7.

But the apostle, in order to excite the zeal of this servant of God to whom he is speaking, sets before him the good and holy actions of the two women whom he recommends to his assistance: "They have (says he) laboured with me in the gospel." You are aware that he often compares the employment with which God had honoured him to a combat, in which he had for his antagonists the world and the devil, both exerting their utmost powers to render his design abortive, which design was to preach the gospel of his Master, and establish churches for him through the whole earth. In this great and glorious combat, the persons of whom he speaks had assisted him, ranging themselves on his side, opposing all the efforts of the common enemy, sharing his sufferings, mingling in the conflict, and in short doing their utmost for the advancement of the gospel. This we understand from the expression, "laboured with me in the gospel." Judge, then, whether, after such proofs of piety, zeal, and love, they were not worthy of being especially noticed, worthy of the pains the apostle takes to interest in their behalf all the holy and faithful servants of God in the Philippian church. And it is in this sense I take the addition

the apostle makes, "with Clement also, and with other my fellow labourers, whose names are in the book of life." I know that these words may be conjoined with the preceding, thus, "They have laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and other my fellow labourers," as though the apostle would simply bear witness that Clement and others had assisted him in the establishment of the gospel among the Philippians. But such an idea seems out of place here, and I would rather unite the sentence with the first clause, thus, "I beseech thee also, true yoke-fellow, with Clement and other my fellow labourers, help those women." In this sense he solicits Clement and the other servants of God at Philippi to unite together in order to restore Euodias and Syntyche to the bosom of the church. His addition, "whose names are in the book of life," is intended as an excuse for not inserting them here; their names (says he) are written in a much more excellent book than this Epistle of mine. This "book of life," of which lie speaks, is the register of the kingdom of heaven, wherein are enrolled the names of all the elect. The Lord mentions it in the Apocalypse, promising to him that should overcome "not to blot his name out of the book of life," Revelation 3:5. And again, "The book of life shall be opened," Revelation 20:12. The same register is intended by Daniel, when he declares, "Thy people shall be delivered, every one that is found written in the book," Daniel 12:1; and by our Lord, when he told his disciples, "Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven," Luke 10:20. It appears also that this is what Ezekiel calls "the writing of the house of Israel," Ezekiel 13:9. For the Scripture, employing frequently things of earth in order to represent to our minds the things of heaven, compares the list of the people of God, whom he has chosen from eternity, and marked as his elect, to a register, in which the names of all the citizens of a town are enrolled. I confess that to us this book is shut up and sealed. God knoweth them that are his, but will not manifest them fully until that day when the books shall be opened and the sheep separated from the goats. But meanwhile we may judge, although with modesty and charity, by the actions of men, and hold as the elect of God, as citizens of the new Jerusalem, truly enrolled in its registers, those who display in their lives the marks of Divine adoption, such as faith, obedience, love, holiness, perseverance, and other graces. And therefore the apostle scruples not to say, that the "names" of the Philippians in whose conduct and conversation he had observed these holy qualities were written in the "book of life."

Such, then, is the exposition of all that Paul teaches in our text, both to the Philippian church in general, and to some members of it in particular. Be content, brethren, that we hold towards you the same language. For although we may be infinitely below this great apostle, yet do we preach among you, though with much weakness, the same gospel that he taught in the church at Philippi. And God knows we can say of you with truth, that you are our "dearly beloved and longed for," and that from you alone we desire to derive our crown of rejoicing. Let Satan calumniate us, let false teachers declaim against us, let the world trample us under its feet as the scum of the earth, we shall be content and happy if you persevere to the end in the grace and communion of the Lord our Saviour. We shall never want a subject of joy and satisfaction, so long as piety abounds among you. If then you

consider you owe us any thing in return for this affection that we have for you, and for the feeble efforts that it produces in the course of our ministry in order to your greater edification, dear brethren, give us the consolation that we ask; crown our troubles and anxieties with the sweet success that we desire. Let your devotion, your holiness, your zeal furnish us continually with matter for rejoicing and glorifying God. Let your progress keep pace with our diligence; let your manners grace our doctrine; let the holiness of your lives be the crown of our preaching. O beautiful and glorious crown! May God of his grace bestow it upon us. Neither you nor we could possibly wish for a better thing. For what on earth is there more beautiful and admirable than a docile, obedient flock, covered with evangelic wool, that is to say, full of love and holiness? And who is happier than the pastor who conducts them? And what can heaven itself present more grand and magnificent than (at the last day in the sight of men and angels) the pastor presenting them before the Lord, saying, in the words of the prophet, "Behold I, and the children whom thou hast given me." I conjure you, then, beloved brethren, by the delights of this heavenly glory which we hope to enjoy, "stand fast in the Lord." Let nothing interfere with this resolve. I know that the snares of error, and the efforts of the world, are many and great, in order to detach you from the truth, and corrupt
156 your morals. But if the truth be spoken, our enemies have more fury than power, because Jesus strengthens his people, and makes his strength perfect in their weakness. Love and serve him alone, and leave events to him in perfect assurance. And if there be among you an Euodias and a Syntyche, weak minds which have not vigour to resist the bold attacks, or the deceits of seduction, remember them, and endeavour to keep them in the right way. Love them, and give them your assistance in the day of need both by your words and your example. Labour with the apostle for the gospel of the Lord Jesus. Join then your hands to his, and partake now of his cross, if you wish hereafter to share his crown. And let none excuse himself here. Let none allege his sex or condition as exempting him from work. The combat is a general one; no one can be dispensed with. The example of these holy and devoted female warriors, whose valour the apostle has praised, even calling them the companions of his labours; this example teaches you, O Christian women, that you are capable of serving in this war for the advancement of the gospel. For faith, love, zeal, devotion, the weapons of the warfare, are well suited to your sex. And in Jesus Christ there is neither bond nor free, neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female. Being all one in him, let us fight with one heart, so that, enrolled with the apostle and his blessed companions in his book of life, we may have part in that eternal glory which God has prepared for them whose names are written therein. Amen.

SERMON XXVI.

Verse 4–7.

Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Dear brethren, the dolorous death of the Lord Jesus, the glorious memorial of which we celebrate this day, is the true and only source of that spiritual joy and peace which the minds of believers possess. Without it we should be still engaged in a melancholy and hopeless war against God, the world, and ourselves, and we should see nothing in heaven, or in earth, or in our own consciences, that was not our enemy. Without it we should still be languishing m the bondage of sin and Satan, in the horrors of death, and in eternal mourning and woe. But by the blood of the cross Jesus has appeased the wrath of God towards us, and has rendered him propitious and favourable to us. He has established an eternal alliance for us with the angels and all other holy intelligences. He has conquered the law. He has wounded Satan, and put his armies under our feet. He has crucified sin, extinguished hell, abolished death; and with the love of the Father he has obtained for us Divine knowledge, a complete justification, an assured sanctification, a blessed immortality; so that if deliverance from so many evils, and the possession of so many good things, has spread joy and peace in our hearts, it is evident that to the death of Jesus alone we are debtors.

Seeing then that the apostle, in the words you have just heard, and which occur in the ordinary subject of my discourse, recommends to us this holy joy, and promises us the inestimable peace of God, I consider that the subject is particularly suitable to the celebration of the Lord's supper; and that, while solemnizing the memory of the death of Christ, it will not be out of place to speak to you of its principal effects, and of the sweetest and most desirable fruits which it produces. The apostle in the text, as you perceive, commands us three things, and promises one. His first command is to "rejoice in the Lord secondly, to be moderate and temperate in our manner of life; and finally, to cast all our care upon the goodness

and providence of God, declaring all our wishes before him in prayer, accompanied with thanksgiving. And, conducting ourselves in this manner, he promises us in the last verse that the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

These, dear brethren, please God, shall form the four subjects to be treated of in this discourse.

I. The joy of the Christian.

II. His moderation and temperance.

III. His holy and assured safety. And,

IV. His Divine peace. The four principal sources of the happiness he enjoys in this world, while awaiting the glory and blessedness that are prepared for him in another. Believing souls, bring to this sacred subject minds deeply conscious of its sublimity and excellence.

I. With regard to the first of these subjects, the apostle expresses himself in these terms, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." Joy is the fruit that we gather from the presence of something we have desired, and its motions are so sweet and familiar to our nature, that there is no one, however melancholy and unhappy he may be, who has not occasionally experienced them; so that it would be a useless work to attempt to explain the meaning of that of which none can be wholly ignorant. We shall find more difficulty in proving that to rejoice is the Christian's duty, (as the apostle's command clearly presupposes,) and in describing this joy in such a manner, as that all true believers shall be capable of experiencing it. For it appears as if Christ had banished cheerfulness from the breasts of his disciples by saying, "Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep;" and, on the contrary, "Blessed are ye that weep now; for ye shall laugh," Luke 6:25, 21. The answer to this, however, is easy. Our Lord speaks thus of worldly joy and sorrow, which arise solely from the prosperity or adversity of the flesh; of the laugh of the wicked, and of the pleasure which they take in persecuting the righteous, and in other vicious ways, a joy truly cursed and unhappy, which shall be quickly followed in the next world by eternal tears and anguish: while, on the other hand, by those who weep our Lord intends believers, who suffer persecution for righteousness' sake, and whose condition outwardly seems to demand pity. For the tears of such shall be assuredly wiped away, and quickly changed to laughter and joy. And in fact in the same place the Lord commands them to "rejoice and leap for joy" in the day of persecution, in hope of the rich reward laid up for them in heaven, Luke 6:23. Or even if we understand these words to relate to those who weep for sin, as some commentators do, still it must be said that such tears are by no means contrary to the joy of which the apostle speaks. However plenteously they may flow, the tears of true repentance will always terminate in joy. We must also distinguish the believing penitent from him who has received remission of sins in Jesus Christ, him who seeks from him who finds. For that every believer who embraces the Saviour with true and lively faith, may and ought to rejoice, we learn both from the apostle, who commands us in this and other places so to do, and also from St Peter and the rest of the sacred writers. St Peter, in the 1st chapter

157

of his First General Epistle, verse 8, declares, "Though now ye see him (Christ) not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory?' The psalmist had also long before enjoined the same thing: "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling," Psalm 2:11; and again, he says the Lord had put "joy" in his heart, more abundant than the children of this world possess in their greatest prosperity, Psalm 4:8. St Matthew, in like manner, represents to us the joy of the blessed man in the parable, who had found the treasure of the kingdom of heaven, chapter 13:44; and St Paul, in Romans 14:17, declares that "the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Thus you see that to rejoice is evidently a Christian's duty. But the apostle does not merely say "rejoice," but "rejoice in the Lord;" and this partly to refine and regulate our joy, partly to show the source from whence it springs. For this word renders our joy distinct from that of the world, which, springing from earthly things, is vain, uncertain, and even mingled with disquietude and trouble, whereas ours, springing from the Saviour, is pure, spiritual, and holy. Far, far from hence, ye profane ones, who know no joy but that of the flesh, and experience no pleasure save in the gratification of your sinful lusts and desires. Such a one was the rich man of the gospel parable, Luke 12:19, who, in the fulness of his imaginary felicity, said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Such again were those epicureans who, deriving their joy from that which might rather have been their sorrow, took the brutal resolution of which the apostle speaks, 1 Corinthians 15:32, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." Miserable people, who drown the knowledge of evil in gluttony and sin. I would place in the same class the joys of the avaricious, the ambitious, and all other slaves of sin; and even the joys which human science, temporal prosperity, eloquence, credit, the love and favour of men, and such things, give to those who possess them. For although it may be said that such joys are not criminal, yet are they vain, puerile, and unworthy of a Christian mind; for if the Lord desired his disciples not to rejoice because the spirits were subject to them, Luke 10:20, though this was one of the greatest gifts he had bestowed, how much less would he approve our rejoicing in these worldly things! And first, real believers but seldom partake of them, God calling to the faith, "not many wise, not many noble," not many great men according to the flesh, and often obliging those of them whom he does call to divest themselves of such advantages at the first entrance into his house; so that in these, however legitimate may be the joy of their possessors, it is evident the Christian has little or no part. But again, I say, that even were we abundantly supplied with worldly things, though we should have the treasures, the delights, the glories of Solomon himself, yet should we have no reason to rejoice therein. That prince who had made the essay acknowledges, and loudly proclaims, that all was vanity, and there are few persons so corrupt as not to see that such factitious benefits could never render either body or soul happy, could never guarantee the one or the other from ills and sorrows, or from the distraction of human passions; neither could they ever secure a man from the caprices of fortune, (as the world says,) nor from the inevitable stroke of death. "Whence it follows, that to rejoice in

them would be as vain and trifling as the child taking delight in her doll, or Jonah congratulating himself upon the shadow of the gourd, which came up in a night, and perished in a night.

Beware, then, believers, of choosing such things for the source of your joys. The apostle says, "Rejoice in the Lord," that is, in Jesus Christ, whom the Scripture, especially in the New Testament, commonly calls by this appellation, which is indeed his due, since he has redeemed us, and since he is the Master and sovereign Prince of the universe. Christian, he is the living and inexhaustible spring, the abundant and legitimate subject of your joy. For if you possess this Divine Saviour, and are acquainted with the fulness of his benefits, what is there in this world that could add to your happiness? This sovereign Lord is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; his word and wisdom, his love and delight, the depository of his eternity, the treasury of his grace, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. This blessed Saviour is our light and our life; our salvation and felicity; our knowledge, our justification, our sanctification, and our redemption. This is our true Sun, bringing healing in his wings, and whose rays spread health and happiness wherever they shine. No sooner do we look at him than we are enlightened. He is the propitiatory sacrifice which covers us from the wrath of God, and blots our sins from his book; the tree of life, the heavenly manna, giving immortality to our souls. He is our David, the glorious Prince who has defeated all our enemies; our Solomon, who has established for us a permanent, inviolable peace. He has delivered us from the ignorance in which we were plunged, and revealed to us the mysteries of God; he has expiated the sins under which our consciences groaned, and has given them perfect peace; he has snatched us from the tomb, (or we should rather say, from hell,) and opened to us the gates of heaven; and instead of this frail and miserable existence that we derive from the first Adam, he has prepared for us another, full of glory and happiness, incorruptible and divine: slaves of Satan he has made children of God, worms of the earth he has made citizens of heaven; he has received us into the community of angels, has sealed us with his Spirit, and made us the first-fruits of his creatures. There is no dignity to which he has not advanced us, ordaining us for ever kings, priests, and prophets. And, O surpassing wonder! besides all this, he vouchsafes to call us his brethren and co-heirs, members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

How dull and insensible must that soul be, which can think of such gifts and benefits of the Divine Saviour, without being, I will not say touched, but overwhelmed with joy! For if the discovery of any wonderful and sublime truth communicates joy to the mind, (as it naturally does,) and even as we read, that wise men of this world have been delighted when they have discovered secrets unknown to others in human science, what should be our happiness to see in Jesus these treasures of wisdom which the Father has revealed and exposed to our view! mysteries of which not only the philosophers and kings of this world, but even the kings and prophets of Israel, nay, the very angels of heaven, were ignorant until the fulness of time was come. What should be our joy to see the

counsels of God revealed in this Divine Lord! to see clearly in him the reasons of such a dispensation, the justice and goodness of God in union! to see thus God manifest in the flesh, heaven embracing earth, and earth as it were kissing heaven! (158) If deliverance from some great and mortal peril would rejoice our souls, how much more should we rejoice to behold ourselves, by the mercy of this sovereign and blessed Saviour, liberated from the prison of the Almighty, redeemed from slavery and eternal death! If the favour of a great prince pleases us, what satisfaction should the love and favour of the King of ages, the Monarch of eternity, give us! If life is sweet to us, if liberty pleases, if honours, riches, dignities charm us, what then should be the joy of our hearts to possess in Jesus immortality and sovereign glory! to possess in him a heavenly kingdom, treasures that the lapse of ages cannot destroy, and crowns which can neither fade nor tarnish! If the society of well-informed persons, if their conversation sometimes softens the ills of life, what should be our consolation to have the Son of God always with us, nay, dwelling within our hearts! to have his Spirit in our souls, his word in our ears, his prophets and apostles with us! And besides all these blessings, capable of bringing joy into the most desolate and unhappy mind, where is the man who would not be touched with the deepest gratitude for the manner in which the Saviour has imparted them to us? who would not be overwhelmed with joy when he considers that the great God became a man, that we might be partakers of his Divine nature; that he descended to our earth, that we might be raised up to his heaven; that he bore the curse of the cross, in order to crown us with blessing and glory? I should certainly imagine that the remembrance of this wonderful and incomprehensible mystery of the love of God never enters the mind of the angels, but they are filled with the sweetest and most delightful sensations of which they are capable.

Rejoice, then, believing souls, in your Divine Redeemer. Drown every care in these sweet reflections: let this rich and beautiful object be before your eyes night and day. In this case you will never want a subject of rejoicing. For you perceive the apostle commands you to be always joyful: "Rejoice in the Lord *always;*" and, as if he were immediately in a transport of joy himself, he adds, "and again I say, Rejoice." Listen not to the flesh, which now whispers in your ear that this may be very well for the day of prosperity; but that in the season of affliction, when bending beneath the cross, when sickness weakens, when losses afflict, or when persecution presses hard, it would be out of season then to say, "Rejoice." The flesh, brethren, comprehends not this mystery; it surpasses its sense and understanding. The joy of the Lord is unlike that of the world, which the vapours of the earth extinguish, which is easily overturned by the casualties of life; the joy of Christ is eternal; it maintains itself against every thing; nothing can extinguish it; it lives even in the furnace of affliction, and triumphs over death itself. Persecution and sorrow rather increase than diminish it. These Philippians to whom the apostle wrote were certainly not in worldly prosperity; they were suffering for Jesus' sake; they saw their Master in prison; they were themselves a prey to divers enemies; and yet Paul commands them to rejoice, and sets them the example by rejoicing even in the bonds in which Nero held him. So we read (Acts 5:41) that the other

apostles, when scourged by the Jews, "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for his name." And how many martyrs has the world witnessed who joyfully endured the rack and the flames in the same sacred cause! all the cruelty of their executioners being unable to diminish the peace of their souls. Say not this was very well for apostles and martyrs, for Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The source from which the saints drew their joy is open now as formerly. It is the vileness of our hearts, the weakness of our faith, which hinder us from deriving the same consolations and the same joys which those blessed persons once possessed. We have in him the same blessings as they; the same Spirit, the same hope, the same glory. And were it in our power to divest ourselves of our natural prejudices, we should see that all these trials and afflictions that we lament are so little compared to our possessions in Jesus, that they ought not even to disturb our joy, much less to extinguish it. You weep perhaps because God has not given you such and such blessings, or because he has taken away some which you formerly had. Another laments the loss of riches, of children, parents, or friends. One recounts his maladies, another the persecutions he endures from the hatred or envy of men, and all tremble at death, a certain evil. I will not deny that these are severe trials, neither will I undertake to blame the sighs and tears which are drawn from those who suffer them; human nature is unable to divest itself of this tenderness altogether: but I must say that they will not prevent the true believer from rejoicing; he can and will rejoice in the Lord, deriving consolation under every sorrow, from the remembrance of so rich a treasure. Remember, O Christian, though God has not given you the good things of this life, he has given you heaven, which is infinitely better than earth; though here you may be unhonoured, he has prepared for you an eternal crown; though you possess not the favour of men, you have the favour of God; though he has taken your children or other ties in this life, he has given you abundant joy in his Son Jesus, the Prince of life. Remember that the trials you endure are salutary, the persecutions honourable, and death itself is necessary; yet none of these things shall ever snatch you from the protection of Jesus, the source of all joy, for whom to live or die is gain. Fear not that he will ever leave you; he dwells in your heart, and will accompany you through life and death. He will sweeten every bitter trial. He will share in your griefs. He will seal the waters under your feet, change flames into balmy dew, convert rocks into sources of springing waters, and deserts into gardens of delight. He will never tempt you beyond what you are able to bear, but will manifest his strength in your weakness, turn evil into good, darkness into light, and death into a sweet passage into that eternal life which he has purchased for you. Rejoice then always in him, in whatsoever state you may be; in prosperity or adversity, in health or sickness, in life or in death itself; and again I say unto you, Rejoice in him.

II. But after this holy joy which the apostle recommends, let us observe what that moderation may be of which he speaks in the following verse: "Let your moderation be known unto all men." The word here employed signifies frequently in the original *equity*, or *moderation*, in any transaction with our neighbour, that without austerity, but with sweetness and urbanity, we should accommodate

ourselves to their deportment, and rather yield our own just right than give occasion to any to complain of our severity. But as this seems to strain the meaning in the present sentence, it appears better to understand the word as it is translated in the French Bible, *la débonnaireté*, *cheerfulness;* that is to say, a certain sweetness of temper, which takes all things in good part, which is not easily offended, which is not in continual trouble because of afflictions and casualties, but retains a uniform calmness in every condition. And this virtue is necessary in every way. For if you consider the thing itself, is it not reasonable that man, who of himself 159
is but a poor weak creature, guilty in a thousand ways, and subject to the wrath of God, should have feelings so humble and submissive as not to be surprised and grieved at the wrongs and disgraces that he may suffer, as though they were something unworthy of him? And with respect to the utility of this virtue, there is not one in the catalogue of virtues so necessary in the society of men. For that fierce and lofty courage, which can tolerate no offence, does infinite evil, as well to him who possesses it as to others, and is the cause of half the trouble and misfortune which happen to mankind. It is from this evil temper that law processes, quarrels, and wars, that so frequently afflict states and families, mostly proceed; so that if every man had the moderation and cheerfulness which the apostle recommends, the world would live in peace. But if it be good for other men, it is absolutely necessary for believers, who are more exposed to injuries and insults than all the world besides. And certainly, if they know the grace that God has given them in Jesus Christ, and if they rejoice therein, considering the true and solid happiness which is their portion, they will not find it difficult to bear with temperance, moderation, and even coldness, the sufferings they may meet with in the world, the most important being nothing at all in comparison of that secret source of happiness which they possess in their heart. Therefore the apostle desires that our moderation should be known unto all men; not merely to believers, but also to strangers, and in fact to all with whom we have intercourse; and this, not for the sake of our reputation, in order to its establishment among men: that is a vanity which our Master forbids, and which would be indeed unworthy of our high and holy profession. But he desires simply that all our neighbours, whoever they may be, should be obliged to acknowledge our cheerfulness and moderation, and that none should have occasion to say that we belied our name of Christian, or were far from the temperance and gentleness which the school of Christ demanded. For although we are not called to seek the judgment of men, we must not fly from it; but, as often as opportunity may offer, we should give them proofs of our piety, by causing our light to shine before men, so that, seeing our good works, they may glorify our Father which is in heaven.

And that which the apostle adds, "the Lord is at hand," is here extremely apropos. For the wickedness of men is so great, that the milder and more temperate we are, so much the more insolent and turbulent are they, taking occasion from our forbearance to conduct themselves the more outrageously. Fearing that this consideration might deter us from the exercise of that moderation which he commands, he sets before us the providence of God, who is at hand to govern and

restrain the enemy, to succour in extremity, and to defend us from the violence and injustice of the wicked; so that we have no need to suppose that we shall be, from our moderation, more exposed in reality to the blows and audacity of our enemies. But, however, it appears to me more proper to connect this sentence with the next verse, to which it evidently has reference: "The Lord is at hand, be careful for nothing."

III. And this is the third point which the apostle recommends in order to preserve Christian joy in our minds; for nothing disturbs that so much as the vain and useless care that we bestow on the things of earth, as the success of our plans, labours, &c. And because the source of this disquietude is in ignorance of the providence of God, he declares "the Lord is at hand." This may have respect either to time or place: To time; then the Lord will soon come to judge the world, and that great and terrible judgment in which all men shall be confronted together is not far distant. To place; then the Lord is not far from every one of us; he is the witness and the arbiter of all human affairs, observing all things that occur in order to assist us in our need, repressing the excess and punishing the wickedness of our enemies.

The first consideration (with regard to time) ought to calm our impatience, and moderate the pain we give ourselves; for neither the prosperity of the wicked, nor the adversity of the faithful, would trouble us greatly, if we had continually in our minds the horrible sufferings which are prepared for the first, and the infinite consolation which awaits the second, each receiving his sentence from the mighty Judge, whose day nothing can retard. Nevertheless, as the prophet, in the 145th Psalm, from whence the apostle seems to take this sentence, evidently speaks of the continual presence of God, saying, "The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon him," and as this consideration has a more exalted view, I prefer interpreting it rather with regard to place. For since this lovely and blessed Saviour is near to us, at our right hand, as the psalmist sings, surrounding us on all sides, so that we cannot turn our eyes without beholding him, knowing our necessities better than we ourselves can know them, and having both the will and the power to provide for them, what can occasion us anxiety, and why, men of little faith as we are, need we be worn with chagrin and useless care? The Lord himself speaks against this distrust and disquietude at some length in the 6th chapter of Matthew, and in the 12th of Luke, and gives several motives to rally our faith and courage; among others, the care which God takes of the smallest animals, and of the minutest herbs of the field, and the uselessness of every endeavour to add one cubit to the stature; and he finishes his discourse by this excellent sentence, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you." His apostle Peter likewise exhorts us to "cast all care upon God, for he careth for us," 1 Peter 5:7. But besides things necessary for our food and clothing, St Paul in this place comprehends all those which the church in general, and each individual in particular, may require for safety or rest; the danger in which we perceive ourselves to be often causing us much groundless anxiety and care. "Be careful for nothing;" repose entirely upon the providence of our God.

Yet let not careless ones abuse this holy doctrine. The apostle forbids that care and solicitude which depresses the mind, he forbids distrust in Providence, impatience, vain regret, and useless efforts to ascertain the future; but he does not forbid labour, or assiduous diligence in those duties which belong to the vocation of each individual did I say he does not forbid? he expressly commands that every one should "eat his own bread with quietness," 2 Thessalonians 3:12; and, "If any man will not work, neither let him eat," Ephesians 4:28. And again, "If any provide not for his own, and specially those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," 1 Timothy 5:8. In this Epistle also (chapter 2:20) he praises the care which Timothy took of the church at Philippi, and elsewhere he witnesses of himself that the care of all the churches "came upon him daily," 2 Corinthians 11:28. It is not then of labour, or of the lawful cares of our calling, that the apostle bids us beware in this place, but rather of distrust and anxieties, and of those miseries which distrust causes in the human heart.

In order to deliver us from it entirely, he recommends that on all occasions 160
when tempted to yield to it, we should have recourse to God in prayer, pouring out our hearts before our heavenly Father, and consigning our sighs and cares to him: "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Among all the excellencies of prayer, this is not the least, that it restrains the care which oppresses the believer. For having unburdened his soul into the ear of God, and poured forth his anxieties there, he lives in peace, trusting in his providence, and awaiting with confidence the succours he requires. Joined to which, the prayer of faith never returns void, and if it obtains not immediately the required petition, at least it obtains assistance from the Holy Spirit, who strengthens the believer, and gives him grace to possess his soul in peace. Thus the psalmist declares that prayer was his solace in the day of adversity. And therefore the apostle desires that, instead of teasing our hearts with useless care, we should have recourse to God in all things, and "make known our requests to him;" in other words, declare our wishes before him, our desires and necessities, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving. For I consider that these words are to be understood simply, without seeking for a mystical meaning. God is our Almighty King; as, then, subjects in their necessities approach their earthly prince, and cause him to know their wants and desires by presenting their requests before him, so ought we to act towards God by notifying our desires to him: but there is this difference, that this process is needful for the princes of this world, both on their account and ours, it not being possible that they should be aware of our wishes unless we make them known; whereas it is entirely for our benefit, and not for God's instruction, that we are required to conduct ourselves in the same way before him: for he knows our desires before they spring up in our hearts; and therefore for us to pour them out before him, is not because they are unknown to him, but because he has commanded us so to do, and it has therefore become our duty and privilege.

The apostle, however, not only recommends prayer and supplication, but also "thanksgiving," even for whatever may occur to us; and this should guard us from

the error of those who pray with lamentations, murmurs, and reproaches, as though God had no right to give them trouble; or, at least, as though he could not leave them in it long without injustice or unnecessary harshness. The true believer, on the contrary, seasons every request with gratitude, and commences and ends his prayer with thanksgiving, asking nothing of the Majesty of heaven as a right, but as a favour, submitting himself humbly to his will, and acknowledging that whatever may be ordered for him, glory, honour, and praise are due to God.

IV. After these commands, the apostle adds, in the fourth and last place, a very sweet promise, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." The word "and" at the beginning of this sentence shows that this "peace" depends upon the previous question: "Let your moderation be known unto all men. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. *And* the peace of God," &c.; that is to say, if these duties be diligently performed, the peace of God shall guard you from every evil. This peace of God does not signify the peace which God possesses in himself, but that which he has given us in his Son; the fruit of justification by faith, that sweet and holy calm produced by the grace of Jesus Christ upon the conscience, delivering it from the burden under which it laboured, and showing God reconciled to us, and looking upon us as his children, with a kind and propitious countenance. Paul says that this peace "passeth all understanding;" first, because there is no understanding which, before having experienced it, can possibly conceive what it is, or form an idea of its true and real essence. And, secondly, because the minds even of those who do possess it can never entirely explain or comprehend it. It is a Divine and heavenly thing, full of secret sweets and concealed marvels, that the human understanding knows not how to imagine it distinctly; and whatever efforts the mind may make, it must yield at last, seeing, after all its thoughts, some new wonders remaining in this delightful subject, which, having exhausted the powers of his intellect, constrains him at last to admire what he is unable perfectly to understand. It is with a similar meaning the apostle says elsewhere that "the love of Christ passeth knowledge," Ephesians 3:19; and St Peter tells us that our joy in Christ is "glorious and unspeakable," 1 Peter 1:8. In fact, if you consider the causes of this peace, where is the mind, whether human or angelic, that could sufficiently comprehend the wonders of the death of the Son of God, which procured it for us; the inexhaustible love of the Father in the gift of his Son, the only source of happiness or peace to men? If you examine its form and essence, what understanding can enough admire the fact of sinners being at peace with Almighty justice, that they should meet his all-piercing eye, and live secure in him, not merely delivered from his vengeance, but even expecting his greatest favours? If you consider its effects, who shall know how to describe, or even depict to his own mind, the sweetness which this peace sheds over the hearts of faithful Christians, the joy, the happiness which it establishes there? converting them into a paradise, and causing to flourish therein, in this world, the glory which belongs to another; maintaining there hope in despair, strength in weakness, abundance in dearth, victory in defeat, triumph in

doubt, even life in death itself. But it is in vain that I attempt to represent it to you, since it passes all understanding. Make the essay, believers; learn by experience what we cannot express in words, or conceive in thoughts.

And observe, that, besides what we have just seen, it also has the efficacy which the apostle attributes to it here, "shall keep your hearts and minds by Jesus Christ." When once we have the happiness to be in communion with Jesus Christ, many enemies rise up who endeavour to separate us from him. The devil, the world, and the flesh never cease to solicit us, representing to our minds the affliction of the cross, and the repose and prosperity of the world. But the same Spirit who first gave us to Jesus will preserve us in him, being the author of our perseverance, as well as of our first entrance into alliance with him. And as he is infinitely wise, he does not retain us in this happy communion against our will; but working with us in a manner suited to our nature, he so draws our minds that they continue firm in their constant desire to embrace the Saviour. The principal means which he employs to this end is the peace of God shed abroad in our hearts, which is, as it were, the seal by which we are sealed unto the day of redemption. For recognising, by the experience of this ineffable peace, the Divinity of the Lord Jesus, the truth of his gospel, and the happiness of those who belong to him, we repulse all the efforts of the tempter, and prefer the grace of God to all the advantages of the flesh. This peace so strengthens our hearts, that they despise all the promises of the world; it shuts our ears to its seductions, and our eyes to its illusions, and so wins our minds by the power of its Divine sweetness, that we are ready to answer those (161) who endeavour to detach us from the Lord, in the words of St Peter, To whom else should we go? he has the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Such is the meaning of the apostle when he says that "the peace of God shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Consider, believers, the excellence and the price of this peace; it is our chief happiness on earth, the consolation of our hearts, the guardian of our souls, the defence of our understandings, the assurance of our salvation; it is the one thing needful. We can pass by all other blessings, and be happy without possessing those things which other men desire; but we can neither enter into, nor continue in the enjoyment of, true felicity, without this peace of God. For of what avail would be the esteem of the great, the glory of the world, the amassing of riches, the knowledge of science, the pleasures of life, and, in short, every thing agreeable and desirable in this world, if we are at enmity with God? What asylum, what place of refuge, could we find from his arms? O ye miserable ones, who quit his service for the good things of this world, where is your understanding? Do you not know that without the peace of God you must be in eternal misery? There is in the world neither force nor cunning sufficient to shield you from his anger; the arrows of his wrath will find you wherever you may be concealed, they will pierce through every defence, and will sink into your heart, and suck the life from your soul, even in the midst of your pleasures and your triumphs. His image will every where pursue you, and fill your miserable consciences with fear and horror, without allowing you an

hour's repose; and after a life of remorse and secret torment he will punish your sin with eternal misery in hell.

But, believers, these unhappy ones never had the peace of God in their hearts; if they had had it, it would have kept their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. As for us, then, who know its value, let us ask it night and day from God. Let all the world be our enemies, provided we are at peace with him. But it is certain that nothing can be our enemy if we are at peace with God. He is the Almighty Lord of the universe. All creatures obey his laws and his motions, of good will or bad will; and if we have peace with God, we have it necessarily with the heavens and with the earth, with men and with beasts, with the elements, with the sword, with famine, with nakedness, with death and the grave. Nothing can by any means hurt us; all things must work together for our good; the most deadly poison shall become wholesome to us; the sovereign power and wisdom of the Almighty changing by admirable means the very nature of things in favour of those who are in covenant with him.

O merciful Lord, give us then this blessed peace; shed it abroad in our hearts, and make it so to dwell within us that we may experience much of its sweetness. Take away from us what thou wilt, but take not away thy peace. As thou hast obtained it for us by the bloody sacrifice of the cross, O communicate it to us by the operation of thy Spirit, our only Comforter, by the power of thy holy word, and by the receiving of this holy sacrament to which thou hast invited us. Feed our souls with thy flesh, water them with thy blood; so may the Almighty spare and deal with us as with men in covenant with him. And may this blessed peace so faithfully guard our hearts and minds, that we may remain always in thee by faith and love, and thou always in us by thy Spirit and grace. Amen.

SERMON XXVII.

Verse 8–9.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Brethren, the sanctification of men is the true object of our redemption by Jesus Christ, as the apostle teaches us when he says that the Lord Jesus "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father," Galatians 1:4; that is to say, as he himself explains more clearly in another place, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Titus 2:14. This is the great end of all that he has done and suffered on the earth, to the astonishment of angels and men. It was for this that he took our nature, concealing the glory of eternal Divinity under the veil of weak and mortal flesh. It was for this that he was tempted in all points like as we are, and sanctified by so many bitter tears. It was for this that he was given over to the cross, the Almighty Lord of the world enduring the punishment of slaves; for this the holiest of the holy was treated like the worst of malefactors, the beloved and blessed of the Father being made a curse. And as the salvation which he purchased for us is not a common and earthly good, but a Divine and heavenly one; so the holiness to which he moulds us, and by which he conducts us to heaven, is not a common and natural perfection, such as men of the world may acquire, and which they honour with the glorious appellation of virtue; but it is a holiness singular and exquisite, supernatural and angelic.

And therefore it is that the Lord, in that Divine discourse upon the mount, wherein he explains the rules and regulations of holiness, declares to his disciples that "unless their righteousness exceeded that of the scribes and Pharisees," (that is, of the famous masters of the purest school in the world,) "they could not see the kingdom of God." The design, then, of the Christian religion being so excellent and so lofty, we cannot be surprised that the apostles treated of it with

so much diligence and assiduity; and that this holiness is the great object of their writings, as it was the end of all the deeds and sufferings of their Master. St Paul has commenced this Epistle to the Philippians by praying God that "they might be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ," Philippians 1:11; and recommending them to have their conversation as it became the gospel of Christ. He had scattered throughout the whole body of the Epistle various other excellent exhortations to holiness, especially in this and the preceding chapter. Behold him now again finishing as he had begun, and giving to his dear disciples this last precept, which we have just read, to be, as it were, the seal and mark of his Epistle: "Finally, brethren, (says he,) whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both
162 learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you." In order to give you a complete exposition of this text, we will consider three things, one after another, by the grace and assistance of God. The first subject shall be concerning those things which the apostle recommends to the Philippians to study and practise. The second, concerning the example which he had given them in his own person, and of which he reminds them in this place, to encourage them in their duty. And the third, concerning the promise which he gives them, that the God of peace should be with them.

I. With regard to the first point, this word "finally," with which St Paul commences his discourse, bears relation to the preceding texts, both of the third chapter and of this one, in which he had explained the fundamentals of the Christian life; namely, the faith and service of Jesus Christ, union and harmony among believers, and perseverance in piety. When afterwards, therefore, he adds, "Finally, whatsoever things are true, &c., think on these things," it is as though he said, So far I have described to you the very substance and body of Christianity; for the remainder, employ all the time you can to the study of it, and to the exercise of good and praiseworthy actions. And herein the apostle silently opposes his doctrine to that of the false teachers, and of all those who endeavoured to Judaize the church. For these people, after receiving the gospel faith, desired their disciples to occupy themselves in the practice of ordinances and legal ceremonies, and to trim (if I may be allowed the expression) the robe of Jesus with the fringes of Moses. This passion of desiring the externals of devotion is natural to all men, for such exercises in religion are much more easy and agreeable than the study of real virtue; and this may be proved by referring to all religions, ancient and modern. But the apostle, instead of such weak, vain, and useless ceremonies, desires Christians to occupy themselves in the constant practice of honesty, justice, and all other virtues which a man can exercise towards his neighbour. This was to be the ornament, as it were, the outward mark of their faith. So the holiest, the best, the most, honest man, would be considered the most religious, according to the doctrine also of St James, who defines pure religion thus: "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world,"

James 1:27. Perhaps also the apostle, having just declared all our duties, as well toward God as toward believers, adds this precept to show us how we ought to conduct ourselves before strangers; as though he had said, So far I have described your life in all that concerns the service of God and the love of your brethren; as to the rest, which concerns them that are without, let your manners and conversation be marked by honesty and goodness.

If you take the trouble to count the things which he recommends to us, you will find eight articles: first, "things true;" second, "things venerable" (margin); third, "things just;" fourth, "pure;" fifth, "lovely;" sixth, such as are "of good report;" seventh, "if there be any virtue;" eighth, and last, "if there be any praise." Truly all this is so clear, there is little need of explanation. Ah, would to God it were as easy to practise as to understand! Yet, in order to aid and strengthen you in so necessary an object, we will say a few words upon these eight things, in the order in which the apostle has written them. He places first, "things true." And it is certainly very proper that above and before all things we should embrace the truth, because we are disciples of Jesus Christ, who is the truth itself. Here then should be the base, the foundation of our conduct; we must receive the truth as a daughter of Heaven, as the first and principal mark of our profession, and truth should be the seal of our thoughts, words, and actions. Some would restrain this word to the truths which pagans even and other enemies of our religion hold in common with ourselves; such are the maxims respecting our conduct, the knowledge whereof nature has engraved in the hearts of all mankind; as, for example, that of not doing to another the thing we do not wish him to do to us, and such like, of which the apostle speaks in the Epistle to the Romans, saying that "the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law;" and that "that which may be known of God is manifest in them, even his eternal power and Godhead," Romans 2:12, &c.

But as the apostle here expressly says, "whatsoever things are true," it appears much better to understand the words in their fullest extent. In this sense truth is opposed to falsehood, or mere appearance. For, first, we consider those things "true" which are not feigned or invented to please, but which really subsist. And secondly, such as are at the foundation firm and solid; not shadows and figures, which have indeed the appearance of truth, but are not in reality what they seem to be. Therefore the apostle banishes from the mind and conduct of Christians all falsehoods, of what kind soever they may be. And thirdly, all vain and deceitful appearances. He desires that our manner of life should be plain and simple, not vain and hollow, and that we should leave shadows to others, and attach ourselves entirely to reality. And in order to conform to this precept, it is not enough to purify your language from all falsehood, equivocation, and ambiguity, and your conduct from every species of hypocrisy; the heart must also be purged from the esteem, the love, and the admiration of the world, which is as a shadow that passes away, as the apostle teaches us. Neither the gains of avarice, nor the honours of ambition, nor the pleasures of vanity, nor the occupations and enjoyments of any vice whatever, are "true things;" because it is clear they give not the happiness they promise, and while presenting a false appearance of good they possess nothing

good in reality. No, we must exercise ourselves in those things that are "true;" that is to say, in the purity and sincerity of a good conscience, and in the fruits which that will produce.

The apostle, secondly, recommends us all things "venerable" (margin); signifying by this word all that relates to sobriety and purity of manners, and to the dignity of the high vocation to which God has called us. In order to practise this virtue we must renounce all frivolity, lightness, buffoonery, and folly, which are quite at variance with our holy profession. There should be nothing in our words, in our habits, or in our conversation, that cannot correspond with the loftiness and holiness of that Jesus whose disciples we call ourselves; in other words, nothing but what is pure and simple: on all occasions the same life should be manifested in us; no adversity, no prosperity, should depress or elevate us; in solitude or in company, we should be equally simple and sincere. For as the Christian is a child of God, an heir of heaven, a brother of the Lord Jesus, a fellow-citizen with the angels, the salt of the earth, and the light of the world, the master and teacher of all men, it is clear that such high qualities must oblige him to maintain a holy and grave deportment; and that he could not fall in with the opposite vices, without betraying his honour and scandalously belying his profession.

163 "Things just," which the apostle adds in the third place, are those which we owe to each other, whether by the Divine law, or by the customs and ordinances of men. He desires us to consider, first, what God commands us to render unto men; whether honour, or obedience, or deference to our superiors, whether in the kingdom or the family; whether the guidance, care, and protection of our inferiors; whether friendship and assistance towards our equals; whether charity and kindness towards all. Secondly, that we should remember the laws, especially those of the city and society in which we live, and the duties they require of us. And lastly, that we should be careful to acquit ourselves in all these with the utmost fidelity, excepting such human laws as may be contrary to the law of God and of our consciences; for with regard to them, as they cannot be considered just, so neither are we bound by them. But in every other case we must submit and accommodate ourselves to the laws of the civil and domestic community in which we dwell.

The apostle, in the fourth place, commands us to think of things "pure;" meaning thereby to place purity and chastity in opposition to filthiness and voluptuousness, which are contrary to the mind of God. That we should be careful not only to preserve our bodies free from pollution, but our hearts, our tongues, our eyes, even our dress, should be holy and pure, our deportment modest, our conversation free from every species of dissoluteness. But as drunkenness and gluttony soil the mind and body of man, and render it unfit for the temple of Jesus Christ, I consider that the purity of which the apostle speaks must extend itself to sobriety and temperance in eating and drinking, if we desire to preserve ourselves in perfect consistency. I confess that this "truth," this "gravity," this "justice," this "purity," which the apostle recommends, are most suitable to the perfection of our manners and life. Nevertheless these are not all. He is desirous that we should

adorn these virtues with a sweetness and urbanity pleasing to them with whom we converse, and that if there be things worthy of praise and commendation, we should adorn ourselves therewith as with jewels of gold. And this is what is intended by the four graces added next.

Fifthly, "Think of whatsoever things are lovely." He does not mean by this that, in order to obtain the good opinion of men, we should practise generally whatever is most pleasing to them. For then we must run with them to their excess of riot, and wallow in their filthiness, and imitate their superstitions and vices, because nothing gratifies them so much as this conformity, and nothing vexes and annoys them so much as the horror that we manifest for the things which they esteem and practise without scruple of conscience. The apostle here speaks only of such things as are not contrary to the will of God, while at the same time they are agreeable and pleasing to men. In this class I would place patience, cheerfulness, sweetness of temper, generosity, and such-like virtues. For although all virtues are beautiful and excellent in themselves, and deserve the approbation and respect of men, being all emanations from God and the fruits of his Spirit, yet nevertheless there are some more pleasing than others; some more gay, more fascinating, and universally known among men; even as we see among the stars, though all are beautiful, yet some shine with greater lustre than others. Among the virtues, these shine with peculiar brightness, sweetness of mind, courtesy, patience, clemency, willingness to oblige, &c., for there are few minds so savage as not to love goodness. The worst barbarians are softened when they see a man without violence, without bitterness, full of compassion towards the afflicted, liberal to the necessitous, and who, without constraint or any other obligation than that of humanity, does good to all men, and even to those that have injured him. It is impossible that a man should not love and respect such excellent goodness, however little in common he may possess with it. To these duties I would add, secondly, a yielding in things which in their nature are indifferent; and of this the apostle himself gives us an excellent example, and one well worthy of imitation; for that holy man, renouncing his own liberty, became a servant to all in order to win them to his Master. To the Jew he became as a Jew, to those who were under the law as being himself under the law, to the weak he became as weak, all things to all men, bending and submitting to the humours of his neighbours, and transforming himself, as it were, into them, as much as the laws of piety would permit him, in order by these means to obtain their favour and affection, as he himself explains to us in the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

What he says, sixthly, that we should also think of such things as are of "good report," relates to the same end, and must be understood in the same manner; for among actions which are all good and excellent, there are some which are more especially in repute among men. St Paul desires us to give ourselves to them with especial care, because those who hold them in high esteem will love us better; and seeing us constant, ardent, and zealous in the practice of them, will by these means be constrained to acknowledge that it is not malice or hatred, but belief and sound

judgment, which induce us to abhor their superstitions; and this disposition of mind is useful to persuade them of the truth of our religious opinions.

And further, as among things in their nature indifferent some are much esteemed, either by all men generally, or by particular nations or societies; so, on the contrary, some are held in disrepute, as severity, rigour, penuriousness, avarice, and the like. The apostle, therefore, desires that in matters of this sort we should accommodate ourselves to the public feeling, not only shunning evil, but the appearance of evil; so that nothing in our conduct should possibly give vantage ground to our enemies: for if a pagan,[1] who had no particular respect for true honour, considered that his wife should not only be pure and chaste in reality, but even that that purity should not be for a moment questioned, how much more should we feel the same with regard to a Christian soul, the spouse of Jesus, Lord of glory, and King of saints! Having the honour of such an alliance, a soul should be careful, not only of her purity, but of her reputation, in order to bring no spot or stain of evil, whether real or apparent, upon the household of her Divine Husband.

Seventhly, That nothing may be omitted, the apostle concludes with, "if there be any virtue, if there be any praise," that is, any thing considered praiseworthy among men, "think on these things." He is desirous that we should neglect no virtue, but that we should adorn the new man which Christ has created within us with every thing excellent and beautiful; so that none of these Divine and celestial flowers may be wanting: for it must never be supposed sufficient to possess one or two only; and indeed it is not possible to have one, in any degree of perfection, without all the others. They are sisters so firmly linked together that they cannot be torn
164 asunder. But even were it possible, nay, easy to possess some without the rest, still it is clear that a true Christian must strive after all, because the same who commands one commands likewise the others. Let us then renounce the error into which men of the world fall, of supposing it sufficient to exercise one virtue, while neglecting every other: thus luxury and extravagance shelter themselves under the character of not being avaricious; thus chastity is supposed to save a man who is at the same time cruel and uncharitable. Let us never separate what God has united. Let us embrace with all our hearts every thing he has commanded, and suffer nothing to escape us. If you desire to reign in heaven, you must present yourselves there with this beautiful crown, from whence radiate all kinds of virtue and praise. Do not forget or omit one, says the apostle. "Think of these things, and do them." He desires us to "think" of them, because the mind is the root of all human actions. It is the mind which influences the will, stirs up the affections, and conceives and produces every action. He therefore would have the act follow the intention. For it is not merely to indulge the mind in the pleasure of vain speculations that we are to exercise ourselves in this lofty study, but rather that we may put in practice all that we have understood.

Finally, the apostle's words, "praiseworthy and of good report," are not to be misunderstood, as though he commanded or permitted us to consider our own

1 Julius Cæsar.

reputation, and do good in order to obtain praise of men. He tells us indeed to live in the study and practice of things worthy of praise, but not in order to obtain it. He who has such an object in view is a slave to his own passions, but not a servant of God. He outrages virtue, the most beautiful thing in the world, in making it subservient to vanity. The Christian regards only the will of God and his approbation, from whose goodness and free grace he expects his reward, and for whom therefore alone he labours.

II. But the apostle, having thus set before the Philippians in order the duties to which he exhorts them, recommends them, in the second clause of the text, by this consideration, that they had "learned, and received, and heard, and seen them in him." These (he declares) are not novelties of which he has just become enamoured. He had instilled the same lessons into them from the beginning. He calls upon them as witnesses, saying that they had learned, and received, and heard, and seen them in him; thus manifesting in his own person the model of a faithful preacher of the gospel, and in them the duty of true disciples. For respecting the first, he witnesses with what care and assiduity he had preached among them the study of truth, righteousness, and Christian purity, having taught or recommended nothing else; on the contrary, these had been the entire and sole object of his instructions. False apostles taught the observance of ceremonies. St Paul demanded only of believers holiness and purity of manners. Ministers of the gospel ought, in conformity with this example, to give their flocks frequently this wholesome and solid advice; and leave the subtilties, questions, and speculations of philosophy to others; these latter being mostly unwholesome food, pleasing perhaps to the taste, but more likely to poison the soul than to nourish it.

It is not, however, enough that the servants of God preach sound doctrine to the flock committed to their charge; they must exhibit the same in their deportment, even as St Paul tells the Philippians, that they not only had heard and received those things from him, but that they also had seen them in him, his conversation and manners having been conformable to his preaching.

The sketch of his life which is given us in the Acts proves this fact; for he devoted himself to the exercise of piety, righteousness, gravity, purity, and every other Christian grace. This demonstrated the truth of his doctrine. He easily persuaded others of what it was evident he believed himself. On the other hand, that preaching which is not enforced by example is but vain declamation, whic but increases the guilt of him who so shamefully disgraces his holy office, and can never truly benefit his hearers, because no one considers his doctrine worthy of faith, while his manner of life testifies that he does not himself believe it. The ministers of the Lord have however a beautiful pattern of their duty in the person of Paul. You also, dear brethren, have the model of yours in the Philippian converts, of whom the apostle witnesses that they had learned, and received, and heard the things preached to them; signifying hereby the attention and docility with which they had listened to the gospel, receiving its Divine lessons with respect, engraving them upon their hearts, and embracing them with zeal and ardour. And it is evident that their own interest would prompt them to retain firmly this holy faith;

exercising themselves and advancing flails in humility and sanctification, even as at the beginning they had received it with alacrity; for fear lest, relaxing in their course, they might through negligence lose that which they had acquired.

III. Therefore, in order to encourage them to persevere in their holy way, he promises that the "God of peace shall be with them." This promise includes every blessing that we are acquainted with, for who can want any thing with whom God dwells; God, the only source of all happiness? Therefore it is that the Scriptures often speak thus, "God is with you," in order to signify the constant assistance derived from him, and the blessings of his providence; as when Moses says, "God was with Joseph," he shows us the paternal care with which he watched over him; and thus also our Saviour Jesus Christ expressed himself when we would assure his faithful disciples of his assistance in all their laborious ministry, saying, "I will be with you always, even to the end of the world." Here then, in the same manner, the apostle, in saying that if we give ourselves seriously to holiness and good works, "God will be with us," intends us to understand that he will bless us, will make all things work for our good, will console us in every trouble, and strengthen us in every conflict; and thus, giving us while in this world his grace and favour, and guiding us through all our sojourn here, he will at length bring us into his heavenly and glorious kingdom. And it may here be remarked that he gives God frequently this title, "The God of peace," when he would promise us such blessings. Just before he had said that the peace of God should keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus; now he gives us stronger assurance, saying that the God of peace shall be with us.

The Scriptures often designate the Almighty thus; first, because that Divine and blessed Being enjoys within himself such profound peace, that no changes which may take place in this lower world are capable of disturbing his holy rest; secondly, because as nothing is so lovely in his eyes as peace, so nothing is so hateful to him as division, war, and tumult. The vision seen by Elijah (1 Kings 19:12) illustrates this, for the Scripture observes that God was manifested to him, not in the wind, not in the tempest, not in the fire, but in a still small voice; thus demonstrating that God dwells in tranquil, calm, and peaceful minds, not in boisterous and turbulent
165 spirits. And lastly, he is called "God of peace," because he alone is the author of whatever degree of peace his creatures may enjoy. He it is who maintains peace among the holy and blessed angels, having (as Job tells us) ordained peace in high places. He it is who bestows on us, in his Son, that peace we now possess, and that we hope for hereafter; peace in this world, and peace in the world to come.

But if you understand the expression "of peace" in the sense in which the Scriptures commonly use it, to signify prosperity and happiness, then is he again rightly called the "God of peace;" because on his free grace and favour alone depends every suocess enjoyed here below, whether by the church in general, or by individuals in particular. It is under this appellation that he comes to us, if we walk in holiness, shedding abroad in our hearts sweet consolation, blessing both us and our flocks, and those among whom we dwell in communion, and causing all things, even the most apparently inimical, to work for our good.

Such, dear friends, is the exposition of this last precept which the apostle gives to the Philippians in this Epistle. May it be deeply impressed on our hearts; let us meditate often upon it, that we may profit thereby, and be enabled carefully to practise it. We may learn from it how false is the calumny of those who accuse evangelical religion of setting aside good works, and how greatly they err who believe it. For how is it possible to urge their necessity stronger? Or how could they be more splendidly inculcated than by the apostle's words in the text? For they show that a Christian's life should be spent only in thinking and doing such things as are true, just, venerable, pure, lovely, and of good report, and in practising every sort of virtue. If there be any persons who live a vicious life in so holy a school, let them answer for their malice and wickedness. The gospel is not to blame either for their error or its punishment. It is their own hardness, and no imperfection in it, which retains them in sin. The gospel calls and urges them to purity and virtue; its lessons are repeated over and over again; the most holy motives are set forth to them; and if they continue in vice and sin, it is their own fault, and not that of the gospel. We might with much more truth retort this accusation on those who make it. For is it not an evident death-blow to the pursuit of holiness to teach that its loftiest and most beautiful traits are not necessary to all believers, but belong only to the more exalted minds, to those whom they account among the perfect? and further, that for the commonalty, a small measure of faith and virtue is sufficient, while the most excellent works of holiness are supererogatory, that is, are not absolutely commanded by God, but merely recommended? thus leaving it to a believer to work or not, as he may please. O vile and pernicious doctrine! which with one blow ruins all, both those who perform good works, by the vain presumption of having performed more than was required; and those who do them not, by the blind security in which it plunges them, under the idea that they may be saved without so needful a part of sanctification. This one passage of Scripture, although there were no other in the whole book of God, is sufficient to refute this error. For it is clear that there is no good action, of whatever nature, that you can possibly figure to yourselves, which does not come under the class of things true, or just, or venerable, or pure, or lovely, or of good report, or praiseworthy, or virtuous. If it could not be classed with any of these, it could not be good, much less meritorious and supererogatory, as false teachers represent. Now the apostle, as you see, commands us to think of all things that are good, and to do them. Certainly then there can be nothing good which we are not desired to do, consequently there can be no virtue supererogatory, or merely advised. And besides the authority of the apostle, the very reason of things proves this. For as God is a Sovereign, as he has given us all we have of being and life, as, not satisfied with having once given us life, he has redeemed and purchased it again at the infinite price of the death of his Son; who can but see that we owe him all we are capable of rendering of duty and obedience, and that we are bound to employ in his service every thought and affection? And therefore you know he commands us in his law expressly, to love him with all our hearts, with all our minds, with all our strength. Let us then hold and maintain, as a fixed principle, that there is no point

of sanctification, however complete and refined, which we do not owe to God; and that after we have done every thing, we have merely done that which it is our duty to do; that no one is exempt from this obligation, whether minister or layman, whether small or great. Let no one transfer the study and aim after perfection into the hands of others. As all believers aspire after eternal life, so must they all walk in the way which conducts thereto, even the way of holiness; and as all are honoured with the appellation of "children of God," so ought all to be perfect, as their Father in heaven is perfect. Be assured the apostle addresses this Divine precept to every one of us, as it is evident that he speaks here to all the Philippian Christians generally, and we should study to practise what he has commanded.

Comparing then the rules which he has given uswith our lives, we must with shame and sorrow acknowledge our numerous failings. He commands us to think of every thing true, just, venerable, pure, lovely, and of good report; and if there be any thing worthy of praise, if there be any virtue, to think of these things and do them. How many are there amongst us who have never thought of them, and much less done them; whose religion consists merely in a naked profession, which is denied by th enactions and conduct! They attend public worship, they partake of the outward sacrament; but they have not that holiness without which no man can see the Lord. Instead of the seal of truth, which ought to be the very mark and stamp of their lives, they are full of deceit and guile; they act a perpetual farce, in which they appear any thing but what they are; and their boldness has arrived to such a pitch, that they consider this very vice a virtue. They call hypocrisy *prudence*, and knavery *wit* and *address*, There is nothing holy and true in their aim or their means. And as for that calm seriousness which ought to manifest itself in our conversation, where is it to be found? How many of us, forgetting what we are, and the majesty of the Lord Jesus whose name we bear, and the glory of that heaven to which he calls us, amuse ourselves with vain trifles, with earthly pastimes, with the puerilities and follies of the world! It is not for a Christian, a disciple of Christ, an heir of eternity, to waste his time with the children of this world, to mix in their games, in their dances, in their theatrical entertainments, in their fetes, their revels, their drunkenness, their excesses. It is not for him to grow old in these vanities, though age, which arrests the career of worldly men, is unable to form such a one to the dignity suited to his profession.

What shall I say also of that justice which we owe to all men, the foundation of public virtue, the very bond of society, the necessity of which even savages
166 are compelled to acknowledge? Who would believe it is continually outraged in societies of Christians, where injustice should be met with as a prodigy? And yet (we must confess it to our shame) it is committed every day among us. There are among us people who wrong their neighbours, who spare not their own brethren, who hunt after the wealth of others, who borrow and never pay, who forcibly take what is not their own. There are to be found among us children who have no respect for their parents, husbands without affection for their wives, wives who obey not their husbands, brothers who hate their brothers; and there are few who do not to others what they would reprobate others doing to them.

Purity is no better observed. Dissoluteness of manners, adultery, drunkenness, gluttony, are of frequent occurrence; to say nothing of those "spots on our garments," avarice, luxury, expensive furniture and dress, things utterly at variance with Christian simplicity, chastity, and purity.

It is no wonder therefore that, failing so sadly in things of importance, we should have little care for such as are lovely, as kindness and generosity; every one considering himself as born for his own pleasure, and as owing nothing to any one, while every body owes much to him. And as for things of good report, we care so little about them that we often run after things of bad odour among men, bringing thereby scandal and opprobrium on the church of Christ. The passions of avarice and ambition, for instance, are so violent that they set aside conscience and reputation, and roam right and left to gratify themselves, as monsters search after their prey. Dear brethren, it is with much grief that I thus probe your wounds. But it is needful to discover in order to heal them.

Let us then set about a serious repentance. Let a holy shame be its commencement. Let us blush to remember how we have served that God who has been so good to us, scandalizing his church, and disgracing his name, by our manner of life. Let us ask pardon for our faults, and kneeling at his footstool let us continue there until we obtain the favour we need. Let us make a firm and solemn resolution to do better in future, and to employ the remainder of our lives in a rigid observation of our duties. Let us renounce every vice, banishing from our society all falsehood, frivolity, injustice, impurity, in short every thing that can provoke the wrath of God, or deserve the hatred and contempt of men. Let that truth, innocence, gentleness, sweetness, beneficence, that purity of manners, that gravity and virtue, which the first ministers of Christ recommended both by their doctrine and practice, and which the world saw and admired in them, revive and shine amongst us.

O eternal God, what would be the glory of our church in general, and what the happiness of each individual in it, if, loosing our hearts and affections from earth, and renouncing the excitements of passion, we walked all with one accord in the way of holiness; if, leaving the vain occupations of the world, we thought only of practising those true, just, venerable, lovely, and pure things, full of virtue and praise, which the apostle commands us! The light of such a life would confound the enemy. It would shut the mouth of calumny; it would convert the hatred and blasphemy of the world into love, and praise, and edification: new subjects would be acquired to Jesus, and his empire would enlarge itself both in length and breadth: for think not that it was either the power of miracles, or the wonders of knowledge, or the eloquence of the preaching of the first Christians, which converted the world formerly. Their holiness was the great instrument in this work; and the reason of our not being useful as they were, is not because we are less learned and less eloquent than they; all the difference is that our lives are not holy as theirs were. If we walk in holiness of life, we shall have the same success as they had; and besides the glory of God, this would turn to our own happiness: "The God of peace shall be with you," says the apostle. In the exercise of holiness

we should enjoy a sweet and calm repose, passing through this world and looking for the next with a contented mind, free from fear, and trouble, and anxiety, and remorse, and all those miseries which vice invariably produces in the hearts of such as are enslaved by it. Possessing Jesus Christ, assured of his favour and of our own immortality, we should dwell in joy and unutterable peace, until, after these pledges of paradise, he shall raise us to heaven, and cause us to drink at the very fountain of these delights.

To him, then, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, one God blessed for ever, be ascribed glory, honour, and praise. Amen.

SERMON XXVIII.

Verse 10–14.

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I hare learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

As believers who have wealth are commanded by the laws of the gospel to administer to the wants of their brethren, so also should relief be received with joy and gratitude; and true charity mainly consists in the exercise of these two duties. We have a beautiful example of both in the text which has just been read to you; wherein we see, on the one hand, the Philippians sending to Paul things needful to him in his bonds; and, on the other, the great apostle receiving the gift with singular gratitude and sweetness; for it appears, from the closing of this Epistle, that they had sent Epaphroditus to visit him in his prison, and by his hands had presented a charitable subscription for his necessities.

The apostle had not mentioned the subject hitherto, having, in the former chapters of this Epistle, discoursed on the more important points of the instruction and spiritual edification of the church. But having discharged fully this more pressing duty, in these few verses he touches upon charity, and returns them his acknowledgments for theirs. And in this St Paul has acted in a remarkable manner. A mercenary person would have commenced by thanking them, as though that were the subject nearest his heart, or at least of which he chose to speak first. An ungrateful person, on the contrary, would have said nothing about it. The apostle, avoiding these two extremes, thanks the Philippians for their present, but only at the latter portion of his letter, and after having spoken largely concerning heaven and his Lord. And further, he treats the subject in so exquisite a manner, that in expressing his sincere and real acknowledgments to the believers, he manifests no low and earthly feeling. All his words are grand and lofty, full of noble and exalted sentiments. For as all things change their nature in the hands of God, a dry rod

into a flowering almond tree, a shepherd into a king, a herdsman into a prophet; so, in like manner, this blessed apostle, participating in some degree (if we may thus speak) in this quality of his Lord, transforms the subjects he handles. He strips them of every thing vile and despicable, and clothes them with another dress, spiritual and beautiful. The Philippians had sent him a small sum in Roman coin. The thing was little in itself, and still less with respect to this great apostle, who esteemed all the riches of the world no more than a morsel of mud or a handful of dust. Yet he changes this little present into a holy sacrifice, the odour of which has mounted to heaven, and there rejoices God and men. He speaks of it loftily, taking occasion in his usual way to philosophize, and showing by his own example what should be our feelings and affections, respecting the abundance or scarcity of earthly things. Neglect not then, believing souls, this latter part of St Paul's Epistle, under the idea that it respects only the present made by the Philippians. However dry and uninteresting it may at first sight appear, you will see, on further examination, that it opens for our instruction a lively spring of piety.

And that we may more abundantly profit, let us consider attentively, and in due order, the three points which present themselves in the text you have just heard.

The first is in the 10th verse, and speaks of the joy which the apostle felt in receiving such a proof of the charity and affection of the Philippians by Epaphroditus.

The second point is contained in the three following verses, and respects the disposition that we should maintain concerning the things of this life.

And the third is in the last verse, and is contained in the praise that the apostle gives to the Philippians.

These three subjects I propose, with the blessing of God, to consider in this discourse.

I. The joy of the apostle; his moderation in want or fulness; and the approbation bestowed on the charitable subscription of the Philippians. It is a law founded on natural equity, established by God in his word, and amply justified in the 9th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, by the apostle Paul, that every church is commanded to furnish to the pastors who instruct it all things necessary for the maintenance both of them and their families, so that the duties and functions of a heavenly ministry may not be disturbed by anxiety and the care of earthly things. According to this law, the greater part of the Christian churches owed this charitable duty to St Paul, because he had founded, or confirmed, or instructed nearly all of them. Yet, as he has declared in several places, yielding his right to the advancement of God's glory and the edification of men, he drew not his subsistence from the believers to whom he had preached the gospel, but procured his living by working with his own hands. This however did not prevent him from receiving, on certain unusual occasions, (either when it was difficult or impossible to labour, as when in prison or sick,) the voluntary offerings made him by some of the flocks whom he had served. From these acknowledgments it is evident that such assistance was necessary for him. And among all the churches to whom he owed this obligation, he especially mentions this one of the Philippians, who,

from the very commencement of his preaching in Macedonia, had communicated assistance to him, and it appears that this occurred more than once, Philippians 4:15. Now again, hearing that the holy apostle, their dear master, the founder of their church, was in prison in Rome, they called to remembrance their former charity, and despatching Epaphroditus to him, besides salutations, they sent a present, in order that they might minister to his necessities. This he alludes to in saying, "that at the last your care of me hath flourished again." It is a figure drawn from the plants whose life manifests itself by the verdure of their branches and leaves. Christians, observe this manner of speaking, and learn from hence that almsgiving, care of others, kindness, and every charitable work, are the true and needful marks of piety. First, they are its glory and ornament; for what can be more melancholy than a tree without verdure, uselessly extending its naked branches in the air? in like manner, nothing is so hideous in the church as a man without charity. But besides being the ornament, charity is also the very life or soul of piety. I acknowledge that it occasionally happens that faith remains some time without manifesting this delightful verdure outwards, though retaining the sap within, like trees during the rigour of winter; and in such a case it would be reasoning badly to conclude that piety must be dead because it did not blossom outwardly. But I must say that it could not continue long in this state. I do not condemn a plant as dead because it has been some months without leaves; but if it remains in that state for years, if the sweet showers of spring and the bright sun of summer pass, and yet it does not put forth its foliage, I then lose all hope of its life, and root it up without scruple from the earth it occupied in vain. Judge from hence, ye avaricious men, what opinion we must form of your religion, who allow so many suns to pass over your heads without being warmed to life, whom no season has ever caused to put forth either blossoms or fruits. I know not what may be your inward feelings, yet am I well assured that God judges of plants by their productions, and will therefore class you with dead trees; and unless you change your spirit and mode of life, you must expect the end of the barren fig tree, even to be torn from the earth, which you only encumber, and to be cast into the fire. Prevent then such a sad and severe condemnation. Renounce this hardness of heart, this wonderful sterility. Obey those shining rays which the Sun of righteousness causes to light upon you. Bend beneath the efficacy of the holy light, and, yielding yourselves to virtue, manifest the verdure which she demands, by clothing yourselves with the works of a pure and abundant charity. Imitate these Philippians. Be kind like them to the prisoners of Jesus Christ, and to any believer who may stand in need of your assistance.

It is true, the apostle, praising their present charity, seems to accuse them of former coldness and neglect; saying, not only that their care of him was fresh and vigorous, but that, with regard to this care, they "had flourished again," and also this "at the last," which appears as though they had failed in this duty for a long season. The apostle, in order to soften this reproach, and purify the praise he had bestowed from this taste of bitterness, adds, "Wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity." He throws the blame of their having for some time failed in this respect upon events, which had not allowed them an opportunity of

testifying the goodwill which they had always felt towards him, whether it were their own need, which had prevented them from assisting him, or whether (and this I consider the most likely supposition) they had not been able to find a faithful and trustworthy person by whom to transmit their subscription. Whatever it might
168 be, the means were at length afforded them of executing their desire, and their charity prompted them to avail themselves of the opportunity, and after a long and unwilling delay, they cheerfully proved to the apostle their verdure, and the lively regard they felt for him.

He therefore says "he rejoiced in the Lord greatly." He makes this declaration for their sakes; for the believer ought not only to give, but also to receive, with cheerfulness. Coldness in receiving a present seems to imply that the affection of the giver is not returned. It is the least acknowledgment that we can render to those who oblige us, to make it appear that their kindness is agreeable to us. Perhaps it may surprise you that the great apostle should do more on such an occasion than simply "rejoice," rather than "rejoice greatly," and it may seem to you that he carried his gratitude to excess for so small a present; like Jonah, who "rejoiced greatly for the gourd," that is, for a small plant which gave him but little shade. But St Paul himself solves this mystery, when he says that he rejoiced "in the Lord." True, the present sent by the Philippians was small with regard to himself, and, were that all, the apostle would not have experienced the slightest emotion of joy. But it is not in respect of its actual value that he regards this present; he considers the heart from whence it proceeded, the love that had produced this fruit, even the love of Jesus, which was at the root, and the glory of his name and gospel, which was the object. This it is that rendered it so acceptable to Paul. These divine marks were the true cause of his joy. What can there be less than a mite? Yet the Lord prized the two mites cast into the box of the temple by the poor widow, more than the richest offerings of the great, because they sprung from a generous heart, from a lofty charity. And we are permitted thus to estimate and desire the gifts of believers, namely, as they are the fruits of their piety, and marks of that love which they bear to the Saviour. From this source the joy of the apostle sprung. It was not carnal, but spiritual joy. He rejoiced not for himself, because his body might obtain relief by means of their subscription; but in the Lord, because he saw by it that his name was honoured and his gospel loved and obeyed. It was no small proof of the zeal of the Philippians, that at a period when others turned their back upon the apostle, and abandoned him in his prison, they should take part in his bonds, and assist him to the utmost of their power; and whereas many in Rome concealed themselves from him, or even quitted the city that they might not be entangled in his cause, they should send two or three hundred leagues in order to fulfil towards him the duties of charity. It is no wonder that such rare love should comfort him. It would have been unjust not to rejoice at seeing such precious fruit in his dear disciples.

And here, let it not be alleged that he glories elsewhere in not having received any thing from them to whom he had preached the gospel, adding even that it were better for him to die than that any one should make his glorying void, 1 Corinthians 9:15; for although he thus speaks, yet nevertheless his hands were

not tied that he could never receive any thing from the churches, and still less was his heart restrained from rejoicing in the love and charity of those from whom he received assistance. It is easy to perceive, from the 11th chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, that his scrupulously abstaining from receiving any thing from the churches of Achaia arose from a desire to take away every opportunity for false apostles to speak reproachfully, "in order (says he) that wherein they glory they may be found even as we." But with regard to other churches, he did not reject the subscriptions that were made for him on remarkable occasions, as appears both from this Epistle and another, wherein he says, "That which was lacking in me, the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied," 2 Corinthians 11:9. Thus you see that his glorying in having preached the gospel to the Corinthians without receiving any assistance from them, does not prevent his rejoicing in the present made to him by the Philippians.

Having however declared to them the pleasure which their charity had caused him, he hastens to prevent the evil interpretation which might be put upon his words: "Not (says he) that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." He had just before said that he was greatly pleased with their care of him. Some might from this imagine that until the Philippians had shed upon him this charitable dew, he had been in sadness and ennui, languishing and low-spirited under the necessities of a prison. He therefore corrects this false conclusion, and declares to the faithful that he had never been in this condition, his heart having always found perfect content in the situation in which God had placed him, without being elevated in abundance, or depressed in adversity. Do not impute to vanity the liberty which he takes in discovering this noble and magnificent quality of his mind. It is for our interest that he has placed this before our eyes; for as he is one of the principal models on which we are to form our character, it is of importance to know truly what were the feelings and sentiments of his soul, lest, imagining such as were not in him, we should run some danger in imitating them. First, then, he says that it was not on account of his poverty that he found the subscription of the Philippians so pleasing to him. But how is it possible, O holy apostle, that having been so long in a melancholy state of imprisonment, thou hast not felt the pangs of indigence? Hadst thou some secret treasure? Has a concealed source supplied thee with necessaries? No, he answers. It is not thus I would be understood. I have never possessed riches, and the prison of Nero takes from me the only means I had of providing for myself, so that those who measure things outwardly would esteem my indigence very great. For my own part, I take a different view of the subject. I do not consider myself poor, because "I have learned in all things to be content." As it is not abundance, but content, which makes a man rich; so it is not poverty, but covetousness, which makes a man indigent. He who covets nothing is rich, though he have neither gold nor silver; while he who is without content is poor, though he possess much.

Since then this holy apostle was content with that state in which he found himself, it is clear that however poor he might be, he was not in indigence. Although there may be but a pint of oil or wine in a vessel, yet is that vessel full, if it will contain no more; while, on the other hand, though there be a gallon in it, it is not full if it will hold more than it has. For it is by its capacity, and not by the quantity poured into it, that we judge of its abundance or need. It is the same with man. If he has enough to satisfy the desires of his soul, he has great riches, however small his capacities may be. And if, notwithstanding all that a man has, his soul remains, always empty, if he is continually sighing formore possessions, even though he had all the gold of Peru, all the pearls and all the delicacies of the East, yet would he be indigent and necessitous, and the more he desired, the greater would be in proportion his poverty. The apostle in his prison had but bread and water for his food, and clothes sufficient to cover him. I acknowledge that if many of you had no more, you would be poor indeed. You, whose desires are infinite, who are accustomed to luxuries, you would not know how to live with so little. But as for him, he was rich, because with this little which you despise he had all that he required. "Having (says he in another place, 1 Timothy 6:8) food and raiment, let us be content." Happy apostle! who could be satisfied with so little! How firm, how calm is thy content, because thy desires are so limited! We read that a man once was in despair, because, having reckoned his accounts, he discovered that when all his debts were paid, there would only remain for him a hundred thousand crowns; and that another did not consider himself rich unless he had enough wherewith to feed and clothe a royal army.

169

These, however, are illusions, or, to speak more properly, they are the extremes of avarice and luxury. Reason shows us that he is rich who has need of nothing, who finds his home sufficient, who has what he desires. If his desires are just, and limited by good sense, it will not require an army, or a revenue sufficient to support one, to satisfy his wants. It was thus the apostle was fortified against discontent, not by acquiring riches, but by limiting his desires, reducing them to so small a compass, and mortifying them by faith and meditation on the cross of his Master, and by the continual exercise of fasting, sobriety, and frugality, that at length they ceased to give him pain, and submitted without murmuring to the condition in which they happened to find themselves. And this he teaches us when he says that he has "learned, in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content;" that is, he has come to this by long experience; for he does not mean to tell us that he has merely learned to *acknowledge* the justice of this moderation, either in the book or by the revelation of God, but rather that he has acquired the *feeling*, by the crosses in which he had been long exercised; living, ever since his conversion, in the midst of strifes, of imprisonments, of perils, of tumults, of labours, of watchings, of fasting, of cold, and hunger, and nakedness. By these means he had learned to be content in the poorest and most destitute condition. In the same manner, (if it be permitted to compare the disciple with his Lord,) the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that "Christ learned obedience by the things that he suffered," Hebrews 5:8; or that the continual practice of such things had rendered them familiar.

II. In the following verses the apostle extends and separates into parts this excellent knowledge which he had acquired, of being satisfied in whatever condition he might be: "I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." Human life, as experience daily shows even to the blindest, is but a vain shadow which changes into a hundred forms; a wheel incessantly turning, raising up one, depressing another, and often causing the same person to pass through various states and conditions. We behold to-day, reduced to shame and ignominy, those who, but yesterday, were flourishing in vainglory. We weep over the poverty of such as were formerly in abundance, and some that we are pitying to-day may to-morrow excite our envy. The mind of man is so weak, that these changes in outward circumstances affect it also; and there are few firm Enough to continue the same in different conditions. Prosperity and abundance are prone to elevate and puff up the heart, while adversity and poverty depress it. The first render us insolent and proud, the second weak and feeble. The apostle here declares that he knows how to support either condition; that he is enabled to taste abundance, or to suffer need, and so to conduct himself that neither the eclat of the one, nor the pain of the other, could ever make him vary; and that neither time nor occupation could take this moderation from him: for "to be hungry, and to suffer need," signify adversity; and "to be full, or to abound," signifies the opposite state of prosperity. He knows "how to be abased and how to hunger" who can sustain necessity and adversity with a humble and patient spirit, acquiescing meekly in the will of God, and being contented in his low estate without murmuring and useless regrets. And although this virtue may be difficult, its opposite is much more so, even to "know how to abound and be full:" so that a man who has riches can enjoy them soberly, without pride, without vanity; and with thankfulness, bestowing much in charity, without spending more on himself than is necessary. Many men may be found who have supported poverty and disgrace with much courage and patience. But there are few whose minds have not been spoiled by abundance and prosperity. The highest degree of virtue is to know how to endure either; to have a mind firm, upright, and pure, so that it can sustain the threatenings and blows of evil fortune, (as the world says,) and the caresses and favours of good fortune, with equanimity and calmness.

The apostle, fearing that this language, whereby he attributes to himself such rare perfection, might appear like vain boasting, corrects and modifies it by saying, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." It is not, he would say, the strength of my mind, or the power of my intellect, which renders me capable of this; it is Christ who gives me power: of myself I can do nothing; but in him I can do all things. He speaks in the same manner in his Epistle to the Corinthians, where, having said that he had laboured more than all the apostles, he immediately adds, "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me," 1 Corinthians 15:10.

You will observe that the "all things" of which he speaks must be restricted to the subject under consideration, that is to say, they signify such as God should call him to; such as he had to do or suffer in the course of his vocation. For example:

Does God call him to suffer need? He is assured that he shall be enabled to suffer cheerfully. Does he call him to abundance? He promises that he will enjoy it calmly. There is nothing of this sort that he cannot do, because the Lord who strengthens him is both good and mighty. And these words of the apostle are very valuable. For they teach us, on the one hand, that all the good which believers can do in their several callings is owing to the assistance of the Lord Jesus, who fortifies them; as he himself also said, John 15:5, "Without me," or out of me, "ye can do nothing." And this militates against the presumption of Pelagians, whether ancient or modern, who attribute religion, and the virtues and graces which depend upon it, to the power of nature and free-will. But these words of Paul show us, on the other hand, that believers, who in themselves can do nothing, are enabled to do all things in the Lord, who vouchsafes to manifest his power in their weakness. Be not proud, then, O Christian; you have nothing good in yourself; you owe all to the grace of Jesus Christ. Yet, fear not! weak though you be, you can do all things by the grace
170 of that Divine Saviour who strengthens you. Trust not in yourself, but expect much from him. There is nothing, however small, that we can do in our own strength; or however great, that we cannot do in his.

III. Observe then, brethren, how exquisite is the prudence of the apostle, and how exactly he balances his expressions, so as to lean neither to one side nor the other. So far he has spoken loftily of his own constancy, lest the joy he had expressed at the receipt of the present sent by the brethren should have given them reason to think that before it came he had been bowed down by necessity and distress. Now again, lest the strong and powerful language just uttered might offend them, as though he despised their liberality, he endeavours to eradicate such an idea from their mind by adding, "Nevertheless you have done well that ye did communicate with my affliction." Do not suppose (he would say) that your charity is lost or ill bestowed, by being expended upon a person capable of suffering need with cheerfulness, and of living in poverty without murmuring. That which I have said respecting the equanimity of my own mind, was said solely with a view to show you how we should submit to the will of God in whatever condition he may place us, and not with a view to undervalue your charity. I esteem it greatly, and regard it with joy as a good and holy act.

You see therefore, brethren, that this declaration of the apostle was necessary in order to show the Philippians that he did not contemn their present, which indeed would have been proud and unchristian. And it was necessary also in order to give no pretext, either to those believers or others, to neglect such as were in affliction from the idea that they would be given grace to endure their misery patiently. It is not for us to examine curiously how far others may be distressed by their poverty. If God strengthens them thus far, that they can suffer need without murmuring, without complaining, we may admire their virtue, and rejoice in it, but we may not withhold our relief on that account. We should distribute aid to all who have need, but more especially when we find poverty conjoined with religion. We can never be better employed than in the service of such as, like Paul, "know how to be

abased and how to abound," because none will receive assistance more thankfully and religiously.

The apostle speaks very highly of the subscription of the Philippians, saying "that they had communicated with his affliction;" as though by sending to his prison they had been there themselves in order to partake of his trials. We can communicate with the afflictions of believers in three ways: First, When we suffer for religion's sake the same distresses as they. Secondly, When we compassionate their sufferings with tenderness. And, thirdly, When we console and relieve their pains, not with words merely, but also with liberality: and it is of this last way that the apostle speaks in this place. The truth of his declaration that they did well in rendering him this duty is witnessed throughout the Scriptures; for although the apostle might have done without assistance, yet in bestowing it they had shown at once their charity towards the afflicted, and their respect towards their excellent master, who had so faithfully instructed them in the way of salvation.

Such, brethren, is the view I take of the subject in hand this day. Let us be careful to imitate the beautiful examples of the Philippians and of St Paul here set before us. Let the flocks learn from the former to assist with alacrity the necessities of their pastors; let pastors learn from the latter to receive these sacred donations of their people with all gratitude. Above all, let us endeavour to aid and instruct one another in that most excellent knowledge of which the apostle speaks, "in whatsoever state we are, to be therewith content." Ignorance of this secret is the cause of the greater part of our miseries. This ignorance is the parent of injustice and envy, and of all the evils which they produce. It is this which occasions wars, trials by law, and continual quarrels in the world, which fills the forests and high roads with robbers, the seas with pirates, the cities with rogues, leaving no part of the universe in safety. It troubles the peace of states and the repose of families; it extinguishes friendship, and even natural affection. It raises up enmity between brethren; nay, even animates children against parents, and parents against their children. This it is which forges arms, burnishes swords, invents acts for sinful purposes, and goes down, as it were, to hell, to draw thence all that Satan has of malice and wickedness. What formerly changed the peace of Israel into a frightful war, in which a son was armed against his father, Absalom against David? It was nothing more than the blindness of that parricide, who was discontented with his condition. What lighted up among the Romans that fierce civil war which terminated in the overthrow of the republic? The cupidity of two men, dissatisfied at having, the one an equal, the other a superior. And if you consider the various events, past and present, which have troubled the world, the church, kingdoms, or families, you will see that they all spring from the same source, that men are not contented with their condition. The universe would enjoy a happy and settled peace, if every one knew with St Paul how "to be content in whatsoever state he found himself." But though the world may remain in its ignorance, we, at least, dear brethren, to whom God has given light, and to whom he presents to-day the example and word of his holy apostle, we should come out of so vile, so pernicious an error. Let us set a bound to our desires; let us bear rule over our lusts; let us

respect the order of Divine Providence, contenting ourselves with the situation in which that has placed us, and with the share of worldly things bestowed upon us, receiving from the hand of God with profound humility the allotment he appoints us in life. And here, I entreat you, do not allege that such moderation is only befitting an apostle; that for you, who have not such high qualifications, it is needless so to regulate your desires. There is but one law in the house of God, and unless you submit thereto you cannot enter into his happy family. And that which the apostle attributes to himself in this place, he commands elsewhere to all believers: "Let your conversation be without covetousness: be content with such things as ye have," Hebrews 13:5.

Now it were an absurdity to be willing to dispense with being happy; and yet you cannot be so without possessing this moderation of mind. It is not only in accordance with the will of God, but it is also necessary for your peace. Whether therefore you do it to obey your Lord, or to secure yourself a tranquil and happy life, diligently study this lesson. Do not quit it until you have learned it; until you know how to be content in what condition soever you may be; until you are capable of supporting calmly abundance or scarcity, riches or need. If you find yourself in poverty, remember that it is not so extreme as that in which Paul was when prisoner at Rome in the chains of Nero. What should hinder you from attaining a like courage with him; from finding the same peace which that holy man possessed in captivity? He braved poverty, and, notwithstanding its pressure, (171) boasted of not being in distress. And why? Because he was content with what he had, and regulated his desires according to his actual need. Do then as he did, and poverty shall have no power over you, even as it had none over him. Your body is not larger than his; you do not require more cloth to cover it, or more food to nourish it, than he did. The little which sufficed for him may suffice for you likewise. If there be a difference, it must arise not from your nature, but from your effeminacy; from the excess of your lusts, and not of your necessity. Poverty, to say the truth, only inconveniences the ambitious, the voluptuary, the effeminate. It is no evil to a sober and temperate man, who knows he has need but of little, and for only a short period. What did I say, that it is no evil? It is a positive good in many respects; it eradicates from the heart many vices, which spring and blossom only in abundance. It exempts him from the cares, the pains, the fears, the anxieties, the vanities, which accompany the possession of riches. It teaches him sobriety, modesty, humility. It renders him indifferent to the world, and enables us to despise this present life. It detaches him from earth, and weakens those ties which bind others to it. He can more easily quit the world in which he possessed nothing, and will more ardently desire that heaven where his treasure is. Support then calmly a thing so desirable. Let the blessings which will accrue to your mind enable you to bear patiently inconvenience to the body. Philosophize over your poverty, rather than murmur against it. Consider that God, the sovereign Disposer of all things, sends it to you in order to detach you from the world, and win you entirely to Jesus Christ. And even if you cannot draw any practical inference from it, yet at least to you shall be the glory of obedience to the will of God. As it is his will, be assured it

is right, and humbly acquiesce therein. Repose tranquilly in his providential care, for he has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Hebrews 13:5. He knows how to support his Elijahs in the solitude of the valleys; his people in the deserts; he can multiply the oil and the meal to the exact measure of their necessity. Observe how he sustained Paul in the Roman prison; how, besides the mere necessaries that were furnished him there, he caused a subscription to be sent him from Philippi in Macedonia, (a place distant two or three hundred leagues,) and that not barely to supply his wants, but sufficient to minister to his abundance. The Lord's heart is not now changed, neither is his hand. He has always the same kindness and the same power for his people. Be assured he will do for you as he did for Paul, if you serve him, each one in his vocation, as Paul did.

If it should happen that you are placed in the middle station beyond the reach of poverty, remember that you are still more bound to be therewith content. Do not then raise your desires yet higher. Continue where God has placed you, and remember the excellent warning which the apostle elsewhere gives us: "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition," 1 Timothy 6:9. In the name of God, do not entangle yourselves with these embarrassments. What more can you require, since you have sufficient to support nature? As that is in reality all you need, so it should be all you desire. If that is not the boundary of your desires, they will have none at all. You will then be in continual excitement; for the more you have, the more you will wish for. This species of thirst increases by gratification, and if once you give yourselves up to so weak and foolish a passion, nothing will arrest your troubles but death. Your labour and success will always fall short of vour intention; so that what you possess will not give you half the content as what you possess not gives you of discontent. Consider with me the life of a covetous man. His anxiety and trouble are without end. As those who are mounting a ladder no sooner put their foot upon a step than they raise themselves up in order to gain a higher, so a covetous man never ceases to mount, though with pain and disquiet; the termination of one labour is but the commencement of another. And frequently, after all his anxieties and pains, he loses, at one blow and in one moment, the acquisition of many years.

But it is not enough to know how to endure poverty, and be content with mediocrity. We must also learn to endure abundance, when God gives it to us; to possess it with sobriety and temperance; to employ it for the good of the church, and the relief of the poor; to distribute it as faithful dispensers of God's gifts; to make it not so much a means of luxury as of charity: holding it by the grace of God, and being at all times ready to yield it back into his hand whenever he shall be pleased to take it: saying with Job, "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Such, brethren, must be our disposition of mind, if we would, with the apostle, be instructed as well how to abound as how to suffer need. May Jesus Christ, the only Author of all good, without whom we can do nothing, so strengthen us by his

grace, that we may be enabled to do these and all other things that shall redound to his glory and to our salvation. Amen.

SERMON XXIX.

Verse 15–19.

Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

It was a reproach frequently uttered by pagans against the early Christians, that they had no sacrifices in their religion; and you know, my brethren, that the Church of Rome accuses us now of the same fault. Blessed be God that we are charged with the same crime, as was formerly imputed to the best and first disciples of our Lord. This conformity is honourable to us, and shows very clearly that our doctrines and theirs are the same. And as this accusation is common to us and to them, let us give the same answers as they did, saying to our opponents what the first Christians said to the pagans, that the sacrifices which God and our religion demand are a pure mind, a good conscience, a sincere belief;[1] that prayers, alms, and holy and virtuous actions are the most pleasing victims that can be immolated before the Almighty.[2] At the same time we willingly acknowledge that we offer to him no propitiatory sacrifice for the atonement of our sin; because this would be a presumption on our part to undertake a thing which requires *infinite* merit; and it would be also an insult to Jesus, who having once offered himself for the propitiation of our sins, is accused of insufficiency by our reiterating a sacrifice. 172

But if the question concerns sacrifices of thanksgiving, never has any religion established them more richly, more magnificently, than ours; for while under Moses, during paganism, or among our adversaries, sacrifices can only be offered by certain ministers, there is no man among us who is not a priest to offer them, Jesus Christ having given us each this dignity. For his church is entire; it is a holy

1 Minut. in Octav.
2 Origen contra Celsum, 1. 8. p. 400.

nation, a royal priesthood. And while with others there are certain exterior acts performed at particular hours and in particular places, denominated sacrifices, with us every act of love to God and charity towards our neighbour is a true and lawful sacrifice, and can be presented to the Lord in all places and at all hours without limit. St Paul, one of the most learned and authorized interpreters of our religion, teaches us these truths in many parts of his writings, and especially in this that we have just read, and which I propose, if the Lord will, to make the subject of this discourse.

Before, in the second chapter of this Epistle, he had enrolled ministers of the gospel among the number of priests, calling their preaching "a sacrifice," and the sufferings by which it was followed the "sprinkling" of their oblation. Now he extends the same dignity to the people, and honours the fruits of their benevolence with the expression, "a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing unto God." And from this we may learn how precious before God and his saints are the works of charity and love.

Let us then consider, in order to understand it, the manner in which the apostle speaks of the charity of the Philippians, greatly lauding the subscription that they had sent him by Epaphroditus. He had begun this subject in the preceding text, declaring that their care of him was very gratifying, not so much on his own account, as he had learned by the grace of God to be content with what he had, and suffer poverty without inconvenience; but on account of the goodness and propriety of the thing itself, which being built on the right foundation, bore evidence of true piety. He continues to dwell upon the same subject in the verses you have heard, and even takes the Philippians themselves to witness the truth of what he had said, that "he was content with such things as he had," without soliciting or declining the gifts of those whom he had served; for (says he) "Ye Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity." He immediately however corrects and modifies this language, lest they should think his feelings low and earthly: "Not that I desire a gift; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." And hereupon he concludes the subject, rendering to Epaphroditus the praises due to his fidelity, and to the Philippians the praises due to their charity, adding a promise that God will bless them: "But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Thus we have four points on which to speak, in order, by God's help, to give you an entire explanation of the text. First, The conduct of the Philippian and other churches towards St Paul, respecting the acknowledgment of his ministry. Second, The feelings and intentions with which Paul desired and received these duties of theirs. Third, The especial praise which he bestows upon the subscription which

Epaphroditus had lately brought to him from the Philippian church. And fourth and last, The promise he makes them of the reward and blessing from God.

I. With regard to the first of these subjects, we have already seen, when discoursing upon the preceding text, that although churches are obliged, by the Divine command, to supply their pastors with all things necessary for the support of themselves and their families, yet that St Paul did not exact this acknowledgment from any of the flocks which he had either collected or instructed by his preaching. He provided for his own necessities by the labour of his hands, choosing rather to submit to this than to give, at the commencement, occasion to the adversaries of the gospel to calumniate his ministry; as though he exercised it in order to draw therefrom some carnal advantage. It is true that if believers, touched with a sense of duty, voluntarily offered him assistance, he did not refuse to accept it, whether he would not hurt their feelings, or whether it might be in order to assist such as were in need. And this conduct of his clearly proves the truth of what he had said before, that he had learned to preserve the same mind in abundance or poverty; either to do without these lawful resources when they failed, or to receive and expend them liberally when they were presented to him. He now recalls this to the Philippians' memory, mingling with the praise bestowed upon them the recollection of their former charity and affection towards him: "Ye know, O Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only."

We learn from the book of Acts that St Paul, having passed from Asia into Europe by an express command from God, went to Macedonia, and there preached the gospel at Philippi, at Thessalonica, and at Berea; from which place he retired to Athens. It is of this period that he speaks when he says, "the beginning of the gospel," meaning when first he preached in those places. He declares then that during all that time, until the fury of the Jews persecuting him from city to city had compelled him to quit Macedonia, no other church but theirs had communicated with him on the subject "of giving and receiving." This manner of speaking is remarkable, and is taken from the custom of merchants, who are in the habit of writing in their books the articles they have sold as well as those they have received from them with whom they negociate, in order to balance the whole, when they would take account, and prove themselves even, each one with his correspondent. The apostle presupposes that there is a like connexion between a pastor and his flock, by which the one party are obliged to give to him from whom they receive, so as to be even the one with the other. In this mutual negociation the pastor gives the gospel, the peace of God, and the blessings of life eternal. The flock in return give such things as are necessary for the support of his earthly existence. Thus the pastor bestows heavenly and receives earthly things, while the flock receive heavenly and bestow earthly things. And this the apostle tells us in another place, where he argues the subject at some length: "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" 1 Corinthians 9:11. And from this it appears that the assistance which churches give to the ministers of the Lord is an act of justice and not purely of charity; the payment of a lawful (173)

debt, and not the present of a voluntary offering. Judge then what must have been, not the ingratitude merely, but even the cruelty and injustice, of the churches of whom St Paul here speaks, who having received so much from the apostle, had given him nothing in return; remaining not simply in arrears to him, but owing him the entire whole. This great man had sowed the gospel, even eternal life, freely among them, and had given them with a liberal hand the riches of the kingdom of God. To his preaching he had added the example of his life, the most holy and devoted that could possibly be; his sufferings, his dangers, his tears, even his blood, the most precious thing he had. Yet these people had received blessings more valuable than their life itself, with hearts so hard as to leave in necessity the man to whom they owed so much. They permitted that hand which had communicated to them the bread of heaven to be reduced to labour like a mechanic, because they had not furnished him even with a small part of what they owed; for they owed him every thing, and he required but little for the supply of his daily wants, few men living so frugal and temperate a life as he. But observe, on the other hand, the cheerfulness and mildness of the apostle, who, though being so unworthily treated, yet suffers the cruelty of these churches without complaining, without accusing them, without uttering against them one unkind word; for this mention of them is not in unkindness. It is the subject of his discourse, and not resentment, which prompts him thus to speak, as much to prove the truth of his assertion respecting the purity and innocence of his conduct, and to excuse himself for having several times accepted the liberality of the Philippians, as to spur on the charity of those believers; for that charity was the more estimable on account of its being a rare quality, like the gratitude of the poor leper in the gospel, who, out of ten that had been cured by our Lord, alone returned to give him thanks. Thus the ingratitude of other churches gave a brilliancy to the charity of the Philippians.

Among all the flocks who were infinitely obliged by the preaching of the apostle, this was the only one which acquitted itself of this duty. The Philippians did not plead the example of others as a pretext for neglecting the right course. Not seeing a good example around them, they resolved to be more careful in assisting the apostle on that very account. In fact all believers in Jesus should regard, not so much what others do, but what their Master commands, what religion requires, what charity demands. Reason and the truths of God are the rules in this school, and not the custom of men. Misery will be his lot who follows a multitude to do evil. Though you had the whole universe for your guide in this evil way, it would conduct you down to perdition. The number of those whom you follow will not diminish your anguish. Remember that the Lord will judge us by his word, and not by the errors of the world, and will examine our conformity, not to the customs and habits of other men, but to the models which he has given us in his gospel. Do not allege to me that those whom you follow call themselves "the church," that they are even so jealous of that name they suffer no others to appropriate it. Let them do as they please. If they turn from that which the apostles have commanded, they must not be imitated. They who had failed in rendering to Paul gratitude and assistance were also the church, they honoured themselves with this appellation,

and yet the Philippians are praised for not having followed their example. Take your stand at the simple word of God, and resolve to maintain it constantly unto the end; and, like Noah in former times, rather separate yourself from the whole world, if the world cast aside that rule, than follow its pernicious example. Say as Joshua said, "Although Israel itself, the people who glory in the name of the Lord, should altogether abandon the service of the Almighty; yet, as for me and my house, we will serve him for ever," Joshua 24:15.

But I return to these generous Philippians, who, in the general failure of other churches, alone were careful of their duty. The apostle, to enhance the praise due to them, adds, that, not satisfied with having exercised their charity towards him while he was with them, they had even assisted him since his departure from their city: "For even at Thessalonica ye sent once and again to my necessity." Thessalonica was the chief city or capital of Macedonia. St Luke relates (Acts 17) that the apostle arrived there after leaving Philippi, and passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, and that he there preached the gospel after his usual custom; the two Epistles which he has left us addressed to the church of the Thessalonians prove that his labour was not bestowed in vain, but had produced much fruit. And although that church was much praised for her faith, and her patience, and her constancy, yet it is very evident that in this particular she forgot her duty to the apostle, not having taken care to provide for his maintenance. He, in fact, testifies as much in the Second Epistle that he addressed to the Thessalonians. For although he utters no reproach either to them, or to others who had fallen into the like fault, yet he clearly discovers his feelings, when he recalls to their mind that, during his sojourn among them, he had not even eaten his bread without labouring for it; "travailing (he says) night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you," 2 Thessalonians 3:8. The Philippians then having learned how the apostle was situated, in order, as we may say, to hide the shame of their metropolitan city, sent him two or three times voluntary offerings. Oh how generous is real Christian love! It passed the boundaries of their city; it followed the apostle, like the water from the rock in the desert, and accompanied the servant of God in all his wanderings. It refreshed and strengthened him in Thessalonica; it passed the seas, and came to his assistance even in Nero's prison. There is no place inaccessible to the love of these believers. They do not allege that St Paul was no longer among them; that they had maintained him during his sojourn at Philippi; that now they had their own pastors, their ordinary ministers, for whom they were bound to provide; that it was reasonable that they who enjoyed the ministry of the apostle should be careful to provide for his necessities; that Thessalonica was the richest and largest city of the province, whereas theirs was but of an inferior grade. They neither thought nor spoke a word like this. But knowing the poverty of the apostle, they despatched a prompt messenger to him, to furnish him with all that he might need. Nor were they satisfied with sending once. Their affection is too sincere to exhaust itself in a moment; and they continue their liberality according to the necessities of Paul.

My brethren, this charity of the Philippians is perfect and complete. And would to God that all Christian churches would follow this blessed example. We

should then no longer see ministers of the gospel in various places languishing and struggling in the midst of distress, because the charity of believers, far from spreading abroad, like that of the Philippians, beyond the precincts of their own dwelling, left those even who laboured among them without assistance. But, on the other hand, we should no more behold the avarice, and the ambition, and the numerous evils that we now see among ministers of the gospel who have been rendered rich and powerful by the imprudent devotion of past ages. For the Philippians bartered for the truth with their pastors, but in measure, "according to their need," says the apostle, and not for the sake of luxury. I acknowledge that congregations ought to maintain the ministers of the Lord, and I do not deny that their maintenance should be liberal, not merely sufficient to keep them from want, but even to place them in such a situation that they may sustain their name and rank, according to what St Paul says, "that the bishop," that is, the minister of the gospel, "be given to hospitality," 1 Timothy 3:2, and this cannot be the case without suitable means; but still I say it is right to beware of luxury, and it should be remembered they are to be servants of God, and not princes of this world, to live in temperance and frugality, and not in extravagance, after the fashion of the great and powerful in the world. Their true dignity consists in the lustre of Christian virtues, and not in the splendour of earthly pomp; in the holy light of heaven, and not in the false glare of earth. And if you ask me which of these two extremes is the most dangerous and hurtful to the church, poverty or riches; I answer, the latter beyond a doubt. Indeed it has been frequently remarked that ministers were gold, that is, most precious and excellent, as long as their church was of earth, that is, low and poor; but, on the contrary, they became earth as soon as gold and riches embellished their houses. And another saying on this subject is not less true, viz. that devotion having produced wealth to the church, the child has at length devoured the mother; so much is it easier for man to support poverty than riches, and to stand firm against the anxieties of penury than against the charms and luxuries of wealth.

174

II. But I have said enough on this head, concerning the conduct of the Philippian and other churches towards St Paul in this respect. Let us then advance to the second head, wherein he declares in what manner he was affected by it. Certainly some, seeing how much he felt the kindness of these believers to him, might almost suppose that he was attached greatly to his own interests, and that, it was on account of the convenience of their supplies that he so highly praised their liberality. In order, then, to forestall this unjust suspicion, he adds, in the next verse, "Not that I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." It is not my interest, (says he,) but yours, which prompts me to use such language: when I receive your charity so cheerfully, and esteem it so highly, it is not because of the gift bestowed upon me, but because of the fruit which you will thereby gather. In this holy barter, I rejoice in your advantage rather than in my own; in the prize and the crown which you will receive, and not in the present which you have bestowed. The gifts of charity yield two sorts of fruit; one to him who receives, the other to him who gives. The first is the use which he to whom they come makes

of them, whether for his maintenance, for his comfort, or even for the recreations of the present life. The second testifies the piety of him who gives, and are the marks of his faith and spiritual life. The apostle then places these two effects of the Philippians' charity in opposition to each other, and declares that the beauty which he sought and found therein was not in the gift which he received, though that was most useful and pleasant to him, but rather the abundant fruit that those believers would gather from it to their praise and happiness. This is what he intends when he says that this fruit "will abound to their account," that is, to their advantage: for making use again of the same simile as he had done before, he presupposes what the Scriptures elsewhere teach, that God has made a sort of contract and agreement with his servants, by which they are obliged, on the one hand, faithfully to employ all they have to his glory and the good of his church; and he, on the other side, has engaged to return with abundant usury all that they may have spent in his service. And in order to keep an exact account, he notes all their actions in the book of his providence, (which is, as it were, his register,) without neglecting a single one. There all the alms bestowed on the poor are registered; all the acts of kindness and gratitude rendered to the ministers of God; all visits to the afflicted or the prisoner: not a work, whether of duty or of love, is forgotten, not even the smallest glass of water bestowed in the name of Jesus. And when the great day is come these books shall be opened, and then, in the assembled presence of angels and men, shall be allotted to each one according to his holy deeds done, or the temporal evils he has suffered; and that wealth that was lost or given for the sake of Christ shall be returned to him in heavenly and eternal blessings.

Teachers of human merit, pretend not to draw from this discourse aught in favour of your dogma. It is in mercy, and not in justice, that God has made this treaty with believers. The reward which he will give will show the greatness of his goodness, and not the merit of their works; the truth of his promises, not the value of their deeds. If he bestows heaven upon you in return for a glass of water which you have given to one of his poor, you indeed have reason to adore his liberality, but no reason to boast of so small a service. This, therefore, I forbid. I acknowledge that God will reward believers: I only deny that this retribution is deserved, or due to their righteousness. Why would you exalt your own praise rather than the mercy of God? I know that he keeps a reckoning of all the good we do, and that in the sequel he will crown us with glory. But I maintain that it is to his goodness and not our own that we are indebted. This, then, is sufficient to establish and confirm the apostle's saying, that their charity will abound to their account, because by the kindness and faithfulness of God they will reap eternal life.

It appears, then, that the satisfaction felt by Paul at the bounty of the Philippians was natural and just. For as it is not only permitted but commanded that pastors should desire with ardour, and behold with joy, the spiritual fruit reaped by their flocks, who is there that does not see that the apostle had every reason to rejoice in this charity of his Philippian disciples, which was at once so useful and so advantageous? It is true that God does not absolutely forbid us to seek useful things; and that a man may, without offending God's law, rejoice when

delivered from necessity, and placed in better circumstances than before, by the munificence of others. But a generous and truly Christian mind, such as was the apostle's, regards more especially the interests of heavenly things; and therefore, speaking in this place by comparison, he does not hesitate to say that he sought not the gifts, but the fruit of the Philippians abounding to their account; meaning thereby that the joy and gratification which he felt in his own relief was nothing in comparison to that which he experienced in the happiness and welfare of these believers; for, in fact, there is no proportion between these two fruits of charity, that which he gathers who receives, or that which he receives who gives. The first 175 relieves and supports a mortal and terrestrial life. The second acquires thereby a celestial and eternal one. Whatever I receive from you I consume here below; but the seed you thus sow for yourselves is preserved on high for ever. The assistance of the Philippians was of no very great consequence to the apostle; for what could a little money avail to a man who despised life and death; who regarded the riches and glory of the world as dung; who crucified the flesh, and was satisfied with that condition in which he found himself, how sad soever it might be? All the gain in this was on the side of the Philippians, who from this charity would one day reap the glory and praise of their Lord. And it is on this account that it was so pleasing to the apostle; this it was which caused him to rejoice. So then in this sense it is permitted to a pastor both to rejoice over the gratitude, and weep over the ingratitude, of his flock; on their account, and not on his own; not because of his convenience or inconvenience, (ah, God forbid that so low and mercenary an idea should enter his mind,) but because of the health of the flock, to the good or bad state of which these duties bear witness, according as they are performed or neglected. And this concludes the remarks I have to make upon the second part of my text.

III. The two last verses still remain, wherein the apostle first acknowledges the receipt of the last supply of the Philippians sent to him at Rome, and then promises to them a reward from God. The first clause is couched in the following words: "I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things that were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God." He owed this acknowledgment first to Epaphroditus, who was desirous that the Philippians should know that he had faithfully placed in the apostle's hands all that had been intrusted to him by them, to prevent any suspicion which might arise of failure on his part; and for this reason he says expressly that he had received "all," in order to show that there had been no fraud. And we may infer from this expression what is indeed very probable, that they had sent a list and catalogue of all the things presented by them. For a good man, and especially a minister of the gospel, ought to have a care of his reputation even in the smallest things; witnessing that which is good, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in that of men, being exceedingly careful that no one should reproach him, as the apostle speaks in another place on this subject, 2 Corinthians 8:20–21. But the satisfaction and consolation of the Philippians also demanded this testimony from the pen of Paul. He therefore declares to them that he had received their present;

and to heighten his praises, he testifies first that the supply sent was not narrow and defective, (like the alms and gifts of avaricious people,) but liberal and honest, such as not only relieved his necessity, but even placed him in opulence. "I am full, (says he,) I abound." But we must not suppose from this that they had sent him treasures, gold or pearls, for no doubt the sum was moderate. But mediocrity was sufficient to fill a soul formed as was St Paul's. It did not resemble that of a miser, who would not be satisfied were you to bestow on him all the spoils of the Indies, who dies of hunger in the midst of abundance, and, like the grave, never says, "It is enough." Such a soul as this must be always empty, and always panting after some new prey; such a soul knows not how to be full and satisfied. These words belong only to Paul and his true disciples. None but they can say in truth, "I am full," because their desires are bounded and their wishes regulated according to their need.

But the next commendation that St Paul bestows upon the supply of the Philippians is still more glorious: "I have received it (says he) as an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." Behold how he exalts their present! They bestowed it upon a man; he takes it as a sacrifice to God. What can we desire more magnificent, more glorious than this? that our acts of charity towards men should be made a part of the worship we owe to God, and should be as so many sacred oblations which he is pleased to receive at our hands, taking pleasure in them, and willingly accepting them as a sweet and agreeable perfume? This mode of speech is taken from the custom of the ancient Jewish church; and it is frequently said in Scripture of the offerings that were placed upon God's altar, that they were "an odour of appeasement," or, as it is in the Greek version, (which the apostle here and elsewhere follows,) "an odour of a sweet smell." And such language accommodates itself the better to this subject, because, in fact, the greater number of their oblations, such as perfumes and the burnt flesh of immolated victims, did give out an odour pleasing to the senses. It is not that God (properly speaking) is, like ourselves, pleased with a sweet smell, and annoyed with a bad one. For, as you very well know, the nature of God is simple, spiritual, and incomprehensible, and has nothing in common either with the bodies or senses of animals. But Scripture, accommodating itself to our ideas, ordinarily employs our mode of expression, in order to represent to our minds the things of God by some similitude; and therefore as a bad smell vexes us, and an agreeable one delights us, it declares that these offerings of former times were to God an "odour of a sweet smell," to signify that he approved of and would willingly receive them. St Paul very elegantly applies these terms to such things under the New Testament which have succeeded to the services of the Old, in order to show us that God now took pleasure in them, the law being henceforward abolished. Thus, speaking of the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, the body, the reality, the truth, of those sacrifices of the Old Testament, he says that he was "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour," Ephesians 5:2. And here, speaking of those acts of charity and beneficence which form the principal features of evangelical worship, and take the place of the ancient carnal services, he says likewise, "an odour of a sweet smell," which he immediately explains in other terms, "a sacrifice

acceptable, well-pleasing to God." And in the same sense we must understand that expression which we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 13:16: the apostle, having recommended to us beneficence and frequent communion, adds, that "with such sacrifices God is well pleased." I acknowledge that sacrifice is offered to God, that it is a service pertaining to him alone. But I say also, that although our acts of charity may be done to men, yet if we exercise that charity in faith and for the love of God, and according to his commandment, there can be no doubt that they are offered also to the Lord. Men are, as it were, only the altars on which the sacrifice is offered. In fact, our Saviour declares that he receives them from our hands as though they were at once presented to his sovereign Majesty: "For verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," Matthew 25:40. And that such works are "as a sweet smell," (as saith the apostle,) and "agreeable to God," is evident, first, because he has
176 commanded them to be done; secondly, because they are as representations and shadows of his goodness; thirdly, because they are the production of his Spirit, the works of his hand; and lastly, because he has promised to crown them with favour and reward, both in this life and the next.

IV. And this the apostle declares finally to the Philippians, in order to encourage them more and more in well doing: "My God (says he) shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." This verse has, by some, been understood as a wish; as a prayer made to God by the apostle in behalf of the Philippians, like unto that which he makes elsewhere for the Corinthians on a similar occasion, saying, "Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness," 2 Corinthians 9:10. But it is not straining the sense, and it is more according to the tenor of the words, to understand it as a promise founded upon that of the Saviour, who declares that whosoever shall do the smallest kindness to one of his servants shall in no wise lose his reward. He calls the Lord his God, especially, because it was in the character of his servant that he had received the charitable donations of the Philippians. "The God whom I serve, and to whom you have offered all which is bestowed on me, accepts your work, and will not leave unrewarded the service you have rendered to his minister." He does not merely promise this reward in another world, where we shall indeed receive it in full; but he assures them that even here the Lord will supply "all their need." Though you may have placed yourself in necessity (says he) in order to relieve mine, yet doubt not but the Lord will provide, and will fully replace to your account what you have expended in succouring me. And it may be observed that he promises to relieve their necessity, not to give them opulence and the means of luxury, according to those limits which our Lord himself placed to our desires, commanding us to ask of him, not greatness and abundance, but our "daily bread." And in order that the Philippians may expect this mercy from the Lord, he adds, "according to his riches;" meaning thereby that this promise would be easily fulfilled by him, because he is infinitely rich. The following words, i. e. "in glory," signify gloriously, powerfully, magnificently, and relate to the manner in which God rewards his

people here below, accomplishing his power in their weakness, and preserving them by superhuman means. His last words, "in Jesus Christ," show us that the Lord Jesus is the only source and cause of the blessings we receive from God; for it is he who, by the efficacy of his cross, has opened the treasures of heaven, and rendered the Father propitious and favourable towards all who seek and serve him in truth.

Such, then, believers, is the praise which the apostle bestows on the love of the Philippians, and the reward which he promises them, both in this world and the next. Having their example before our eyes, let us carefully imitate it all the days of our life, employing with cheerfulness all that we have in the service of God's sanctuary, and in relieving his poor people. Say not that it was towards St Paul that the Philippians exercised their charity, and that it was no wonder they were liberal in their gifts to so great an apostle. He whom I recommend to you, and for whom I demand the succour of your alms, is no less a person than was Paul. He is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Master of the apostles, the King of angels. Let not your eyes deceive themselves. He is hidden in the persons of the poor whom you relieve. It is him, and not them, whom you nourish, clothe, assist, and comfort. He it is who receives your benefits, who will publish and acknowledge them hereafter in the sight of heaven and earth. Come, (he will say,) come, my beloved, enter into the kingdom which is prepared for you: for I was hungry, and you fed me; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you received me; I was naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me. Christian, how have you the heart to refuse your charity to so great a King? You think that if Paul were here, you would esteem it an honour to give to such a man, and how is it you are straitened towards the Lord Jesus, the Master of St Paul? If you like to oblige the great, who in this world is so great as the Son of God? If you wish your charity should be known and praised, what more glorious praise could you desire or expect than that which he will give from his own lips before the assembled universe?

Remember the sacerdotal dignity to which he has raised you. You are his priest, and one of the principal sacrifices which he demands from you is beneficence. There is no other whose odour is so sweet to the God whom you serve. O wonderful goodness of the Lord Jesus! He has instituted a worship by which we acquit ourselves at once of our duty towards God and towards men. If the misery of the poor does not affect us with compassion; if that nature which they have in common with ourselves, and which has often moved the most barbarous people and the most ignorant of God, does not touch us; if their tears, their prayers, their entreaties, capable of melting marble, do not soften us; at least, dear brethren, let the majesty of our God, let the love and honour which are due to him, induce us to perform these duties. It is thus (says he) that I will be served. The sacrifice I demand from you is that you do good to your fellow creatures. This is the best and most acceptable sacrifice which you can present unto me. It is to offer me this that I have filled your hands, that I have made you my priests, slaves of devils as you were. It is for this that I have given you the riches and goods which you possess,

not to bury them in the earth, or lock them up in your coffers, but to adorn my altars, the poor members of my Son, the true altars of my divinity; not to waste them in luxury and vanity, but to sanctify them for the use of the church, which is my temple.

But, miserable creatures that we are! instead of listening to the voice of God, we deny to our riches the honour which God would put upon them, and instead of consecrating them to his service, we abuse and profane them by vanity and folly, not to say by injustice and vice. With them we adorn our walls, we carpet our floors of wood or stone; but we clothe not men. We deck our horses and carriages with ornaments, while we leave our brethren in rags and filth. We feed and fatten buffoons and wicked wretches on that which was given us in order to console the saints. We sacrifice the victims that belong to God in gaming and voluptuousness. A single feast swallows up sometimes as much as would have sufficed to feed all the poor in this church for a year. But besides the sacrifice, there is an inconceivable folly in this use of riches; for of all that these vices and vanities costs us, nothing brings us satisfaction. On the contrary, while God is offended, men ridicule or murmur at it. Whereas, were we to employ our riches in alms, the poor would receive benefit, and bless us; our consciences would not reproach us; other men would praise us; none would envy us the abundance of which we made so good
177 a use; and more than all, the God of Paul and of the poor would assist us, and by the power of his grace would supply all our wants, guard us from every loss, and augment our yearly revenue. He promises us this in a thousand places, yet nevertheless we are unable to trust him. We consider what we lend him as lost. O wonderful unbelief! We can trust the elements; we hazard our goods upon the sea, we leave them to the mercy of the winds and waves, which are changing every hour. We trust them to men, who are still more variable and faithless than the elements; and all the shipwrecks and failures of which we read cannot cure us of this fatuity. There is none but God who never deceives, who is at all times faithful and unchangeable, and yet he is the only Being we find difficulty in trusting.

Dear brethren, let use change our dispositions henceforward, and after the numerous infidelities that we have experienced from men and nature, let us place our goods entirely at the disposal of God. Let us lend him, or rather let us return him, all that he has given to us, and assure ourselves it cannot be more profitably employed. It is the only means of enriching ourselves without risk. If you keep your riches, you will lose them; if you distribute them to the poor, you will augment them. If then the consideration of our profit cannot influence us to this, at least let the dread and horror of ruin oblige us. For as we said that he who gives obtains more fruit from his charity than he who receives, so we now say that he who does not give loses much more than he to whom he refuses his charity. The one loses nothing but food or clothing for mortal flesh, which the worms will soon destroy; the other loses thereby an infinite good, even life and eternal glory. For it is of no use to deceive ourselves. God will crown benevolence with immortality; so also will he punish avarice with eternal death. You well know what was the end of the rich man in the gospel. Such as imitate his example may well fear his punishment. You

have no compassion on others. God will have no pity on you. You shut your house against them. He will banish you from his. You refused to give them bread. He will refuse to give you his, even the bread of life, without which you must eternally die.

God keep us, beloved brethren, from this dreadful evil; and, in order to avoid it, let us enlarge our bowels of compassion towards others; so that, after having here below presented to the Lord these acceptable sacrifices, he may hereafter place on our heads that glorious crown of life, reserved in heaven and promised to all such as serve him in the faith of his Son Jesus Christ; to whom, with himself, and the Holy Spirit, one God, blessed for ever, be honour, praise, and glory, world without end. Amen.

20. *Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*
21. *Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.*
22. *All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's houshold.*
23. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

THE END

GENERAL INDEX.

A

Actions of God on his creatures, twofold 166
Advice of the Stoics to their disciples 147
Advocates of God's cause, a glorious title 40
Affection and zeal of the Philippians 20
we should imitate this 21
Afflictions, Paul's tranquillity in 47
not necessarily the marks of God's displeasure 221
reasons for God's children being visited by 217, 219
Aim of a Christian should be to magnify the Lord Jesus 54
Ἀκέραιοι, meaning fourfold 176
Apostle, meaning of the word 215
in what sense applied to Epaphroditus 215
Armour requisite for the Christian warfare is that of faith 83, 215
Assistance, mutual, necessary 53
Assurance which Paul had of his own safety 48, 53, 153
of believers 54, 86

B

Believers, their conflict 83
citizens of heaven 321
dignity of 180, 387
duty of perfect 296
effect of the grace of God in 157
faith the weapon of 83, 85
in what sense termed perfect 297, 298
"lights in the world" 180
one of their greatest consolations 87, 89
persecution of them not fortuitous. 96
should follow after all holiness 81–83, 366
their home in heaven 323
their life compared to a race 290
victims and priests of the Lord 191–195
Birth, we contribute nothing to the work of our new 162–167
Bishop, Scriptural meaning of the word 7
and presbyter by right equal 7
Jerome's observation on the word 7
Bodies, our vile ones changed into glorious 321
Boldness of the apostle, in what it consisted 51

Bonds for Christ honourable 22
advantages resulting from Paul's 33, 35

C

Charity, mainly consists in the exercise of two duties 370, 371
its gifts yield two sorts of fruit 387
Christian religion, design of the 101
armour. 83, 215
piety, self-denying 334
Christians, in what sense called the circumcision 237
their rejoicing should be "in the Lord" 348
the joy of 346
to rejoice, the duty of 347
Christians, moderation of 351
prayer, the duty and privilege of 354
the divine peace of 355, 356
their holy and assured safety. 353
Christ, the depository of the Spirit 52
consolation found in 102
gain inestimable in. 57, 59
impossible to magnify him in the mind whilst he is dishonoured in the body 54
the cause and source of all the grace God gives us 90
truly God. 117–121
union necessary in the church of. 84
consubstantial with the Father 119
distinct in person from the Father 120
his human nature not omnipresent 326
left us an ensample. 145
ruler of the universe 201
Sovereign and Head of the church 321
the day of. 188
wherein consisted the humiliation of 124
Churches commanded to support their pastors 371–373, 378–380
Church, its prayers powerful 53
in what its happiness consists 106
its dominion spiritual 321
its good should be one of our chiefest desires. 106
its Head and Sovereign, Christ 321
mixed with, yet separate from, the world 179
union necessary in Christ's. 84
of Rome, opposed to the Scriptures. *See* letter R
Circumcision, in what sense Christians are called the 240
City of the believer is in heaven 321
Comfort of love 102
Commendation, when proper 146
Communion, effects produced in those who truly participate in the. 321
Concision, meaning of the word 233
Concord, Christian 108
Conflict of believers 82, 84
Consolation of a Christian in the providence of God 88
found in Christ 102, 104
Contarion on justification quoted 273

Contentment of Paul, and its grounds 374–376, 375–376
Conversation worthy of the gospel 78–82, 80–82
Conversion, God the sole author of 161–165
Counterfeits in the church of God 176
Course of a believer compared to a race 290

D

Danger of departing from the discipline and language of the apostles 7
Day of Christ 13, 15, 188
Deacons, meaning of the term 7
Death, fear of 61
deliverance from it requires two things 156
not a subject of mourning to a believer 73
ours should be consecrated to God 194
Defenders of God's cause, a glorious title 40
Delight of ministers to see God's cause prosper in their hands 80
Deliverance of the apostle, its objects and effects two-fold 71
Dignity of believers 392
Dilemma of Paul 65
Discontent, evil of 378
Disinterestedness of true religion 112
Dog, meaning of the word 232
Do," "to will and to 157, 160
Duties relative between pastors and their flock of "giving and receiving" 384

E

Empire of the universe ascribed to Christ 201
End, two acceptations of the word 314
Ἐνεργεῖν, force of the word 160
Envy, to preach Christ sometimes excites 41
Epaphroditus, titles of. 213
cure of 220
his love to his flock 222
in what sense an apostle 215
Paul's commendation of 223
Paul's fellow soldier 214
sickness of 216
Epistles of Paul to be read by all 6
Ἐπέχειν, signification of the word 181
Euodias 338
Exaltation of Christ, connexion between the voluntary humiliation and 130, 131
wherein consists the 134, 137
Example, of Paul, with regard to an assured hope 47, 53
Christ the best 144
Examples, efficacy of 46
Expectation," "earnest 49
Experience worketh hope 51
Eye-service condemned 147

F

Faith, the weapon of our warfare 83

a peculiar, distinguishing gift 93
not given because good use of it is foreseen 93
our shield 85
"sacrifice of your faith" 191, 192
the gift of God 90
the objects of 90, 91
word of God, the only infallible rule of 236, 237
False teachers, appellations given to. 232–235
marks of 313–316
"Fear and trembling" 151, 152, 154
Fellowship in the gospel 9, 11
of Christ's sufferings 276
of the Spirit 102
which the Philippians had with Paul in his bonds 20
Fellow-soldier, Epaphroditus Paul's 214
"Finally," force of the word. 230
Flesh, difference between living according to and living in the 62
"no confidence in" 241
"no confidence in the" 244
Free-will, Bernard's observation on 151
errors respecting this doctrine examined, and objections answered. 151, 152
Fruits to be deduced from the deliverances God gives his servants 72
Funerals of their dead, some nations rejoice at the 73
Future events depend upon God 201

G

Gain, inestimable in Christ 278
Giving and receiving, duties relative between pastors and their flocks 384
Glorification of the body 328, 330
God, the, of peace 365
Good, all things work together for the believer's 43, 51
"Good work" 13
Gospel, the, fellowship of 9
conversation worthy of 76
superior to the law 129
Grace, and peace 8
growth of grace in the new man gradual and progressive 15, 81, 143, 294
of congruity unscriptural 92, 166
of faith not given because good use of it is foreseen. 92
of God, its effects in believers 157
Paul calls a prison for Christ a 20
Gratitude due to ministers. 191
Greek games referred to 281–290
Gregory Nazianzen quoted 294

H

Holiness, reasons constraining believers to 177
Human nature of Christ, not omnipresent 326
Humiliation of Christ, in what it consisted 124, 125
Humility, nature of true 111, 126
effects of true 152
the true road to glory 142

I

Immortality of the soul 65
Inability of man 150
Inoffensive, not sufficient to be merely 29
Insensibility to suffering 221
Intentions as well as actions must be good 44
Invocation of saints unscriptural 53, 218
Irresolution of St. Paul 65

J

Jesus Christ, the medium of all our blessings 8
divine nature of 117
equal with God 117
excellency of the knowledge of 256–260
his human nature not omnipresent 326
humbled himself 121–127
in the form of a servant 121
in the form of God 117
made in the likeness of man 121, 123
the fruits of righteousness are by 29
truly God, in contradiction to the Arians and Socinians 117–121
Joy of Paul 230
Justification 276

K

Κατεργάζεσθαι, signification of 149
Κατέλαβον, force of the word 283
Knowledge, connexion between love and
excellency of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus 256–260
Knowledge, connexion between, love and 25
of a Christian, practical 27
of what kind the apostle speaks 26
produces purity 27

L

Labour, without pride. 154
Law, superiority of the gospel to the 129
Λειτουργία, remarks on the word 192
Liberty of man, wherein it consists 163
Life, distinguished from salvation 148
ours to be consecrated to God 196
to come. 321
"Lights in the world" 180
Limbo, observations respecting 66
Love, of pastors to their flocks in Christ Jesus 12, 24
connexion between knowledge and 25
generous nature of a real Christian 386
the highest perfection of the Christian character 25
Lukewarmness condemned 55

M

Man's inability 149
salvation referable to the good pleasure of God 167
sin the cause of his perdition 167
Marks of the children of God 178
Marriage of the clergy allowable 342
Martyrdom, a gift of the grace of God 95
Paul's readiness for 193
Martyr, not the suffering, but the cause, makes the 94
their interments 197
Means, "if by any means" 278
Meekness commended 304
Memory of excellent persons to be preserved 295
Μεριμνήσει, force of the word 204
Merit, none in the good works of believers 98, 149, 156
Mind, of which Paul speaks 300
Ministers, delight in seeing God's word prosper in their hands 80
judgement and tenderness required in 203
should be carefulm of their reputations, even in the smallest things 389
should receive gratefully the donations of their people 378
to be supported by their churches 376
union between churches and 185
Moral suasion, in conversion God uses something more than 161
Murmuring, remedies against 172

N

Nature, the power of our 90
Nero's palace, scene of gospel triumphs 39
New birth, God the sole author of the 162–170

O

Oath, an, not forbidden to Christians 23
Obedience, of Christ as man 126
blind, of the Romanists, condemned 146
of the Philippians, praiseworthy 145
Offence, interpretation given to the word 28
of the soul 66

P

Paranomasia, examples of this figure from the Scriptures 235
Pastors, love they owe their flocks 12
churches commanded to support their 371, 378
relative duties between churches and 386
Path, no middle 59
Pattern, Paul proposes himself as a 305
Paul, a servant 5
a merchant 56
his assurance of salvation 53
his bonds promote the gospel 35, 37
his care of the churches 199, 200

his dilemma 65
his diligence 62, 65
his reasons for desiring to go to Rome 35
Jewish privileges no gain to 251
joy in the piety of his converts 185, 335
outline of his character 47
some of Rome's cardinals assert that he was married 341
superiority in seven particulars 245–250
tenderness of 203, 335
vehemence against false teachers 235
Peace of a Christian 354
Perfection, dangerous tendency of the doctrine of 283
Augustine's remarks on 288, 289
Jerome's observations on 287
Paul's view of 283–288
Perfect, signification of the word 296, 298
Persecution not fortuitous 96
Perseverance of the Philippians 10, 11
God the cause of believer's 51
of saints certain 15, 51, 287
Pharisee, meaning of the word 248
Pharisees, their tenets 248
Philippi, description of 4
gospel first preached in it by Paul 8
Piety, its influence on the affections 221
marks of 372
Πολίτευμα 321
"Poured forth" 193
Prayer at all times enjoined 354
Prayers of the church powerful 53
Precepts and advice of the apostles, Rome's unscriptural distinction between 301
Presumption, cautions against 168
Purgatory, fabulous 67

R

Reasons constraining to holiness 177
Reiteration of duties necessary 232
Resurrection, the power of Christ's 274, 278
Reverence, superstitious, at the name of Jesus 139
Riches more dangerous than poverty to the church 387
Righteousness, meaning of the word 29
cause and end of the fruits of 30
of faith 269
of God, typified from the earliest times 268
of the law 269
Rome, church of, its prohibition of the reading of the Scriptures 236, 340
abuse of the title Holy 300
celibacy of its clergy 342
unscriptural distinction between the precepts and advice of the apostles . . . 301
Rome, Paul's reasons for desiring to go to 35
a second time visited by Paul 70
church of, its error with respect to the necessity of knowledge for a believer 27

doctrine of purgatory 67
invocation of saints. 53, 218
sacrifice of the mass 195, 382
superstitious reverence at the name of Jesus 139
the fallibility of its infallibility 236, 237
views of assurance and perseverance 31, 68
sacrifice of the mass 67, 151

S

Sacrifices, gospel signification of the word 191, 192
of thanksgiving 382
Saints, meaning of the term 6
invocation of them inadmissible 53
Saints, meaning of the term 218
their patience under trials 221
Salvation, attributed altogether to God 15, 156, 164, 167
assurance of 53, 86
difference between life and 148
Sanctification, effect of the grace of God. 157
eight parts of 360–363
the object of our redemption 358
Scripture, the only infallible rule of faith. 66, 236, 237
Sects of the Jews 247, 249
Self-denying nature of true piety 334
Servant," "form of a 121
Servants of Jesus Christ 5
Σκύβαλα, signification of the word. 261
Soul, not destroyed by death 65
its state after death 66
"Stand fast" 79
Stedfastness enjoined 335
Στήκετε, meaning of the word 337
Stoics, their advice to their disciples 67
. 147
Strife to be avoided 109
Sufferings for Christ, honourable 20
for Christ, a gift of God's love. 91–94
for doctrines, unusual among the pagans 36
of martyrs, the seed of the church 22
Supplications with thanksgivings 354

T

Tares and wheat 308
Tertullian quoted. 175
Thanksgivings of Paul. 9
with supplication 354
"Thinketh that he hath" 244
Timothy, praise and recommendation of 206–210
Tranquillity of Paul in affliction 47
Transubstantiation opposed to the declarations of Paul 68
Trembling," "fear and 152
Trials of believers. 41, 220

Truth, God gives us the knowledge of his 302

U

Ubiquity belongs not to the human nature of Christ 326
Understandings, the pitiable weakness of our 303
Union necessary in the church of Christ. 84
among the Philippians earnestly desired by the apostle 104
between ministers and their churches. 185
Universe, dominion over it ascribed to Christ 201

V

Vain-glory to be guarded against 110

W

Warning to the Philippians, its form and matter 309–319
Weaker brethren, course to be adopted towards 302
Wishing, distinction between willing and 158
Word of God, the only infallible rule of our faith 236, 237
"Work out your salvation" 148
Worship of images 339
"Worthy of the gospel" 77