

# Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Galatians Chapter VI



Dr. Martin Luther 1535

## CHAPTER 6

*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in any fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one with the spirit of meekness.*

ANOTHER goodly moral precept, and very necessary in this our day. The Sacramentarians seize upon this place and infer from it that we ought in patience to yield somewhat unto fallen brethren, and to conceal their error through love, which 'believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things' (1 Corinthians 13:7), especially seeing that Paul here plainly teacheth that they which be spiritual should restore them that err with a spirit of meekness. The matter (say they) is not of so great moment that for this one article we should break Christian concord, than which the Church hath nothing more goodly and profitable, etc. So they discourse to us of the forgiveness of sins, and accuse us of being obstinate because we will not yield an hair's breadth unto them, nor suffer their error (which they will not openly confess), and much less will we restore them in a spirit of meekness. So do these jolly fellows adorn themselves and their cause, and bring us into contempt with many.

Nothing (as Christ is my witness) hath so grievously vexed and troubled me these many years as that discord in doctrine, whereof even the Sacramentarians themselves know very well that I was not the author, if they will but confess the truth. For that which I did believe and teach in the beginning of this cause, concerning justification, the Sacraments, and all other articles of Christian doctrine, that do I yet at this day believe and profess (but with greater assurance: for this hath increased through study, practice and experience, and also through great and frequent temptations); and I do daily pray unto Christ, that he will preserve and strengthen me in that faith and confession unto the day of his coming in glory. Amen. Moreover, it is manifest in the whole of Germany that the doctrine of the Gospel was at first assailed by none save the Papists; and among them which received it, there was full concord concerning all the articles of Christian doctrine: which concord did endure until the Sectaries came forth with their new opinions, not only touching the Sacraments, but also certain other articles. They were the first that troubled the churches and brake their concord. From that time forward there arose, as there could not but arise, more and more sects and even greater dissensions in consequence. Wherefore they do us this great injury against their conscience, and subject us in the sight of all the world to this intolerable reproach beyond our desert. It is a very grievous thing that the guiltless should suffer, especially in so burdensome a matter, the punishment which another hath deserved.

But we could easily forget this injury, and receive and restore them with a spirit of meekness, if only they would return to the right way and walk orderly with us: that is to say, if they would believe and teach godly concerning the Lord's Supper and the other articles of Christian doctrine, and with one consent together with us would preach, not their own opinions, but Christ, that the Son of God

might be glorified through us, and the Father through him. But seeing they make much of charity and concord, and make light of the matter of the Sacrament, as though it were of small moment how we think of the Eucharist instituted by Christ our Lord, this we may in no wise suffer; but as much as they preach concord of life, so much must we preach concord of doctrine and faith. If they will let us have this sound and whole, then we together with them will also extol the concord of charity, which is of far less account than the concord of faith or of the Spirit. For if thou lose this, thou hast lost Christ: and when he is lost, charity will profit thee nothing. Contrariwise, if thou retain the unity of the Spirit, and Christ, it hurteth thee not if thou dissent from them which corrupt the Word and thereby rend the unity of the Spirit. I had rather, therefore, that they and all the world should depart from me and be my enemies, than that I should depart from Christ and have him for my enemy: which must come to pass, if I should leave his simple and manifest Word and cleave to their vain dreams, whereby they wrest the words of Christ to their own opinion.

But with such as love Christ and faithfully teach and believe his Word, we offer not only to keep peace and concord, but also to bear their infirmities and sins, and to restore them when they be fallen (as Paul here biddeth us to do) in a spirit of meekness. So Paul did bear the infirmity and fall of the Galatians and others (which were led astray by the false apostles) when they heartily repented. So he received into grace that unchaste Corinthian (2 Corinthians 2:7 f.); also he reconciled Onesimus the runaway slave, whom he had begotten at Rome in his bonds, to his master (Philemon 17). Therefore, that which he teacheth here concerning the duty of supporting the weak and restoring the fallen, that did he also himself perform, but towards such only as could be healed: that is to say, such as heartily confessed their sin, their fall, their error, and returned to the right way. Contrariwise, towards the false apostles, which were obstinate and defended their doctrine, saying that it was not error, but the very truth, he showed himself very hard and severe. 'I would,' saith he, 'they were even cut off which trouble you;' and 'he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be' (Galatians 5:10,12). Again: 'Though we or an angel from heaven, etc., let him be accursed' (Galatians 1:8). Now without doubt there were many that defended the false apostles against Paul, saying that they had the Spirit no less, and were no less ministers of Christ and preachers of the Word, than Paul; and that although they agreed not at all points in doctrine with him, yet he ought not therefore to pronounce so horrible a sentence against them: for by this obstinacy he did nothing but trouble the churches and destroy their goodly concord, &c. But nothing moved by these arguments, Paul confidently curseth and condemneth the false apostles, calling them the troublers of the churches and subverters of the Gospel of Christ; and his own doctrine he so extolleth that he will have all things to give place to it, whether the concord of charity, the Apostles, an angel from heaven, etc.

So neither can we suffer this cause to be made of small account, because he whose cause it is, is great. Once indeed he was small, when he lay in the

manger: and yet notwithstanding he was even then so great that he was worshipped by the angels and proclaimed Lord of all. Therefore we will not suffer his Word to be injured in any article. In the articles of faith nothing ought to seem little or of small account to us, and such as we could forego. For the remission of sins pertaineth to the weak in faith and life, which acknowledge their sin and seek pardon, and not to such as are corrupters of doctrine, which acknowledge not their error and sin, but stubbornly defend it as truth and righteousness. And by so doing, they cause us to lose the remission of sins, because they pervert and deny the Word that preacheth and bringeth the same. Wherefore let them first be at one with us in Christ, that is, let them confess their sin and correct their error; and if then we should be lacking in the spirit of meekness, they might justly accuse us.

He that diligently weigheth the words of the Apostle, may plainly perceive that he speaketh not of heresies or sins against doctrine, but of far lesser sins, into the which a man falleth not willfully and of set purpose, but of infirmity. And hereof it cometh that he useth so gentle and fatherly words, not calling it error or sin, but a 'fault.' Again, to the intent to diminish, and as it were to excuse the sin, and to remove the whole fault from man, he addeth: 'If any man be overtaken,' that is to say, be beguiled of the devil or the flesh. Yea, and this term or name of 'man' helpeth something also to diminish and qualify the matter. As if he should say: What is so proper unto man as to fall, to be deceived, and to err? So saith Moses in Leviticus 6:3: 'They are wont to sin like men.' Wherefore this is a sentence full of comfort, which once in a terrible conflict delivered me from death.

Forasmuch then as the saints in this life do not only live in the flesh, but now and then also through the enticement of the devil, fulfill the lust of the flesh, that is to say, fall into impatency, envy, wrath, error, doubting, distrust, and such-like (for Satan always assaileth both, that is, as well the purity of doctrine, which he laboreth to take away by sects and dissensions, as also the soundness of life, which he corrupteth with daily faults and offenses); therefore Paul teacheth how such men that are fallen should be dealt withal, namely, that they which are strong, should raise up and restore them again with the spirit of meekness.

These things it behoveth them specially to know, which are in the ministry of the Word, lest whilst they go about to touch all things to the quick, they forget the fatherly and motherly affection which Paul here requireth of those that have the charge of souls. And of this precept he hath set forth an example (2 Corinthians 2:6 ff.), where he saith that it was sufficient that he which was excommunicate was rebuked of many, and that they ought now to forgive him and comfort him, lest he should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you (saith he) use charity towards him, etc. Therefore the pastors and ministers must indeed sharply rebuke those which are fallen, but when they see that they are sorrowful for their offenses, then let them begin to raise them up again, to comfort them and to diminish and qualify their faults as much as they can, but yet through mercy only, which they must set against sin, lest they that be fallen be

swallowed up with overmuch heaviness. As the Holy Ghost is precise in maintaining and defending the doctrine of faith, so is he mild and pitiful in forbearing and qualifying men's sins, if they which have committed them be sorrowful for the same.

But as for the Pope's synagogue, like as in all other matters it hath both taught and done clean contrary to the commandment and example of Paul, even so hath it done in this thing also. The Roman pontiff and his bishops have been very tyrants and butchers of men's consciences, For they have burdened them from time to time with new traditions, and for every light matter have vexed them with their excommunications; and that they might the more easily obey their vain terrors, they annexed thereunto these sentences of Pope Gregory: It is the part and property of good minds to be afraid of a fault where no fault is. And again: Our censures must be feared, yea, though they be unjust and wrongful. By these sayings (which were brought into the Church by the devil) they established their excommunication and this majesty of the papacy, which is so terrible to the whole world. There is no need of such humility and goodness of minds, but it is enough to confess a fault where a fault is. O thou Romish Satan, who gave thee this power to terrify and condemn men's consciences, that were terrified enough before, with thy unjust and wrongful sentences?

Thou oughtest rather to have raised them up, to have delivered them from false fears, and to have brought them from lies and errors to the truth. This thou omittest, and according to thy title and name, to wit, the man of sin and child of perdition (2 Thessalonians 2:3), thou imaginest a fault where no fault is. This is indeed the craft and deceit of Antichrist, whereby the Pope hath most mightily established his excommunication and tyranny.

For whosoever despised his unjust sentences was counted very obstinate and wicked: as some princes did, howbeit against their consciences; for in those times of darkness, they did not understand that the Pope's curses were vain.

Let them therefore to whom the charge of men's consciences is committed, learn by this commandment of Paul, how they ought to handle those that have offended. Brethren (saith he), if any man be overtaken, do not trouble him or make him more sorrowful: be not bitter unto him; do not reject or condemn him, but amend him and raise him up again; and by the spirit of lenity and mildness restore that which in him is decayed by the deceit of the devil or by the weakness of the flesh. For the kingdom whereunto ye are called, is a kingdom not of terror or heaviness, but of boldness, joy, and gladness. Therefore if ye see any brother cast down and afflicted by occasion of sin which he hath committed, run unto him, and reaching out your hand, raise him up again, comfort him with sweet words, and embrace him with motherly arms. As for those that be hard-hearted and obstinate, which without fear continue careless in their sins, rebuke them sharply. But on the other side (as I said) they that be overtaken with any sin, and are heavy and sorrowful for their fault which they have committed, must be raised

up and admonished by you that are spiritual, and that in the spirit of meekness, and not in the zeal of severe justice, as some have done, who when they should have refreshed thirsty consciences with some sweet consolation, gave them gall and vinegar to drink, as the Jews did unto Christ hanging on the Cross. These things do sufficiently show that the forgiveness of sins must be applied, not unto doctrine, but unto life and our works. Here let no man condemn another or upbraid him harshly and in anger. Ezekiel (Ezekiel 34:4) saith of the shepherds of Israel, that they ruled the flock of God with cruelty and rigor: but a brother ought to comfort his brother that is fallen, with a loving and meek spirit. Again, let him that is fallen hear the word of him that raiseth him up, and believe it.

For God would not have those that are bruised to be cast away, but to be raised up, as the Psalm saith (Psalm 145:14). For God hath bestowed more upon them than we have done, that is to say, the life and blood of his own Son. Wherefore we ought also to receive, to aid and comfort such with all mildness and gentleness. Wherefore we refuse not pardon to the Sacramentarians or other authors of impious sects, but from our hearts we forgive them their insults and blasphemies against Christ: and of the hurt they have done unto us, we will never make mention again, if only they will repent, put away their wicked doctrine wherewith they have troubled the churches, and walk in the right way orderly with us. But if they continue in their error, and destroy the true order, in vain do they require of us the forgiveness of sins.

### *Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted*

This is a very necessary admonition to beat down the sharp dealings of such [pastors] as show no pity in raising up and restoring again them which are fallen. 'There is no sin (saith Augustine) which any man hath done, but another man may do the same.' We stand on a slippery ground; therefore if we wax proud and leave off our duty, there is nothing so easy unto us as to fall. It was well said therefore of one in the book called The Lives of the Fathers, when it was told him that one of his brethren was fallen into whoredom: 'He fell yesterday (saith he), and I may fall to-day.' Paul therefore addeth this earnest admonition, that the pastors should not be rigorous and unmerciful towards the offenders, or measure their own holiness by other men's sins; but that they should bear a motherly affection towards them, and think thus with themselves: This man is fallen; it may be that I also shall fall more dangerously and more shamefully than he did.

And if they which be so ready to judge and condemn other, would well consider their own sins, they should find the sins of others which are fallen to be but motes, and their own sins to be great beams (Matthew 7:3). 'Let him therefore that standeth take heed lest he fall' (1 Corinthians 10:12). If David which was so holy a man, full of faith and the Spirit of God, which had such notable promises of God, which also did so many and great things for the Lord, did fall so grievously, and being now stricken in years, was overthrown with youthful lusts after so many and divers temptations wherewith God had exercised

him, why should we presume of our own constancy? God by such examples doth show unto us, first our own weakness, that we should not wax proud, but stand in fear; then he showeth unto us his judgments, that he can bear nothing less than pride, either against himself or against our brethren. Paul therefore saith, not without cause, 'considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.' They that be exercised with temptations, do know how necessary this commandment is. On the other side, they which be not tried therewith, do not understand Paul, and therefore are not touched with any pity towards them that are fallen: as was to be seen in popery, where nothing else reigned but tyranny and cruelty.

### *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ*

This is a gentle commandment; to the which he joineth a great commendation. The law of Christ is the law of love. Christ, after he had redeemed us, renewed us and made us his Church, gave us no other law but the law of mutual love: 'A new commandment give I to you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you,' and: 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples' etc. (John 13:34 f.). And to love is not (as the popish sophisters dream) to wish well one to another, but one to bear another's' burdens, that is, to bear those things which be grievous unto thee, and which thou wouldest not willingly bear. Therefore Christians must have strong shoulders and mighty bones, that they may bear flesh, that is, the weakness of their brethren: for Paul saith, that they have burdens and troubles. Love therefore is mild, courteous, patient, not in receiving, but in giving; for it is constrained to wink at many things, and to bear them. Faithful teachers do see in the Church many errors and offenses which they are compelled to bear. In the commonweal, subjects are never so obedient to the laws of the magistrates as they should be. Therefore unless magistrates can wink and dissemble in time and place, they shall never be meet to rule the commonwealth. In household affairs there be many things done, which displease the master of the house. But if we bear and wink at our own vices and offenses which we daily commit, let us also bear other men's faults, according to this saying: 'bear ye one another's burdens,' etc., and: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'

Seeing then there be vices in every state of life, and in all men, therefore Paul setteth forth the law of Christ unto the faithful, whereby he exhorteth them to bear one another's burdens. They which do not so, do plainly witness that they understand not one jot of the law of Christ, which is the law of love: which, as Paul saith (1 Corinthians 13.) believeth all things, hopeth all things, and beareth all the burdens of the brethren; yet always holding the first commandment, wherein they that offend, do not transgress the law of Christ, that is to say, the law of charity, they do not hurt nor offend their neighbor, but Christ and his kingdom which he hath purchased with his own blood. This kingdom is not maintained by the law of charity, but by the Word of God, by faith and by the Holy Ghost. This commandment then of bearing one another's burdens belongeth not to them which deny Christ, and not only do not acknowledge their sin, but also defend it; neither doth it belong unto those which continue still in their sins (who

also do partly deny Christ), but such must be forsaken, lest we become partakers of their evil works. On the contrary, they which willingly hear the Word of God and believe, and yet notwithstanding against their will do fall into sin, and after they be admonished, do not only receive such admonition gladly, but also detest their sin and endeavor to amend; these, I say, are they which be overtaken with sin, and have the burdens that Paul commandeth us to bear. In this case let us not be rigorous and merciless; but after the example of Christ, who beareth and forbeareth such, let us bear and forbear them also; for if he punish not such (which thing notwithstanding he might justly do), much less ought we so to do.

*For if any man think himself to be somewhat, when indeed he is nothing, he deceiveth himself*

Here again he reprehendeth the authors of sects, and painteth them out an their right colors; to wit, that they be hard-hearted, merciless, and without compassion, such as despise the weak, and will not vouchsafe to bear their burdens, but require all things straitly and precisely (like wayward husbands and severe schoolmasters) whom nothing can please but what they themselves do; who also will be always thy bitter enemies unless thou commend whatsoever they say or do, and in all things frame thyself according to their appetite. Of all men therefore they are the proudest, and dare take upon them all things. And this is it that Paul saith here: they think themselves to be somewhat, that is to say, that they have the Holy Ghost, that they understand all the mysteries of the Scriptures, that they cannot err and fall, and need not the remission of sins, etc.

Wherefore Paul addeth very well, that they are nothing; but that they deceive themselves with the foolish persuasions of their own wisdom and holiness. They understand nothing therefore either of Christ or of the law of Christ; for if they did, they would say: Brother, thou art infected with such a vice, and I am infected with another. God hath forgiven me ten thousand talents, and I will forgive thee an hundred pence, etc. (Matthew 18:23 ff.). But when they will require all things so exactly [and with such perfection,] and will in no wise bear the burdens of the weak, they offend many with this their sharpness and severity, who begin to despise, hate and shun them, and seek not comfort or counsel at their hands, nor regard what or how they teach; whereas contrariwise, pastors ought so to behave themselves towards those over whom they have taken charge, that they might love and reverence them, not for their person, but for their office and Christian virtues which especially ought to shine in them. Paul therefore in this place hath rightly painted out such severe and merciless saints, when he saith: 'They think themselves to be somewhat,' that is to say, being puffed up with their own foolish opinions and vain dreams, they have a marvelous persuasion of their own knowledge and holiness, and yet in very deed they are nothing, and do but deceive themselves. For it is a manifest beguiling when a man persuadeth himself that he is somewhat, when indeed he is nothing. Such men are well described in the third of the Apocalypse in these words: 'Thou sayest: I am rich



and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not how thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,' etc.

*But let every man try his own work, and then he shall have rejoicing in himself only, and not in another*

He goeth forward in rebuking those proud and vainglorious fellows. For the desire of vainglory is an odious and cursed vice; it is the occasion of all evils, and troubleth both commonweals and consciences. And especially in spiritual matters it is such an evil as is incurable. And albeit that this place may be understood of the works of this life or civil conversation, yet principally the Apostle speaketh of the work of the ministry, and inveigheth against those vainglorious heads, which with their fantastical opinions do trouble well-instructed consciences.

And this is the property of those which are infected with this poison of vainglory, that they have no regard whether their works, that is to say, their ministry, be pure, [simple and faithful,] or not; but this only they seek, that they may have the praise of the people. So the false apostles, when they saw that Paul preached the Gospel purely to the Galatians, and that they could not bring any better doctrine, began to find fault at those things which he had godly and faithfully taught, and to prefer their own doctrine before the doctrine of Paul; and by this subtilty they won the favor of the Galatians, and brought Paul into hatred among them. There the proud and vainglorious do join these three vices together: first, they are greedy of glory; secondly, they are marvelous witty and wily in finding fault with other men's doings and sayings, thereby to purchase the [love, the wellliking and] praise of the people; and thirdly, when they have once gotten a name (though it be by other men's travail), they become so stout and full of stomach, that they dare venture upon all things. Therefore they are pernicious and pestilent fellows, whom I hate even with my very heart; for they seek their own, and not that which is of Jesus Christ, etc. (Philippians 2:21).

Against such Paul speaketh here. As if he should say: Such vainglorious spirits do their work, that is to say, they teach the Gospel to this end that they may win praise and estimation among men, that is, that they may be counted excellent doctors, with whom Paul and others might not be compared. And when they have gotten this estimation, then begin they to reprehend the sayings and doings of other men, and highly commend their own: and by this subtilty they bewitch the minds of the people, who, because they have itching ears, are not only delighted with new opinions, but also rejoyce to see those teachers which they had before, to be abased and defaced by these new upstarts and glorious heads, and all because they are come to a fullness and loathing of the Word.

Thus it ought not to be, saith he, but let every man be faithful in his office: let him not seek his own glory, nor depend upon the praise and commendation of the people, but let his only care be to do his work truly, that is, let him teach the Gospel purely. And if his work be sincere and sound, let him assure himself that

he shall lack no praise either before God or among the godly. In the mean space, if he be not commended of the unthankful world, let this nothing move him: for he knoweth that the end of his ministry is, not that he, but that Christ should be glorified thereby. Wherefore, being furnished with the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left (2 Corinthians 6:7), let him say with a constant mind: I began not to teach the Gospel to the end that the world should magnify me, and therefore I will not shrink from that which I have begun, if the world hate, slander, or persecute me. He that is such a one, teacheth the Word and attendeth upon his office faithfully, without any worldly respect, that is, without regard of glory or gain, without the strength, wisdom or authority of any man. He leaneth not to the praise of other men, for he hath it in himself.

Wherefore he that truly and faithfully executeth his office, careth not what the world speak of him; he careth not whether the world praise or dispraise him, but he hath praise in himself, which is the testimony of his conscience and [praise or] glory in God. He may therefore say with Paul:

This is our rejoicing, [this is our praise and glory,] even the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and sincerity before God, and not in fleshly wisdom, but in the grace of God, we have had our conversation in this world (2 Corinthians 1:12). This glory is uncorrupt and steadfast; for it dependeth not on other men's judgments, but of our own conscience, which beareth us witness that we have taught the Word purely, ministered the Sacraments rightly, and have done all things well, and therefore it cannot be defaced or taken from us.

The other glory which the vainglorious [spirits] seek, is uncertain and most perilous, for that they have it not in themselves, but it consisteth in the mouth and opinion of the people. Therefore can they not have the testimony of their own conscience, that they have done all things with simplicity and sincerity for the advancing of the glory of God only and the salvation of souls. For this is it which they seek, that they may be counted famous through the work and labor of their preaching, and be praised of men. They have therefore a glory, a trust and a testimony; but before men, not in themselves nor before God. The godly do not desire glory after this manner. If Paul had had his praise before men, and not in himself, he should have been compelled to despair when he saw many cities, countries, and all Asia fall from him; when he saw so many offenses and slanders, and so many heresies to follow his preaching. Christ when he was alone, that is, when he was not only sought for by the Jews to be put to death, but also was forsaken of his disciples, was yet not alone, but the Father was with him, for he had glory [and rejoicing] in himself (John 16:32).

So at this day, if our trust, our glory and rejoicing did depend upon the judgment and favor of men, we should die with very anguish and sorrow of heart. For so far off is it that the Papists, Sectaries, and the whole world do judge us worthy of any reverence or praise, that they hate and persecute us most bitterly;

yea they would gladly overthrow our ministry and root out our doctrine forever. We have therefore nothing before men but reproach.

But we rejoice and we glory in the Lord; and therefore we do cheerfully and faithfully attend upon our office which he hath given us and which we know is acceptable to him. Thus doing, we care not whether our work do please or displease the devil, whether the world love or hate us. For we, knowing our work to be well done, and having a good conscience before God, go forward by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report, etc. (2 Corinthians 6:8). This, saith Paul, is to have [rejoicing or] glory in thyself. And this admonition is very necessary against that execrable vice of vainglory.

The Gospel is a doctrine which both of itself, and also by the malice of the devil, bringeth with it the cross and persecution. Therefore Paul is wont to call it the Word of the cross and of offense (1 Corinthians 1:18). It hath not always steadfast and constant disciples. Many there be that today make profession thereof and embrace it, which tomorrow, being offended with the cross, will fall from it and deny it. They therefore that teach the Gospel to the end that they may obtain the favor and praise of men, must needs perish, and their glory be turned to shame, when the people cease to reverence and magnify them. Wherefore let all pastors and ministers of the Word learn to have glory [and rejoicing] in themselves, and not in the mouth of other men. If there be any that praise them, as the godly are wont to do ('By evil report and good report,' saith Paul), yet let them receive this glory but as a shadow of true glory; and let them think the substance of glory to be indeed the testimony of their own conscience. He that doth so, proveth his own work, that is, he regardeth not his own glory, but his only care is to do his office faithfully, that is to say, to teach the Gospel purely, and to show the true use of the Sacraments, etc. When he thus proveth his own work, he hath glory and rejoicing in himself, which no man can take from him; for he hath it surely planted and grounded in his own heart, and not in other men's mouths, whom Satan can very easily turn away, and can make that mouth and tongue now full of cursing, which a little before was full of blessing.

Therefore, saith Paul, if ye be desirous of glory, seek it where it should be sought, not in the mouth of other men, but in your own heart; which ye then do, when ye execute your office truly and faithfully. So shall it come to pass, that besides the glory which ye have in yourselves, ye shall have praise and commendation also before men. But if ye glory in other men, and not in yourselves, that shame and confusion which ye have inwardly in yourselves, shall not be without reproach and confusion also outwardly before men. This have we seen in certain fantastical spirits in these our days, which proved not their work, that is, they did not seek only to preach the Gospel purely and simply, but misused it to gain praise among men, contrary to the second commandment. Therefore, after their inward confusion, there followed also an outward confusion and shame among men, according to that saying: 'The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain' (Exodus 20:7); and again: 'They which

despise me, shall be despised' (1 Samuel 2:30). Contrariwise, if we seek first the glory of God by the ministry of the Word, then surely our glory will follow, according to that saying: 'Him that honoureth me, I will glorify.'

To conclude, let every man prove his work; that is, let him do his endeavor that his ministry may be faithful: for this above all things is required in the ministers of the Word (1 Corinthians 4:2). As if he should say: Let every man endeavor purely and faithfully to teach the Word, and let him have an eye to nothing else but the glory of God and the salvation of souls; then shall his work be faithful and sound; then shall he have glory and rejoicing in his own conscience, so that he may boldly say, this my doctrine and ministry pleaseth God. And this is indeed an excellent glory.

This sentence may also be well applied to those works which are done of the faithful in every state of life. As, if a magistrate, an householder, a servant, a schoolmaster, a scholar, etc. abide in his vocation, and do his duty therein faithfully, not troubling himself with those works which pertain not to his vocation, he may glory and rejoice in himself; for he may say: I have done the works of my vocation appointed unto me by God, with such faithfulness and diligence as I was able. Therefore I know that this work, being done in faith and obedience to God, pleaseth God. If other speak evil of it, I pass little thereof. For there be always some which despise and slander the doctrine and life of the godly. But God hath threatened to destroy all lying lips and slanderous tongues. Therefore whilst such men do greedily seek after vainglory, and with lies and slanders go about to deface the godly, it happeneth to them as Paul saith: 'Whose glory is their shame' (Philippians 3:19); and in another place: 'Their foolishness shall be known to all men' (2 Timothy 2:9). By whom?

Even by God the righteous judge, who as he will utter their false accusations and slanders, so will he reveal the righteousness of the godly like the noonday, as it is said, Psalm 37.

This cause, 'in himself' (to touch this also by the way) must so be understood that God be not excluded: that is, that every man may know, in what godly state of life soever he be, that his work is a divine work: for it is the work of his vocation having the commandment of God.

### *For every man shall bear his own burden*

This is, as it were, the reason or confirmation of the former sentence, lest any man should lean to other men's judgments [in praising and commending] of him, As if he said: It is extreme madness for thee to seek glory in another, and not in thyself. For in the agony of death and the last judgment, it shall nothing profit thee that other men have praised thee; for other men shall not bear thy burden, but thou shalt stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and shalt bear thy burden alone. There thy praisers shall nothing help thee. For when we die, these

voices of praise shall cease unto us. And in that day, when the Lord shall judge the secrets of all hearts, the witness of thine own conscience shall stand either with thee or against thee (Romans 2:15). Against thee, if thou have thy glory in other men; with thee, if thou have it in thyself, that is to say, if thy conscience bear thee witness that thou hast fulfilled the ministry of the Word sincerely and faithfully, having respect to the glory of God only and the salvation of souls, or hast otherwise done thy duty according to thy calling. And these words: 'Every man shall bear his own judgment,' are very vehement, and ought so to terrify us, that we should not be desirous of vainglory.

And this moreover is to be noted, that we are not here in the matter of justification, where nothing availeth but mere grace and forgiveness of sins, which is received by faith alone, where all our works also, yea even our best works, and such as are done according to God's calling, have need of forgiveness of sins, because we do them not perfectly. But this is another case. He treateth not here of the remission of sins, but compareth true works and hypocritical works together. These things therefore ought thus to be taken, that although the work or ministry of a godly pastor is not so perfect, but that he hath need of forgiveness of sins, yet in itself it is good and perfect, in comparison of the ministry of the vainglorious man.

So our ministry is good and sound, because we seek thereby the glory of God and the salvation of souls. But the ministry of the fantastical heads is not so, for they seek their own praise. Albeit therefore that no works can quiet the conscience before God; yet is it necessary that we should persuade ourselves that we have done our work uprightly, truly and according to God's calling, that is, that we have not corrupted the Word of God, but have taught it purely [and faithfully]. This testimony of conscience we have need of, that we have done our duty uprightly in our function and calling, and led our life accordingly. So far ought we then to glory as touching our works, as we know them to be commanded of God, and that they please him. For everyone in the last judgment shall bear his own burden, and therefore other men's praises shall there nothing help or profit him.

Hitherto he hath spoken against that most pestilent vice of vainglory; for the suppressing whereof, no man is so strong, but that he hath need of continual prayer. For what man, almost even among the godly, is not delighted with his own praises? Only the Holy Ghost can preserve us that we be not infected with this vice.

*Let him that is taught in the word, make him that teacheth him partaker of all his goods*

Here he preacheth to the disciples or hearers of the Word, commanding them to bestow all good things upon those which have taught and instructed them in the Word. I have sometimes marveled why the Apostles commanded the churches

so diligently to nourish their teachers. For in popery I saw that all men gave abundantly to the building and maintaining of goodly temples, to the increasing of the revenues and livings of those which were appointed to their service. Hereof it came that the estimation and riches of the bishops and the rest of the clergy did so increase, that everywhere they had in possession the best and most fruitful grounds.

Therefore thought I that Paul had commanded this in vain, seeing that all manner of good things were not only abundantly given to the clergy, but also they overflowed in wealth and riches. Wherefore I thought that men ought rather to be exhorted to withhold their hands from giving, than encouraged to give any more. For I saw that by this excessive liberality of men, the covetousness of the clergy did increase. But now I know the cause why they had such abundance of good things heretofore, and now the pastors and ministers of the Word do want.

Beforetime, when nothing else was taught but errors and wicked doctrine, they had such plenty of all things, that of Peter's patrimony (which denied that he had either silver or gold) and of spiritual goods (as they called them) the Pope was become an emperor, the cardinals and bishops were made kings and princes of the world. But now, since the Gospel hath been preached and published, the professors thereof be as rich as sometime Christ and his Apostles were. We find then by experience, how well this commandment of nourishing and maintaining the pastors and ministers of God's Word is observed, which Paul here and in other places so diligently repeateth and beateth into the heads of his hearers. There is now no city which is known to us, that nourisheth and maintaineth her pastors and preachers: but they are all entertained with those goods which were given, not unto Christ, to whom no man giveth anything (for when he was born he was laid in a manger instead of a bed, because there was no room for him in the inn; afterwards, being conversant among men, he had not whereon to lay his head; and briefly, being spoiled of his garments and hanging naked upon the Cross between two thieves, he died most miserably), but to the Pope, for the maintenance of his abominations, and because he oppressing the Gospel, taught the doctrines and traditions of men and set up idolatry.

And as oft as I read the exhortations of Paul, whereby he persuadeth the churches, either that they should nourish their pastors, or should give somewhat to the relief of the poor saints in Jewry, I do greatly marvel, and am ashamed that so great an Apostle should be constrained to use so many words for the obtaining of this benefit of the congregations. Writing to the Corinthians, he treateth of this matter in two whole chapters (Corinthians 8 and 2 Corinthians 9.). I would be loth to defame Wittenberg, which indeed is nothing to Corinth, as he defamed the Corinthians in begging so carefully for the relief and succor of the poor.

But this is the lot of the Gospel when it is preached, that not only is no man willing to give anything for the finding of ministers and maintaining of scholars,

but men begin to spoil, to rob, and to steal, and with diverse crafty means one to beguile another. To be brief, men seem suddenly to grow out of kind, and to be transformed into cruel beasts. Contrariwise, when the doctrine of devils was preached, then men were prodigal, and offered all things willingly to those that deceived them. The prophets do reprove the same sin in the Jews, which were loth to give anything to the godly priests and Levites, but gave all things plentifully to the wicked.

Now therefore we begin to understand how necessary this commandment of Paul is as touching the maintenance of the ministers of the Church. For Satan can abide nothing less than the light of the Gospel. Therefore when he seeth that it beginneth to shine, then doth he rage, and goeth about with all main and might to quench it. And this he attempteth two manner of ways: first, by lying spirits and force of tyrants; and then by poverty and famine. But because he could not hitherto oppress the Gospel in this country (praised be God) by heretics and tyrants; therefore he attempteth to bring it to pass the other way, that is, by withdrawing the livings of the ministers of the Word, to the end that they, being oppressed with poverty and necessity, should forsake their ministry, and so the miserable people being destitute of the Word of God, should become in time as savage as wild beasts. And Satan helpeth forward this horrible enormity by ungodly magistrates in the cities, and also by noblemen [and gentlemen] in the country, who take away the Church goods, whereby the ministers of the Gospel should live, and turn them to wicked uses. 'These goods', saith the prophet Micah (chapter 1:7), 'were gathered of the hire of an harlot, and therefore to an harlot's hire shall they return.'

Moreover, Satan turneth men particularly also from the Gospel by overmuch fullness. For when the Gospel is diligently and daily preached, many being glutted therewith begin to loathe it, and by little and little become negligent and untoward to all godly exercises. Again, there is no man that will now bring up his children in good learning and much less in the study of the holy Scripture, but they employ them wholly to gainful arts or occupations. All these are Satan's practices, to no other end but that he may oppress the Gospel in this our country without any violence of tyrants, or subtle devices of heretics.

It is not without cause therefore that Paul warneth the hearers of the Gospel to make their pastors and teachers partakers with them in all good things. 'If we (saith he to the Corinthians) have sown to you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we reap your worldly things?' (Corinthians 9:11). The hearers therefore ought to minister carnal things to them of whom they have received spiritual things. But both husbandmen, citizens and gentlemen do at this day abuse our doctrine, that under the color thereof they may enrich themselves. Heretofore, when the Pope reigned, there was no man which paid not somewhat yearly to the priests for anniversaries (as they called them) and for masses, diriges, trentals and such trash. The begging friars had also their part. The merchandises of Rome likewise and daily offerings carried away somewhat. From these and from an infinite

number of such exactions, our countrymen are now delivered by the Gospel. But so far off is it that they are thankful unto God for this liberty, that of prodigal givers they are now become stark thieves and robbers, and will not bestow one farthing upon the Gospel or the ministers thereof, nor give anything for the relief and succor of the poor saints; which is a certain token that they have lost both the Word and faith, and that they have no spiritual goodness in them. For it is impossible that such as are godly indeed, should suffer their pastors to live in necessity and penury. But forasmuch as they laugh and rejoice when their pastors suffer any adversity, and withhold their living or give it not with such faithfulness as they ought, it is a plain token that they are worse than the heathen.

But they will feel ere it be long what calamities will follow this unthankfulness. For they shall lose both temporal and spiritual things. For this sin must needs be grievously punished. And certainly I think that the churches in Galatia, Corinth and other places, were so troubled by the false apostles for no other cause, but for that they little regarded their true pastors and preachers. For it is good reason that he which refuseth to give a penny to God, who offereth unto him all good things and life everlasting, should give a piece of gold to the devil, the author of all evils and death everlasting. Whoso will not serve God in a little, and that to his own inestimable benefit, let him serve the devil in much to his extreme and utter confusion. Now therefore since the light of the Gospel beginneth to shine, we see what the devil is and what the world is.

In that he saith, 'in all his goods,' it is not so to be taken that all men are bound to give all that they have to their ministers, but that they should maintain them liberally, and give them that whereby they may be well able to live.

### *Be not deceived, for God is not mocked*

The Apostle prosecuteth this place of the nourishing and maintaining of ministers so earnestly, that to his former reprehension and exhortation he addeth now also a threatening, saying: 'God is not mocked.' And here he toucheth to the quick the perverseness of our countrymen which proudly despise our ministry. For they think it to be but a sport and a game; and therefore they go about (especially the gentlemen) to make their pastors subject unto them like servants and slaves. And if we had not so godly a prince, and one that so loveth the truth, they had ere this time driven us out of the country. When the pastors ask their duty, or complain that they suffer penury, they cry out: The priests be covetous, they would have plenty; no man is able to satisfy their unsatiable covetousness: if they were true gospellers, they should have nothing of their own, but as poor men, ought to follow poor Christ, and to suffer all adversities, etc.

Paul horribly threateneth here such tyrants, and such mockers of God, who so carelessly and proudly do scorn the miserable preachers, and yet will seem to be gospellers, and not to be mockers of God, but to worship him very devoutly.



'Be not deceived,' saith he, 'God is not mocked,' that is to say, he doth not suffer himself to be mocked in his ministers. For he saith: 'He that despiseth you, despiseth me' (Luke 10:16). Also he saith unto Samuel: 'They have not cast thee away, but me' (1 Samuel 8:7).

Therefore, O ye mockers, although God defer his punishment for a season, yet when he seeth time he will find you out, and will punish this contempt of his Word and bitter hatred which ye bear against his ministers. Therefore ye deceive not God but yourselves, and ye shall not laugh at God, but he will laugh at you (Psalm 2). But our proud gentlemen, citizens, and common people are nothing at all moved with these dreadful threatenings. Nevertheless they shall feel when death approacheth, whether they have mocked themselves or us; nay rather not us, but God himself, as Paul saith here. In the meantime, because they proudly despise our admonitions with an intolerable pride, we speak these things to our comfort, to the end we may know that it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong: for patience is ever innocent and harmless. Moreover, God will not suffer his ministers to starve for hunger, but even when the rich men suffer scarcity and hunger, he will feed them, and in the days of famine they shall have enough.

*For whatsoever a man soweth, that he shall reap*

All these things tend to this purpose, that ministers should be nourished and maintained. For my part, I do not gladly interpret such sentences: for they seem to commend us, and so they do indeed. Moreover, if a man stand much in repeating such things to his hearers, it hath some show of covetousness. Notwithstanding, men must be admonished hereof, that they may know that they ought to yield unto their pastors both reverence and a necessary living. Our Savior Christ teacheth the same thing in the tenth of Luke: 'Eating and drinking such things as they have, for the laborer is worthy of his reward.' And Paul saith in another place: 'Do ye not know that they which sacrifice in the temple, live of the sacrifices; and that they which serve at the altar, are partakers of the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel' (1 Corinthians 9:13 f.).

It is good that we also which are in the ministry, should know these things, lest for our labor we might with evil conscience receive the stipend which is given unto us of the Pope's goods. And although such goods were heaped together by mere fraud and deceit; yet notwithstanding, God spoiling the Egyptians (that is to say, the Papists) of their goods, turneth them here amongst us, to a good and holy use; not when noblemen [and gentlemen] spoil them and abuse them, but when they which set forth God's glory, and bring up youth virtuously are maintained therewith. For it is impossible for one man both to labor day and night to get a living, and at the same time to give himself to the study of sacred learning as the preaching office requireth. Let us know then that we may with good conscience (since God hath ordained and commanded that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel) use those things that are given us

of the Church goods for the necessary sustentation of our life, to the end we may attend upon our office the better. Let no man therefore make any scruple hereof, as though it were not lawful for him to use such goods.

*For he that soweth in the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth in the spirit, shall of the spirit reap everlasting life*

He addeth a similitude and an allegory. And this general sentence of sowing he applieth to the particular matter of nourishing and maintaining the ministers of the Word, saying: 'He that soweth in the Spirit,' that is to say, he that cherisheth the teachers of God's Word, doth a spiritual work, and 'shall reap everlasting life.' Here riseth a question, whether we deserve eternal life by good works? For so Paul seemeth to avouch in this place. As touching such sentences which speak of works and the reward of them, we have treated very largely before in the fifth chapter. And very necessary it is, after the example of Paul, to exhort the faithful to good works, that is to say, to exercise their faith by good works. For if works follow not faith, it is a manifest token that their faith is no true faith. Therefore the Apostle saith: 'He that soweth in the flesh' (some understand it 'in his own flesh'), that is to say, he that giveth nothing to the ministers of God's Word, but only feedeth and careth for himself (which is the counsel of the flesh), that man shall of the flesh reap corruption, not only in the life to come, but also in this present life. For the goods of the wicked shall waste away, and they themselves also at length shall shamefully perish. The Apostle would fain stir up his hearers to be liberal and beneficial towards their pastors and preachers. But what a misery is it, that the perverseness and ingratitude of men should be so great, that the churches should need this admonition?

The Encratites abused this place, for the confirmation of their wicked opinion against marriage, expounding it after this manner: 'He that soweth in the flesh, shall reap corruption,' that is to say, he that marrieth a wife, shall be damned; ergo, a wife is a damnable thing, and marriage is evil, forasmuch as there is in it a sowing in the flesh. These beasts were so destitute of all judgment, that they perceived not whereabouts the Apostle went. I speak this to the end ye may see how easily the devil, by his ministers, can turn away the hearts of the simple from the truth. Germany shall shortly have an infinite number of such [devil's ministers], yea and already hath very many: for on the one side it persecuteth and killeth the godly ministers and on the other side it neglecteth and despiseth them, and suffereth them to live in great penury. Let us arm ourselves against these and suchlike errors, and let us learn to know the true meaning of the Scriptures. For Paul speaketh not here of matrimony, but of nourishing the ministers of the Church, which every man that is endued but with the common judgment of reason, may perceive. And although this nourishment is but a corporal thing, yet notwithstanding he calleth it a sowing in the Spirit. Contrariwise, when men greedily scrape together what they can, and seek only their own gain, he calleth it a sowing in the flesh.

He pronounceth those which sow in the Spirit, to be blessed both in this life and the life to come; and the other which sow in the flesh, to be both accursed in this life and in the life to come.

*And let us not be weary in doing good, for in due time we shall reap without weariness*

The Apostle, intending to close up his Epistle, passeth from the particular to the general, and exhorteth generally to all good works. As if he should say: Let us be liberal and bountiful not only towards the ministers of the Word, but also towards all other men, and that without weariness. For it is an easy matter for a man to do good once or twice; but to continue, and not to be discouraged through the ingratitude and perverseness of those to whom he hath done good, that is very hard. Therefore he doth not only exhort us to do good, but also not to be weary in doing good. And to persuade us the more easily thereunto, he addeth: 'For in due time we shall reap without weariness.' As if he said: Wait and look for the perpetual harvest that is to come and then shall no ingratitude or perverse dealing of men be able to pluck you away from well-doing: for in the harvest-time ye shall receive most plentiful increase and fruit of your seed. Thus with most sweet words he exhorteth the faithful to the doing of good works.

*Therefore while we have time, let us do good unto all men, but specially to those that be of the household of faith*

This is the knitting-up of his exhortation for the liberal maintaining and nourishing of the ministers of the churches, and giving of alms to all such as have need. As if he had said: Let us do good while it is day; for when night cometh, we can no longer work (John 9:4). Indeed men work many things when the light of truth is taken away, but all in vain; for they walk in darkness, and wot not whither they go, and therefore all their life, works, sufferings and death are in vain. And by these words he toucheth the Galatians. As if he should say: Except ye continue in the sound doctrine which ye have received of me, your working of much good, your suffering of many troubles, and such other things profit you nothing; as he said before in the third chapter: 'Have ye suffered so many things in vain?' And by a new kind of speech he termeth those the household of faith, which are joined with us in the fellowship of faith, among whom the ministers of the Word are the chiefest, and then all the rest of the faithful.

*Behold what a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand*

He closeth up his Epistle with an exhortation to the faithful, and with a sharp rebuke or invective against the false apostles. Before, he cursed the false apostles. Now, as it were repeating the same thing again, but with other words, he accuseth them very sharply to the end he may fear and turn away the Galatians from their doctrine, notwithstanding the great authority which they seemed to have. The teachers which ye have (saith he) are such as first regard

not the glory of Christ and the salvation of your souls, but only seek their own glory. Secondly, they fly the Cross. Thirdly, they understand not those things which they teach, much less do they perform them.

These false teachers, being accused of the Apostle for three such execrable enormities, were worthy to be avoided of all men. But yet all the Galatians obeyed not this warning of Paul. And Paul doth the false apostles no wrong when he so vehemently inveigheth against them; but he justly condemneth them by his apostolic authority. In like manner, when we call the Pope Antichrist, the bishops and the frantic heads a cursed generation, we slander them not, but by God's authority we judge them to be accursed, according to that which is said in the first chapter: 'If we, or an angel from heaven, preach otherwise than we have preached unto you, accursed be he,' for they [hate,] persecute and overthrow the doctrine of Christ. 'Behold,' saith he, 'what a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.' This he saith to move them, and to show his motherly affection towards them. As if he should say: I never wrote so long an epistle with mine own hand to any other church as I have done unto you. For as for his other epistles, as he spake, others wrote them, and afterwards he subscribed his salutation and name with his own hand, as it is to be seen in the end of his epistles. And in these words (as I suppose) he hath respect to the length of the epistle. Other some take it otherwise.

*As many as desire to please in the flesh, compel you to be circumcised, only because they would not suffer the persecution of the cross of Christ*

He useth a significant word: *eujproswph-sai* 'to make a fair shew.' Their chief virtue (saith he) lieth in this, that they fawn upon the dignitaries and prelates; and to the end they may win their favor and lose nothing of their own glory, they compel you to be circumcised. For the rulers of the Jews do obstinately resist the Gospel and defend Moses; and the false apostles study to serve their humor in outward life and conversation, that they may please them. To this end, therefore, they teach circumcision as necessary to salvation, that they may remain in favor with them and avoid the persecution of the Cross. Such at this day are certain cunning flatterers of the Pope, of the bishops and princes, which cry out against us and wickedly defame our writings, not for love of defending the truth, but that they may please their idols, the Pope, the bishops, the kings and princes of this world, and may not suffer the persecution of the Cross of Christ. But if they might obtain through the Gospel those carnal commodities which they have of the ungodly bishops and princes; or if the profession of the Gospel brought with it the riches, pleasures, peace and security of the flesh; then would they forthwith join themselves unto us.

Your teachers (saith Paul) are vain heads, and not regarding the glory of Christ and your salvation, they seek only their own glory. Again, because they

are afraid of the Cross, they preach circumcision and the righteousness of the flesh, lest they should provoke the Jews to hate and persecute them.

Wherefore, although ye hear them never so gladly and never so long, yet shall ye hear but such as make their belly their God, seek their own glory, and shun the Cross. And here is to be noted a certain vehemency in the word 'compel'. For circumcision is nothing of itself: but to be compelled to circumcision, and when a man hath received it, to put righteousness and satisfaction therein; and if it be not received, to make it a sin; that is an injury unto Christ. Of this matter I have spoken largely enough heretofore.

*For they themselves that are circumcised, do not keep the law; but they would have you circumcised, that they might glory in your flesh*

Is not Paul here worthy to be called an heretic? For he saith, that not only the false apostles, but all the nation of the Jews which were circumcised, keep not the law, yea rather that they which were circumcised, in fulfilling the law fulfill it not. This is against Moses, who saith that to be circumcised is to keep the law; and not to be circumcised is to make God's covenant void (Genesis 17:14). And the Jews were circumcised for none other cause but to keep the law, which commanded that every male child should be circumcised the eighth day, etc. Hereof we have before entreated at large, and therefore we need not now to repeat the same again. Now these things serve to the condemning of the false apostles, that the Galatians may be feared from hearing of them. As if he should say: Behold, I set before your eyes what manner of teachers you have. First, they are vainglorious men, which seek nothing but their own profit, and care for nothing but their own belly; secondly, they fly the Cross; and finally, they teach no truth or certainty but all their sayings and doings are counterfeit [and full of hypocrisy]. Wherefore, although they keep the law outwardly in their actions; yet in keeping it, they keep it not. For without the Holy Ghost the law cannot be kept. But the Holy Ghost cannot be received without Christ; and where the Holy Ghost dwelleth not, there dwelleth an unclean spirit, that is to say, despising God, and seeking his own [gain and] glory.

Therefore all that he doth as touching the law, is mere hypocrisy and double sin. For an unclean heart doth not fulfill the law, but only maketh an outward show thereof, and so is it more confirmed in his wickedness and hypocrisy.

And this sentence is diligently to be marked, that they which are circumcised keep not the law, that is to say, that they which are circumcised are not circumcised, etc. It may also be applied unto other works. He that worketh, prayeth, or suffereth without Christ, worketh, prayeth and suffereth in vain; for all that is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23). It profiteth a man therefore nothing at all to be outwardly circumcised, to fast, to pray, or to do any other work, if he be within a despiser of grace, of forgiveness of sins, of faith, of Christ, etc., and be puffed up with the opinion and presumption of his own righteousness, which are

horrible sins against the First Table: and afterward there follow also other sins against the Second Table, as disobedience, carnal lust, furiousness, wrath, hatred, and such other. Therefore he saith very well, that they which be circumcised, keep not the law, but only pretend that they keep it. But this counterfeiting [or hypocrisy] is double iniquity before God.

What mean the false apostles when they would have you to be circumcised? Not that ye might become righteous although they so bear you in hand, but that they may glory in your flesh. Now, who would not detest this most pestilent vice of ambition and desire of glory, which is sought with so great peril of men's souls? They are (saith he) deceitful, shameless and vain spirits, which serve their own belly and hate the Cross.

Again (which is worst of all) they compel you to be circumcised according to the law, that they may thereby abuse your flesh to their own glory, and in so doing they bring your souls into danger of everlasting destruction.

For what gain ye else before God but damnation? And what else before men, but that the false apostles may glory that they are your teachers, and ye their disciples? And yet they teach you that which they themselves do not. Thus doth he sharply reprove the false apostles.

These words, 'That they may glory in your flesh,' are very effectual. As if he should say: They have not the word of the Spirit; therefore it is impossible for you to receive the Spirit by their preaching. They do but only exercise your flesh, making you fleshly justiciaries [or justifiers of yourselves]. Outwardly they observe days, times, sacrifices, and such other things according to the law, which are altogether carnal, whereby ye reap nothing else but unprofitable labor and damnation. And on the other side, this they gain thereby, that they boast that they are your teachers, and have called you back from the doctrine of Paul the heretic, unto your mother the Synagogue. So at this day the Papists brag, that they call back those to the bosom of [their mother] the Church, whom they deceive and seduce.

Contrariwise, we glory not in your flesh, but glory as touching your spirit, because ye have received the Spirit by our preaching (Galatians 3:2).

But God forbid that I should glory but in the cross of our lord Jesus Christ

The Apostle closeth up the matter with an indignation, and with great vehemence of spirit he casteth out these words: 'But God forbid,' etc. As if he should say: This carnal glory and ambition of the false apostles is so dangerous a poison, that I wish it were buried in hell, for it is the cause of the destruction of many. But let them glory in the flesh that list, and let them perish with their cursed glory. As for me, I desire no other glory, but that whereby I glory and rejoice in the Cross of Christ. After the same manner speaketh he also in Romans 5: 'We glory in our

afflictions;' also in 2 Corinthians 12: 'I will glory in mine infirmities.' Here Paul showeth what is the glory and rejoicing of the Christians, namely, to glory and to be proud in tribulation, reproaches, infirmities, etc.

The world not only judgeth of the Christians that they are wretched and miserable men, but also most cruelly, and yet, as it thinketh, with a true zeal hateth, persecuteth, condemneth and killeth them as most pernicious plagues of the spiritual and worldly kingdom, that is to say, like heretics and rebels. But because they do not suffer these things for murder, theft, and such other wickedness, but for the love of Christ, whose benefit and glory they set forth, therefore they glory in tribulation and in the Cross of Christ, and are glad with the Apostles that they are counted worthy to suffer rebuke for the name of Christ (Acts 5:41). So must we glory at this day, when the Pope and the whole world most cruelly persecute us, condemn us, and kill us, because we suffer these things, nor for our evil deeds, as thieves, murderers, etc., but for Christ's sake, our Lord and Savior, whose Gospel we truly preach.

Now our glorying is increased and confirmed principally by these two things: first, because we are certain that our doctrine is sound and perfect: secondly, because our cross and suffering is the suffering of Christ.

Therefore when the world persecuteth and killeth us, we have no cause to complain or lament, but we ought rather to rejoice and be glad. Indeed the world judgeth us to be unhappy and accursed; but on the other side, Christ, who is greater than the world, and for whom we suffer, pronounceth us to be blessed, and willeth us to rejoice. 'Blessed are ye (saith he), when men revile you and persecute you, and falsely say all manner of evil against you for my sake. Rejoice and be glad' (Matthew 5:11 f.). Our glorying then is another manner of glorying than the glorying of the world is, which rejoiceth not in tribulation, reproach, persecution, and death, etc. but glorieth altogether in power, in riches, peace, honor, wisdom, and his own righteousness. But mourning and confusion is the end of this glory.

Moreover, the Cross of Christ doth not signify that piece of wood which Christ did bear upon his shoulders, and to the which he was afterwards nailed, but generally it signifieth all the afflictions of the faithful, whose sufferings are Christ's sufferings, 2 Corinthians 1:5: 'The sufferings of Christ abound in us;' again: 'Now rejoice I in my sufferings for you, and fulfill the rest of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the Church,' etc. (Colossians 1:24). The Cross of Christ therefore generally signifieth all the afflictions of the Church which it suffereth for Christ; which he himself witnesseth when he saith: 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' (Acts 9:4). Saul did no violence to Christ, but to his Church. But he that toucheth it, toucheth the apple of his eye.

There is a more lively feeling in the head than in the other members of the body. And this we know by experience; for the little toe or the least part of a

man's body being hurt, the head forthwith showeth itself, by the countenance, to feel the grief thereof. So Christ our head maketh all our afflictions his own, and suffereth also when we suffer, which are his body.

It is profitable for us to know these things, lest we should be swallowed up with sorrow or fall to despair, when we see that our adversaries do cruelly persecute, excommunicate and kill us. But let us think with ourselves, after the example of Paul, that we must glory in the cross which we bear, not for our sins, but for Christs sake. If we consider only in ourselves the sufferings which we endure, they are not only grievous but intolerable; but when we may say: Thy sufferings (O Christ) abound in us; or, as it is said in Psalm 44: 'For thy sake we are killed all the day,' then these sufferings are not only easy, but also sweet, according to this saying: 'My burden is easy, and my yoke is sweet' (Matthew 11:30).

Now, it is well known that we at this day do suffer the hatred and persecution of our adversaries for none other cause, but for that we preach Christ faithfully and purely. If we would deny him, and approve their pernicious errors and wicked religion, they would not only cease to hate and persecute us, but would also offer unto us honor, riches, and many goodly things. Because therefore we suffer these things for Christ's sake, we may truly rejoice and glory with Paul in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is to say, not in riches, in power, in the favor of men, etc., but in afflictions, weakness, sorrow, fightings in the body, terrors in the spirit, persecutions, and all other evils. Wherefore we trust it will shortly come to pass, that Christ will say the same to us that David said to Abiathar the priest: 'I am the cause of all your deaths' (1 Samuel 22:22). Again: 'He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye' (Zechariah 2:8). As if he had said: He that hurteth you, hurteth me; for if ye did not preach my Word and confess me, ye should not suffer these things. So saith he also in John: 'If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you' (John 15:19). But these things are treated of before.

### *By whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world*

This is Paul's manner of speaking: 'The world is crucified to me,' that is, I judge the world to be damned; 'and I am crucified to the world,' that is, the world again judgeth me to be damned. Thus we crucify and condemn one another. I abhor all the doctrine, righteousness and works of the world, as the poison of the devil. The world again detesteth my doctrine and deeds, and judgeth me to be seditious, a pernicious, a pestilent fellow, and an heretic. So at this day the world is crucified to us, and we unto the world. We curse and condemn all man's traditions concerning mass, orders, vows, will-worshippings, works, and all the abominations of the Pope and [other] heretics, as the dirt of the devil. They again do persecute and kill us as destroyers of religion and troublers of the public peace.



The monks dreamed that the world was crucified to them, when they entered into their monasteries: but by this means Christ is crucified and not the world, yea the world is delivered from crucifying, and is the more quickened by that opinion of holiness and trust in their own righteousness which they had who entered into religion. Most foolishly and wickedly therefore was this sentence of the Apostle wrested to the entering into monasteries. He speaketh here of an high matter and of great importance, that is to say, that every faithful man judgeth that to be the wisdom, righteousness, and power of God, which the world condemneth as the greatest folly, wickedness and weakness. And contrariwise, that which the world judgeth to be the highest religion and service of God, the faithful do know to be nothing else but execrable and horrible blasphemy against God. So the godly condemn the world, and again the world condemneth the godly. But the godly have the right judgment on their side: for the spiritual man judgeth all things (1 Corinthians 2:15).

Wherefore the judgment of the world, touching religion and righteousness before God, is as contrary to the judgment of the godly as God and the devil are contrary the one to the other. For as God is crucified to the devil and the devil to God, that is to say, as God condemneth the doctrine and works of the devil (for the Son of God appeared, as John saith, to destroy the works of the devil, 1 John 3:8), and contrariwise, as the devil condemneth and overthroweth the word and the works of God (for he is a murderer, and the father of lies, John 8:44): so the world condemneth the doctrine and life of the godly, calling them most pernicious heretics and troublers of the public peace. And again, the godly call the world the son of the devil, which rightly followeth his father's steps, that is to say, which is as great a murderer and liar as his father is. This is Paul's meaning when he saith, 'Whereby the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.' Now the world doth not only signify in the Scriptures ungodly and wicked men, but the very best, the wisest and holiest men that are of the world.

And here by the way, he covertly toucheth the false apostles. As if he should say: I utterly hate and detest all glory which is without the Cross of Christ, as a cursed thing; yea I count it as dead, and as having died such a horrible death as one dieth that is hanged on a cross. For the world, with all the glory thereof, is crucified to me, and I to the world. Wherefore accursed be all they which glory in your flesh, and not in the Cross of Christ. Paul therefore witnesseth by these words, that he hateth the world with a perfect hatred of the Holy Ghost; and again, the world hateth him with a perfect hatred of a wicked spirit. As if he should say: It is impossible that there should be any agreement between me and the world. What shall I then do? Shall I give place and teach those things which please the world?

No: but with a stout courage I will set myself against it, and will as well despise and crucify it, as it despiseth and crucifieth me.

To conclude, Paul here teacheth how we should fight against Satan (which not only tormenteth our bodies with sundry afflictions, but also woundeth our hearts continually with his fiery darts, that, by this continuance, when he can no otherwise prevail, he may overthrow our faith and bring us from the truth and from Christ), namely, that like as we see Paul himself to have stoutly despised the world, so we also should despise the devil the prince thereof, with all his forces, deceits, and hellish furies, and so trusting to the aid and help of Christ, should triumph against him after this manner: O Satan, the more thou hurtest and goest about to hurt me, the more proud and stout I am against thee, and laugh thee to scorn. The more thou terrifiest me, and seekest to bring me to desperation, so much the more confidence and boldness I take, and glory in the midst of thy furies and malice: not by mine own power, but by the power of Christ my Lord, whose strength is made perfect in my weakness. Therefore, when I am weak, then I am strong, etc. (2 Corinthians 12:9 f.). On the contrary, when he seeth his threatenings and terrors to be feared, he rejoiceth, and then he terrifieth more and more such as are terrified already.

*For in Christ Jesu neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature*

This is a wonderful kind of speech which Paul here useth, when he saith: 'Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything.' It may seem that he should rather have said: Either circumcision or uncircumcision availeth somewhat, seeing these are two contrary things. But now he denieth that either the one or the other do anything avail. As if he should have said: We must mount up higher; for circumcision and uncircumcision are things of no such importance, that they are able to obtain righteousness before God. True it is, that they are contrary the one to the other: but this is nothing as touching Christian righteousness, which is not earthly, but heavenly, and therefore it consisteth not in corporal things. Therefore, whether thou be circumcised or uncircumcised, it is all one thing: for in Christ Jesu neither the one nor the other availeth anything at all.

The Jews were greatly offended when they heard that circumcision availed nothing. They easily granted that uncircumcision availed nothing; but they could not abide to hear that so much should be said of the law and circumcision, for they fought even unto blood for the defense of the law and circumcision. The Papists also at this day do vehemently contend for the maintenance of their traditions as touching the eating of flesh, single life, holy days, and such other; and they excommunicate and curse us, which teach that in Christ Jesu these things do nothing avail. And certain of our own people, being no less blind than the Papists, do think liberty from the Pope's traditions to be a thing so necessary, that unless they by and by break and abolish them all, they are afraid that they sin. But Paul saith, that we must have another thing which is much more excellent and precious than circumcision or uncircumcision, than the observation or violation of the Pope's traditions, whereby we may obtain righteousness before God. In Christ Jesu, saith he, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, neither

single life nor marriage, neither meat nor fasting do any whit avail. Meat maketh us not acceptable before God. We are neither the better by abstaining, nor the worse by eating. All these things, yea the whole world with all the laws and righteousness thereof avail nothing to justification; yea they are not worthy to be named in disputing of so high a matter.

Reason and the wisdom of the flesh doth not understand this; 'for it perceiveth not those things that are of the Spirit of God' (1 Corinthians 2:14). Therefore it will needs have righteousness to stand in outward things. But we are taught out of the Word of God, that there is nothing under the sun which availeth unto righteousness before God, but Christ only, or as Paul saith here, 'a new creature.' Politic laws, men's traditions, ceremonies of the Church, yea and the law of Moses, are such things as are without Christ; therefore they avail not unto righteousness before God. We may use them as things both good and necessary, but in their place and time. But if we talk of the matter of justification, they avail nothing, but hurt very much. 'For in Christ Jesu, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything' etc.

And by these two things, circumcision and uncircumcision, Paul rejecteth all other things whatsoever, and denieth that they avail anything in Christ Jesu, that is, in the cause of faith and salvation. For he taketh here a part for the whole, that is, by uncircumcision he understandeth all the Gentiles, by circumcision all the Jews, with all their force and all their glory. As if he said: Whatsoever the Gentiles can do with all their wisdom, righteousness, laws, power, kingdoms, empires, it availeth nothing in Christ Jesus. Also, whatsoever the Jews are able to do with their Moses, their law, their circumcision, their worshippings, their temple, their kingdom and priesthood, it nothing availeth. Wherefore in Christ Jesu, or in the matter of justification, we must not dispute of the laws, either of the Gentiles or of the Jews, either ceremonial or moral, but we must simply pronounce that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything.

Are the laws then evil? Not so. They be good and profitable, albeit in their place and time, that is, in corporal and civil things, which without laws cannot be guided. Moreover we use also in the churches certain ceremonies and laws; not that the keeping of them availeth unto righteousness, but for good order, example, quietness, and concord, according to that saying: 'Let all things be done comely and orderly' (Corinthians 14:40). But if laws be so set forth and urged, as though the keeping of them did justify a man, or the breaking thereof did condemn him, they ought to be taken away and abolished; for then Christ loseth his office and his glory, who only justifieth us, and giveth unto us the Holy Ghost, etc. The Apostle therefore by these words plainly affirmeth, that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything, but the new creature, etc. Now, since that in Christ neither the laws of the Gentiles nor of the Jews avail anything, the Pope hath done most wickedly, in that he hath constrained men to keep his laws with the opinion of righteousness.

Now, a new creature, whereby the image of God is renewed, is not made by any color or counterfeiting of good works (for in Christ Jesu neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision), but it is created by Christ after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness. When works are done, they bring indeed a new show and outward appearance wherewith the world and the flesh are delighted, but not a new creature: for the heart remaineth wicked as it was before, full of the contempt of God, infidelity, etc. Therefore a new creature is the work of the Holy Ghost, which cleanseth our heart by faith, and worketh the fear of God, love, chastity, and other [Christian virtues], and giveth power to bridle the flesh and to reject the righteousness and wisdom of the world. Here is no coloring or new outward show, but a thing done indeed. Here is created another sense and another judgment, that is to say, altogether spiritual, which abhorreth those things that before it greatly esteemed. The monkish life and order did so bewitch us in time past, that we thought there was no other way to salvation. But now we judge of it far otherwise. We are now ashamed of those things which we adored as most heavenly and holy, before we were regenerated into this new creature.

Wherefore the changing of garments and other outward things, is not a new creature (as the monks dream), but it is the renewing of the mind by the Holy Ghost; after the which followeth a change of the members and senses of the whole body. For when the heart hath conceived a new light, a new judgment and new motions through the Gospel, it cometh to pass that the outward senses are also renewed. For the ears desire to hear the Word of God, and not the traditions and dreams of men; the mouth and tongue do not vaunt of their own works, righteousness and rules, but they set forth with joy the only mercy of God offered to us in Christ. These changes consist not in words, but are effectual, and bring a new spirit, a new will, new senses, and new operations of the flesh, so that the eyes, ears, mouth, and tongue do not only see, hear and speak otherwise than they did before, but the mind also approveth, [loveth] and followeth another thing than it did before. For before, being blinded with popish errors and darkness, it imagined God to be a merchant, who would sell unto us his grace for our works and merits. But now, in the light of the Gospel, it assureth us that we are counted righteous by faith only in Christ. Therefore it now rejecteth all will-works, and accomplisheth the works of charity and of our vocation commanded by God. It praiseth and magnifieth God it rejoiceth and glorieth in the only trust and confidence of God's mercy through Jesus Christ. If it must suffer any trouble or affliction, it endureth the same cheerfully and gladly, although the flesh repine and grudge thereat. This Paul calleth a new creature.

*And to as many as walk according to this rule, peace be upon them and mercy*

This he addeth as a conclusion. This is the only and true rule wherein we ought to walk, namely, the new creature. The Franciscans wickedly wrest and apply this sentence of Paul to their own rule; and hereof it cometh that blasphemous

and sacrilegious persons have declared that their rule is far holier than others, because it is founded and established by the authority of the Apostle. But Paul, it is certain, speaketh not here of cowls, tonsures, and such other vain toys, which are contained in their rule; but he speaketh of the new creature, which is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, but the new man created unto the image of God in righteousness and true holiness which inwardly is righteous in the spirit, and outwardly is holy and clean in the flesh. The monks have a righteousness and holiness, but it is hypocritical and wicked, because they hope not to be justified by only faith in Christ, but by the keeping of their rule. Moreover, although outwardly they counterfeit an holiness, and refrain their eyes, hands, tongue, and other members from evil; yet they have an unclean heart, full of concupiscence, envy, wrath, lechery, idolatry, contempt and hatred of God, blasphemy against Christ, etc.: for they are most spiteful and cruel enemies of the truth. Wherefore accursed be the rule of Francis, Dominic and all the monks, because first the benefit and glory of Christ are darkened and defaced thereby, and then the world is tilled with endless idolatries, false worships, impious religions, will-works etc. But blessed be that rule whereof Paul speaketh in this place; by the which we live in the faith of Christ, and are made new creatures, that is to say, righteous and holy indeed by the Holy Ghost, without any coloring or counterfeiting. To them which walk after this rule belongeth peace, that is, the favor of God, forgiveness of sins, quietness of conscience, and mercy, that is to say, help in afflictions and pardon of the remnants of sin which remain in our flesh. Yea, although they which walk after this rule, be overtaken with any fault or fall, yet for that they are the children of grace and peace, mercy upholdeth them, so that their sin and fall shall not be laid to their charge.

### *And upon the Israel of God*

Here he toucheth the false apostles and Jews which gloried of their fathers, bragged that they were the people of God, that they had the law, etc. (Romans 9:4 f.). As if he said: They are the Israel of God, which with faithful Abraham believe the promises of God offered already in Christ, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, and not they which are begotten of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, after the flesh. This matter is largely handled before in the third chapter.

### *From henceforth let no man put me to business*

He concludeth his Epistle with a certain indignation. As if he said: I have faithfully taught the Gospel as I have received it by the revelation of Jesus Christ; whoso will not follow it, let him follow what he will, so that hereafter he trouble me no more. At a word, this is my sentence, that Christ which I have preached, is the only High Priest and Savior of the world. Therefore, either let the world walk according to this rule, of which I have spoken here and throughout all this Epistle, or else let it perish forever.

### *For I bear in my body the marks of the lord Jesus*

As the Minorites understand the former sentence ('as many as walk according to this rule') to mean their own rule, even so do they interpret this sentence to mean the stigmata of their Francis. But this I hold to be a vain imagination and idle sport. For let it be so, that Francis bore the stigmata in his body (as he is painted), yet they were not printed on him for Christ's sake, but he printed them on himself through some foolish devotion, or rather vainglory, whereby he could flatter himself that he was so dear to Christ, that he even printed his wounds on his body.

This is the true meaning of Paul in this place: the marks that be in my body do show well enough whose servant I am. If I sought to please men, requiring circumcision and the keeping of the law as necessary to salvation, and rejoicing in your flesh as the false apostles do, I needed not to bear these marks in my body. But because I am the servant of Jesus Christ and walk after a true rule, that is, I openly teach and confess, that no man can obtain the favor of God, righteousness and salvation, but by Christ alone, therefore it behoveth me to bear the badges of Christ my Lord: which be not marks of mine own procuring, but are laid upon me against my will by the world and the devil, for none other cause but for that I preach Jesus to be Christ.

The stripes and sufferings therefore which he did bear in his body, he calleth marks; as also the anguish and terror of spirit he calleth the fiery darts of the devil. Of these sufferings he maketh mention everywhere in his epistles, as Luke also doth in the Acts. 'I think,' saith he, 'that God hath set forth us the Apostles last, as men appointed to death: for we are made a gazing-stock unto the world, and to the angels and to men' (1 Corinthians 4:9). Again: 'Unto this hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place, and labor working with our own hands: we are reviled, we are persecuted, we are evil spoken of, we are made as the filth of the world, the off-scouring of all things' (Corinthians 4:11 ff.). Also in another place: 'In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, by watchings, by fastings,' etc. (2 Corinthians 6:4 ff.). And again: 'In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prison more plenteously, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one, I was thrice beaten with rods, I was once stoned, I suffered thrice shipwreck, night and day have I been in the deep sea. In journeyings I was often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils among the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren,' etc. (2 Corinthians 11:23 ff.).

These be the true marks and imprinted signs, of which the Apostle speaketh in this place; the which we also at this day, by the grace of God, bear in our bodies for Christ's cause. For the world persecuteth and killeth us, false brethren deadly hate us, Satan inwardly in our heart with his fiery darts terrifieth us, and for none other cause, but for that we teach Christ to be our righteousness and

life. These marks we choose not of any sweet devotion, neither do we gladly suffer them: but because the world and the devil do lay them upon us for Christ's cause, we are compelled to suffer them, and we rejoice with Paul in the Spirit (which is always willing, glorieth and rejoiceth) that we bear them in our body; for they are a seal and most sure testimony of true doctrine and faith. These things Paul spake (as I showed before) with a certain displeasure and indignation.

*Brethren, the grace of our lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen*

This is his last farewell. He endeth the Epistle with the same words wherewith he began. As if he said: I have taught you Christ purely, I have entreated you, I have chidden you, and I have let pass nothing which I thought profitable for you. I can say no more, but that I heartily pray that our Lord Jesus Christ would bless and increase my labor, and govern you with his [Holy] Spirit forever.

Thus have ye the exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. The Lord Jesus Christ, our justifier and Savior, who gave unto me the grace and power to expound this Epistle, and to you likewise to hear it, preserve and establish both you and me (which I most heartily desire), that we daily growing more and more in the knowledge of his grace and faith [unfeigned], may be found unblamable and without fault in the day of our redemption. To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory world without end. Amen. Amen.