

Chapter 5

IN this chapter the Apostle Paul presents the doctrine of Christian liberty in a final effort to persuade the Galatians to give up the nefarious doctrine of the false apostles. To accomplish his purpose he adduces threats and promises, trying in every way possible to keep them in the liberty which Christ purchased for them.

Verse 1. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.

"Be steadfast, not careless. Lie not down and sleep, but stand up. Be watchful. Hold fast the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free." Those who loll cannot keep this liberty. Satan hates the light of the Gospel. When it begins to shine a little he fights against it with might and main.

What liberty does Paul mean? Not civil liberty (for which we have the government to thank), but the liberty which Christ has procured for us.

At one time the emperor was compelled to grant to the bishop of Rome certain immunities and privileges. This is civil liberty. That liberty exempts the clergy from certain public charges. Then there is also another kind of "liberty," when people obey neither the laws of God nor the laws of men, but do as they please. This carnal liberty the people want in our day. We are not now speaking of this liberty. Neither are we speaking of civil liberty.

Paul is speaking of a far better liberty, the liberty "wherewith Christ has made us free," not from material bonds, not from the Babylonian captivity, not from the tyranny of the Turks, but from the eternal wrath of God.

Where is this liberty? In the conscience.

Our conscience is free and quiet because it no longer has to fear the wrath of God. This is real liberty, compared with which every other kind of liberty is not worth mentioning. Who can adequately express the boon that comes to a person when he has the heart-assurance that God will nevermore be angry with him, but will forever be merciful to him for Christ's sake? This is indeed a marvelous liberty, to have the sovereign God for our Friend and Father who will defend, maintain, and save us in this life and in the life to come.

As an outgrowth of this liberty, we are at the same time free from the Law, sin, death, the power of the devil, hell, etc. Since the wrath of God has been assuaged by Christ no Law, sin, or death may now accuse and condemn us. These foes of ours will continue to frighten us, but not too much. The worth of our Christian liberty cannot be exaggerated.

Our conscience must be trained to fall back on the freedom purchased for us by Christ. Though the fears of the Law, the terrors of sin, the horror of death assail us occasionally, we know that these feelings shall not endure, because the prophet quotes God as saying: "In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment: but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you." (Isa. 54:8.)

We shall appreciate this liberty all the more when we bear in mind that it was Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who purchased it with His own blood. Hence, Christ's liberty is given us not by the Law, or for our own righteousness, but freely for Christ's sake. In the eighth chapter of the Gospel of St. John, Jesus declares: "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." He only stands between us and the evils which trouble and afflict us and which He has overcome for us.

Reason cannot properly evaluate this gift. Who can fully appreciate the blessing of the forgiveness of sins and of everlasting life? Our opponents claim that they also possess this liberty. But they do not. When they are put to the test all their self-confidence slips from them. What else can they expect when they trust in works and not in the Word of God?

Our liberty is founded on Christ Himself, who sits at the right hand of God and intercedes for us. Therefore our liberty is sure and valid as long as we believe in Christ. As long as we cling to Him with a steadfast faith we possess His priceless gifts. But if we are careless and indifferent we shall lose them. It is not without good reason that Paul urges us to watch and to stand fast. He knew that the devil delights in taking this liberty away from us.

Verse 1. And be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

Because reason prefers the righteousness of the Law to the righteousness of faith, Paul calls the Law a yoke, a yoke of bondage. Peter also calls it a yoke. "Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10.)

In this passage Paul again disparages the pernicious notion that the Law is able to make men righteous before God, a notion deeply rooted in man's reason. All mankind is so wrapped up in this idea that it is hard to drag it out of people. Paul compares those who seek to be justified by the Law to oxen that are hitched to the yoke. Like oxen that toil in the yoke all day, and in the evening are turned out to graze along the dusty road, and at last are marked for slaughter when they no longer can draw the burden, so those who seek to be justified by the Law are "entangled with the yoke of bondage," and when they have grown old and broken-down in the service of the Law they have earned for their perpetual reward God's wrath and everlasting torment.

We are not now treating of an unimportant matter. It is a matter that involves everlasting liberty or everlasting slavery. For as a liberation from God's wrath through the kind office of Christ is not a passing boon, but a permanent blessing, so also the yoke of the Law is not a temporary but an everlasting affliction.

Rightly are the doors of the Law called devil's martyrs. They take more pains to earn hell than the martyrs of Christ to obtain heaven. Theirs is a double misfortune. First they torture themselves on earth with self-inflicted penances and finally when they die they gain the reward of eternal damnation.

Verse 2. Behold, I Paul say to you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

Paul is incensed at the thought of the tyranny of the Law. His antagonism to the Law is a personal matter with him. "Behold, I, Paul," he says, "I who have received the Gospel not from men, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ: I who have been commissioned from above to preach the Gospel to you: I Paul say to you, If you submit to circumcision Christ will profit you nothing." Paul emphatically declares that for the Galatians to be circumcised would mean for them to lose the benefits of Christ's suffering and death. This passage may well serve as a criterion for all the religions. To teach that besides faith in Christ other devices like works, or the observance of rules, traditions, or ceremonies are necessary for the attainment of righteousness and everlasting life, is to make Christ and His salvation of no benefit to anybody.

This passage is an indictment of the whole papacy. All priests, monks, and nuns—and I am now speaking of the best of them—who repose their hope for salvation in their own works, and

not in Christ, whom they imagine to be an angry judge, hear this sentence pronounced against them that Christ shall profit them nothing. If one can earn the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life through one's own efforts to what purpose was Christ born? What was the purpose of His suffering and death, His resurrection, His victory over sin, death, and the devil, if men may overcome these evils by their own endeavor? Tongue cannot express, nor heart conceive what a terrible thing it is to make Christ worthless.

The person who is not moved by these considerations to leave the Law and the confidence in his own righteousness for the liberty in Christ, has a heart that is harder than stone and iron.

Paul does not condemn circumcision in itself. Circumcision is not injurious to the person who does not ascribe any particular importance to it. Neither are works injurious provided a person does not attach any saving value to them. The Apostle does not say that works are objectionable, but to build one's hopes for righteousness on works is disastrous, for that makes Christ good for nothing.

Let us bear this in mind when the devil accuses our conscience. When that dragon accuses us of having done no good at all, but only evil, say to him: "You trouble me with the remembrance of my past sins; you remind me that I have done no good. But this does not bother me, because if I were to trust in my own good deeds, or despair because I have done no good deeds, Christ would profit me neither way. I am not going to make him unprofitable to me. This I would do, if I should presume to purchase for myself the favor of God and everlasting life by my good deeds, or if I should despair of my salvation because of my sins."

Verse 3. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

The first fault with circumcision is that it makes Christ unprofitable. The second fault is that it obligates those who are circumcised to observe the whole Law. Paul is so very much in earnest about this matter that he confirms it with an oath. "I testify," he says, "I swear by the living God." Paul's statement may be explained negatively to mean: "I testify to every man who is being circumcised that he cannot perform the Law in any point. In the very act of circumcision he is not being circumcised, and in the very act of fulfilling the Law he fulfills it not." This seems to be the simple meaning of Paul's statement. Later on in the sixth chapter he explicitly states, "They themselves which are circumcised keep not the law. The fact that

you are circumcised does not mean you are righteous and free from the Law. The truth is that by circumcision you have become debtors and servants of the Law. The more you endeavor to perform the Law, the more you will become tangled up in the yoke of the Law."

The truth of this I have experienced in myself and in others. I have seen many work themselves down to the bones in their hungry effort to obtain peace of conscience. But the harder they tried the more they worried. Especially in the presence of death they were so uneasy that I have seen murderers die with better grace and courage.

This holds true also in regard to the church regulations. When I was a monk I tried ever so hard to live up to the strict rules of my order. I used to make a list of my sins, and I was always on the way to confession, and whatever penances were enjoined upon me I performed religiously. In spite of it all, my conscience was always in a fever of doubt. The more I sought to help my poor stricken conscience the worse it got. The more I paid attention to the regulations the more I transgressed them.

Hence those that seek to be justified by the Law are much further away from the righteousness of life than the publicans, sinners, and harlots. They know better than to trust in their own works. They know that they cannot ever hope to obtain forgiveness by their sins.

Paul's statement in this verse may be taken to mean that those who submit to circumcision are thereby submitting to the whole Law. To obey Moses in one point requires obedience to him in all points. It does no good to say that only circumcision is necessary, and not the rest of Moses' laws. The same reasons that obligate a person to accept circumcision also obligate a person to accept the whole Law. Thus to acknowledge the Law is tantamount to declaring that Christ is not yet come. And if Christ is not yet come, then all the Jewish ceremonies and laws concerning meats, places, and times are still in force, and Christ must be awaited as one who is still to come. The whole Scripture, however, testifies that Christ has come, that by His death He has abolished the Law, and that He has fulfilled all things which the prophets have foretold about Him.

Some would like to subjugate us to certain parts of the Mosaic Law. But this is not to be permitted under any circumstances. If we permit Moses to rule over us in one thing, we must obey him in all things.

Verse 4. Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Paul in this verse discloses that he is not speaking so much of circumcision as the trust which men repose in the outward act. We can hear him say: "I do not condemn the Law in itself; what I condemn is that men seek to be justified by the Law, as if Christ were still to come, or as if He alone were unable to justify sinners. It is this that I condemn, because it makes Christ of no effect. It makes you void of Christ so that Christ is not in you, nor can you be partakers of the knowledge, the spirit, the fellowship, the liberty, the life, or the achievements of Christ. You are completely separated from Him, so much so that He has nothing to do with you any more, or for that matter you with Him." Can anything worse be said against the Law? If you think Christ and the Law can dwell together in your heart, you may be sure that Christ dwells not in your heart. For if Christ is in your heart He neither condemns you, nor does He ever bid you to trust in your own good works. If you know Christ at all, you know that good works do not serve to righteousness, nor evil works to condemnation. I do not want to withhold from good works their due praise, nor do I wish to encourage evil works. But when it comes to justification, I say, we must concentrate upon Christ alone, or else we make Him non-effective. You must choose between Christ and the righteousness of the Law. If you choose Christ you are righteous before God. If you stick to the Law, Christ is of no use to you.

Verse 4. Ye are fallen from grace.

That means you are no longer in the kingdom or condition of grace. When a person on board ship falls into the sea and is drowned it makes no difference from which end or side of the ship he falls into the water. Those who fall from grace perish no matter how they go about it. Those who seek to be justified by the Law are fallen from grace and are in grave danger of eternal death. If this holds true in the case of those who seek to be justified by the moral Law, what will become of those, I should like to know, who endeavor to be justified by their own regulations and vows? They will fall to the very bottom of hell. "Oh, no," they say, "we will fly straight into heaven. If you live according to the rules of Saint Francis, Saint Dominick, Saint Benedict, you will obtain the peace and mercy of God. If you perform the vows of chastity, obedience, etc., you will be rewarded with everlasting life." Let these playthings of the devil go to the

place where they came from and listen to what Paul has to say in this verse in accordance with Christ's own teaching: "He that believeth in the Son of God, hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not in the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth in him."

The words, "Ye are fallen from grace," must not be taken lightly. They are important. To fall from grace means to lose the atonement, the forgiveness of sins, the righteousness, liberty, and life which Jesus has merited for us by His death and resurrection. To lose the grace of God means to gain the wrath and judgment of God, death, the bondage of the devil, and everlasting condemnation.

Verse 6. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

Paul concludes the whole matter with the above statement. "You want to be justified by the Law, by circumcision, and by works. We cannot see it. To be justified by such means would make Christ of no value to us. We would be obliged to perform the whole law. We rather through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness." The Apostle is not satisfied to say "justified by faith." He adds hope to faith.

Holy Writ speaks of hope in two ways: as the object of the emotion, and hope as the emotion itself. In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians we have an instance of its first use: "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven," i.e., the thing hoped for. In the sense of emotion we quote the passage from the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "For we are saved by hope." As Paul uses the term "hope" here in writing to the Galatians, we may take it in either of its two meanings. We may understand Paul to say, "We wait in spirit, through faith, for the righteousness that we hope for, which in due time will be revealed to us." Or we may understand Paul to say: "We wait in Spirit, by faith for righteousness with great hope and desire." True, we are righteous, but our righteousness is not yet revealed; as long as we live here sin stays with us, not to forget the law in our members striving against the law of our mind. When sin rages in our body and we through the Spirit wrestle against it, then we have cause for hope. We are not yet perfectly righteous. Perfect righteousness is still to be attained. Hence we hope for it.

This is sweet comfort for us. And we are to make use of it in

comforting the afflicted. We are to say to them: "Brother, you would like to feel God's favor as you feel your sin. But you are asking too much. Your righteousness rests on something much better than feelings. Wait and hope until it will be revealed to you in the Lord's own time. Don't go by your feelings, but go by the doctrine of faith, which pledges Christ to you."

The question occurs to us, What difference is there between faith and hope? We find it difficult to see any difference. Faith and hope are so closely linked that they cannot be separated. Still there is a difference between them.

First, hope and faith differ in regard to their sources. Faith originates in the understanding, while hope rises in the will.

Secondly, they differ in regard to their functions. Faith says what is to be done. Faith teaches, describes, directs. Hope exhorts the mind to be strong and courageous.

Thirdly, they differ in regard to their objectives. Faith concentrates on the truth. Hope looks to the goodness of God.

Fourthly, they differ in sequence. Faith is the beginning of life before tribulation. (Hebrews 11.) Hope comes later and is born of tribulation. (Romans 5.)

Fifthly, they differ in regard to their effects. Faith is a judge. It judges errors. Hope is a soldier. It fights against tribulations, the Cross, despondency, despair, and waits for better things to come in the midst of evil. Without hope faith cannot endure. On the other hand, hope without faith is blind rashness and arrogance because it lacks knowledge. Before anything else a Christian must have the insight of faith, so that the intellect may know its directions in the day of trouble and the heart may hope for better things. By faith we begin, by hope we continue.

This passage contains excellent doctrine and much comfort. It declares that we are justified not by works, sacrifices, or ceremonies, but by Christ alone. The world may judge certain things to be ever so good; without Christ they are all wrong. Circumcision and the law and good works are carnal. "We," says Paul, "are above such things. We possess Christ by faith and in the midst of our afflictions we hopefully wait for the consummation of our righteousness."

You may say, "The trouble is I don't feel as if I am righteous." You must not feel, but believe. Unless you believe that you are

righteous, you do Christ a great wrong, for He has cleansed you by the washing of regeneration, He died for you so that through Him you may obtain righteousness and everlasting life.

Verse 6. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.

Faith must of course be sincere. It must be a faith that performs good works through love. If faith lacks love it is not true faith. Thus the Apostle bars the way of hypocrites to the kingdom of Christ on all sides. He declares on the one hand, "In Christ Jesus circumcision availeth nothing," i.e., works avail nothing, but faith alone, and that without any merit whatever, avails before God. On the other hand, the Apostle declares that without fruits faith serves no purpose. To think, "If faith justifies without works, let us work nothing," is to despise the grace of God. Idle faith is not justifying faith. In this terse manner Paul presents the whole life of a Christian. Inwardly it consists in faith towards God, outwardly in love towards our fellow-men.

Verse 7. Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

This is plain speaking. Paul asserts that he teaches the same truth now which he has always taught, and that the Galatians ran well as long as they obeyed the truth. But now, misled by the false apostles, they no longer run. He compares the Christian life to a race. When everything runs along smoothly the Hebrews spoke of it as a race. "Ye did run well," means that everything went along smoothly and happily with the Galatians. They lived a Christian life and were on the right way to everlasting life. The words, "Ye did run well," are encouraging indeed. Often our lives seem to creep rather than to run. But if we abide in the true doctrine and walk in the spirit, we have nothing to worry about. God judges our lives differently. What may seem to us a life slow in Christian development may seem to God a life of rapid progression in grace.

Verse 7. Who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? The Galatians were hindered in the Christian life when they turned from faith and grace to the Law. Covertly the Apostle blames the false apostles for impeding the Christian progress of the Galatians. The false apostles persuaded the Galatians to believe that they were in error and that they had made little or no progress under the influence of Paul. Under the baneful influence of the false apostles the Galatians thought they were well off and advancing rapidly in

Christian knowledge and living.

Verse 8. This persuasion comes not of him that calls you.

Paul explains how those who had been deceived by false teachers may be restored to spiritual health. The false apostles were amiable fellows. Apparently they surpassed Paul in learning and godliness. The Galatians were easily deceived by outward appearances. They supposed they were being taught by Christ Himself. Paul proved to them that their new doctrine was not of Christ, but of the devil. In this way he succeeded in regaining many. We also are able to win back many from the errors into which they were seduced by showing that their beliefs are imaginary, wicked, and contrary to the Word of God.

The devil is a cunning persuader. He knows how to enlarge the smallest sin into a mountain until we think we have committed the worst crime ever committed on earth. Such stricken consciences must be comforted and set straight as Paul corrected the Galatians by showing them that their opinion is not of Christ because it runs counter to the Gospel, which describes Christ as a meek and merciful Savior.

Satan will circumvent the Gospel and explain Christ in this his own diabolical way: "Indeed Christ is meek, gentle, and merciful, but only to those who are holy and righteous. If you are a sinner you stand no chance. Did not Christ say that unbelievers are already damned? And did not Christ perform many good deeds, and suffer many evils patiently, bidding us to follow His example? You do not mean to say that your life is in accord with Christ's precepts or example? You are a sinner. You are no good at all."

Satan is to be answered in this way: The Scriptures present Christ in a twofold aspect. First, as a gift. "He of God is made to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." (I Cor. 1:30.) Hence my many and grievous sins are nullified if I believe in Him. Secondly, the Scriptures present Christ for our example. As an exemplar He is to be placed before me only at certain times. In times of joy and gladness that I may have Him as a mirror to reflect upon my shortcomings. But in the day of trouble I will have Christ only as a gift. I will not listen to anything else, except that Christ died for my sins.

To those that are cast down on account of their sins Christ must be introduced as a Savior and Gift, and not as an example. But to

sinner who live in a false assurance, Christ must be introduced as an example. The hard sayings of Scripture and the awful judgments of God upon sin must be impressed upon them. Defy Satan in times of despair. Say: "O cursed Satan, you choose a nice time to talk to me about doing and working when you know very well that I am in trouble over my sins. I will not listen to you. I will listen to Christ, who says that He came into the world to save sinners. This is the true Christ and there is none other. I can find plenty of examples for a holy life in Abraham, Isaiah, John the Baptist, Paul, and other saints. But they cannot forgive my sins. They cannot save me. They cannot procure for me everlasting life. Therefore I will not have you for my teacher, O Satan."

Verse 9. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

Paul's concern for them meant nothing to some of the Galatians. Many had disowned him as their teacher and gone over to the false apostles. No doubt the false apostles took every occasion to defame Paul as a stubborn and contemptuous fellow who thought nothing of disrupting the unity of the churches for no other reason than his selfish pride and jealousy.

Others of the Galatians perhaps saw no harm in deviating a trifle from the doctrine of justification and faith. When they noticed that Paul made so much ado about a matter that seemed of no particular importance to them they raised their eyebrows and thought within themselves: "What if we did deviate a little from the doctrine of Paul? What if we are a little to blame? He ought to overlook the whole matter, and not make such an issue out of it, lest the unity of the churches be disturbed." To this Paul replies: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

Our opponents record the same complaints about us. They put us down as contentious, ill-tempered faultfinders. But these are the crafty passes of the devil, with which he seeks to overthrow our faith. We answer with Paul: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

Small faults grow into big faults. To tolerate a trifling error inevitably leads to crass heresy. The doctrine of the Bible is not ours to take or to allow liberties with. We have no right to change even a tittle of it. When it comes to life we are ready to do, to suffer, to forgive anything our opponents demand as long as faith and doctrine remain pure and uncorrupt. The Apostle James says, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he

is guilty of all." This passage supports us over against our critics who claim that we disregard all charity to the great injury of the churches. We protest we desire nothing more than peace with all men. If they would only permit us to keep our doctrine of faith! The pure doctrine takes precedence before charity, apostles, or an angel from heaven.

Let others praise charity and concord to the skies; we magnify the authority of the Word and faith. Charity may be neglected at times without peril, but not the Word and faith. Charity suffers all things, it gives in. Faith suffers nothing; it never yields. Charity is often deceived but is never put out because it loses nothing to lose; it continues to do well even to the ungrateful. When it comes to faith and salvation in the midst of lies and errors that parade as truth and deceive many, charity has no voice or vote. Let us not be influenced by the popular cry for charity and unity. If we do not love God and His Word what difference does it make if we love anything at all?

Paul, therefore, admonishes both teachers and hearers not to esteem lightly the doctrine of faith as if it were a toy with which to amuse oneself in idle hours.

Verse 10. I have confidence in you through the Lord.

"I have taught, admonished, and reprov'd you enough. I hope the best for you."

The question occurs to us whether Paul did well to trust the Galatians. Does not Holy Writ forbid us to trust in men? Faith trusts in God and is never wrong. Charity trusts in men and is often wrong. This charitable trust in man is necessary to life. Without it life would be impossible in the world. What kind of life would ours be if nobody could trust anybody else? True Christians are more ready to believe in men than the children of this world. Such charitable confidence is the fruit of the Spirit. Paul had such trust in the Galatians although they had forsaken his doctrine. He trusts them "through the Lord," insofar as they were in Christ and Christ in them. Once they had forsaken Christ altogether, the Apostle will trust the Galatians no longer.

Verse 10. That ye will be none otherwise minded.

"Not minded otherwise than I have taught you. In other words, I have confidence that you will accept no doctrine that is contrary to the one you have learned from me."

Verse 10. But be that troubleth you shall bear his judgment,

whosoever he be.

Paul assumes the role of a judge and condemns the false apostles as troublers of the Galatians. He wants to frighten the Galatians with his severe judgments of the false apostles into avoiding false doctrine like a contagious disease. We can hear him say to the Galatians: "Why do you give these pestilent fellows a hearing in the first place? They only trouble you. The doctrine they bring causes your conscience only trouble."

The clause, "whosoever he be," seems to indicate that the false apostles in outward appearance at least were very good and devout men. It may be that among them was some outstanding disciple of the apostles, a man of fame and authority. The Apostle must have been faced by this very situation, otherwise his vehemence would have been uncalled for. No doubt many of the Galatians were taken back with the vehemency of the Apostle. They perhaps thought: why should he be so stubborn in such small matters? Why is he so quick to pronounce damnation upon his brethren in the ministry?

I cannot say it often enough, that we must carefully differentiate between doctrine and life. Doctrine is a piece of heaven, life is a piece of earth. Life is sin, error, uncleanness, misery, and charity must forbear, believe, hope, and suffer all things. Forgiveness of sins must be continuous so that sin and error may not be defended and sustained. But with doctrine there must be no error, no need of pardon. There can be no comparison between doctrine and life. The least little point of doctrine is of greater importance than heaven and earth. Therefore we cannot allow the least jot of doctrine to be corrupted. We may overlook the offenses and errors of life, for we daily sin much. Even the saints sin, as they themselves confess in the Lord's Prayer and in the Creed. But our doctrine, God be praised, is pure, because all the articles of our faith are grounded on the Holy Scriptures.

Verse 11. And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offense of the cross ceased.

In his great desire to recall the Galatians, Paul draws himself into the argument. He says: "Because I refuse to recognize circumcision as a factor in our salvation, I have brought upon myself the hatred and persecution of my whole nation. If I were to acknowledge circumcision the Jews would cease to persecute me; in fact they would love and praise me. But because I preach the Gospel of Christ and the righteousness of faith I must suffer persecution. The

false apostles know how to avoid the Cross and the deadly hatred of the Jewish nation. They preach circumcision and thus retain the favor of the Jews. If they had their way they would ignore all differences in doctrine and preserve unity at all cost. But their unionistic dreams cannot be realized without loss to the pure doctrine of the Cross. It would be too bad if the offense of the Cross were to cease." To the Corinthians he expressed the same conviction: "Christ sent me. . .to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." (I Cor. 1:17.)

Here someone may be tempted to call the Christians crazy. Deliberately to court danger by preaching and confessing the truth, and thus to bring upon ourselves the hatred and enmity of the whole world, is this not madness? But Paul does not mind the enmity of the world. It made him all the bolder to confess Christ. The enmity of the world in his estimation augurs well for the success and growth of the Church, which fares best in times of persecution. When the offense of the Cross ceases, when the rage of the enemies of the Cross abates, when everything is quiet, it is a sign that the devil is the door-keeper of the Church and that the pure doctrine of God's Word has been lost.

Saint Bernard observed that the Church is in best shape when Satan assaults it on every side by trickery and violence; and in worst shape when it is at peace. In support of his statement he quotes the passage from the song of Hezekiah: "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness." Paul looks with suspicion upon any doctrine that does not provoke antagonism.

Persecution always follows on the heels of the Word of God as the Psalmist experienced. "I believe, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted." (Ps. 116:10.) The Christians are accused and slandered without mercy. Murderers and thieves receive better treatment than Christians. The world regards true Christians as the worst offenders, for whom no punishment can be too severe. The world hates the Christians with amazing brutality, and without compunction commits them to the most shameful death, congratulating itself that it has rendered God and the cause of peace a distinct service by ridding the world of the undesired presence of these Christians. We are not to let such treatment cause us to falter in our adherence to Christ. As long as we experience such persecutions we know all is well with the Gospel.

Jesus held out the same comfort to His disciples in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven." The Church must not come short of this joy. I would not want to be at peace with the pope, the bishops, the princes, and the sectarians, unless they consent to our doctrine. Unity with them would be an unmistakable sign that we have lost the true doctrine. Briefly, as long as the Church proclaims the doctrine she must suffer persecution, because the Gospel declares the mercy and glory of God. This in turn stirs up the devil, because the Gospel shows him up for what he is, the devil, and not God. Therefore as long as the Gospel holds sway persecution plays the accompaniment, or else there is something the matter with the devil. When he is hit you will know it by the havoc he raises everywhere.

So do not be surprised or offended when hell breaks loose. Look upon it as a happy indication that all is well with the Gospel of the Cross. God forbid that the offense of the Cross should ever be removed. This would be the case if we were to preach what the prince of this world and his followers would be only too glad to hear, the righteousness of works. You would never know the devil could be so gentle, the world so sweet, the Pope so gracious, and the princes so charming. But because we seek the advantage and honor of Christ, they persecute us all around.

Verse 12. I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

It hardly seems befitting an apostle, not only to denounce the false apostles as troublers of the Church, and to consign them to the devil, but also to wish that they were utterly cut off—what else would you call it but plain cursing? Paul, I suppose, is alluding to the rite of circumcision. As if he were saying to the Galatians: "The false apostles compel you to cut off the foreskin of your flesh. Well, I wish they themselves were utterly cut off by the roots."

We had better answer at once the question, whether it is right for Christians to curse. Certainly not always, nor for every little cause. But when things have come to such a pass that God and His Word are openly blasphemed, then we must say: "Blessed be God and His Word, and cursed be everything that is contrary to God and His Word, even though it should be an apostle, or an angel from heaven."

This goes to show again how much importance Paul attached to the least points of Christian doctrine, that he dared to curse the false apostles, evidently men of great popularity and influence. What right, then, have we to make little of doctrine? No matter how nonessential a point of doctrine may seem, if slighted it may prove the gradual disintegration of the truths of our salvation.

Let us do everything to advance the glory and authority of God's Word. Every tittle of it is greater than heaven and earth. Christian charity and unity have nothing to do with the Word of God. We are bold to curse and condemn all men who in the least point corrupt the Word of God, "for a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

Paul does right to curse these troublers of the Galatians, wishing that they were cut off and rooted out of the Church of God and that their doctrine might perish forever. Such cursing is the gift of the Holy Ghost. Thus Peter cursed Simon the sorcerer, "Your money perish with you." Many instances of this holy cursing are recorded in the sacred Scriptures, especially in the Psalms, e.g., "Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell." (Ps. 55:15.)

THE DOCTRINE OF GOOD WORKS

Now come all kinds of admonitions and precepts. It was the custom of the apostles that after they had taught faith and instructed the conscience they followed it up with admonitions to good works, that the believers might manifest the duties of love toward each other. In order to avoid the appearance as if Christianity militated against good works or opposed civil government, the Apostle also urges us to give ourselves to good works, to lead an honest life, and to keep faith and love with one another. This will give the lie to the accusations of the world that we Christians are the enemies of decency and of public peace. The fact is we Christians know better what constitutes a truly good work than all the philosophers and legislators of the world because we link believing with doing.

Verse 13. For, brethren, ye have been called to liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

In other words: "You have gained liberty through Christ, i.e., You are above all laws as far as conscience is concerned. You are saved. Christ is your liberty and life. Therefore law, sin, and death may not hurt you or drive you to despair. This is the constitution of your priceless liberty. Now take care that you do not use your wonderful liberty for an occasion of the flesh."

Satan likes to turn this liberty which Christ has gotten for us into licentiousness. Already the Apostle Jude complained in his day: "There are certain men crept in unawares. . . turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness." (Jude 4.) The flesh reasons: "If we are without the law, we may as well indulge ourselves. Why do good, why give alms, why suffer evil when there is no law to force us to do so?"

This attitude is common enough. People talk about Christian liberty and then go and cater to the desires of covetousness, pleasure, pride, envy, and other vices. Nobody wants to fulfill his duties. Nobody wants to help out a brother in distress. This sort of thing makes me so impatient at times that I wish the swine who trampled precious pearls under foot were back once again under the tyranny of the Pope. You cannot wake up the people of Gomorrah with the gospel of peace.

Even we creatures of the world do not perform our duties as zealously in the light of the Gospel as we did before in the darkness of ignorance, because the surer we are of the liberty purchased for us by Christ, the more we neglect the Word, prayer, well-doing, and suffering. If Satan were not continually molesting us with trials, with the persecution of our enemies, and the ingratitude of our brethren, we would become so careless and indifferent to all good works that in time we would lose our faith in Christ, resign the ministry of the Word, and look for an easier life. Many of our ministers are beginning to do that very thing. They complain about the ministry, they maintain they cannot live on their salaries, they whimper about the miserable treatment they receive at the hand of those whom they delivered from the servitude of the law by the preaching of the Gospel. These ministers desert our poor and maligned Christ, involve themselves in the affairs of the world, seek advantages for themselves and not for Christ. With what results they shall presently find out.

Since the devil lies in ambush for those in particular who hate the world, and seeks to deprive us of our liberty of the spirit or to brutalize it into the liberty of the flesh, we plead with our brethren after the manner of Paul, that they may never use this liberty of the spirit purchased for us by Christ as an excuse for carnal living, or as Peter expresses it, I Peter 2:16, "for a cloak of maliciousness."

In order that Christians may not abuse their liberty the Apostle encumbers them with the rule of mutual love that they should serve

each other in love. Let everybody perform the duties of his station and vocation diligently and help his neighbor to the limit of his capacity.

Christians are glad to hear and obey this teaching of love. When others hear about this Christian liberty of ours they at once infer, "If I am free, I may do what I like. If salvation is not a matter of doing why should we do anything for the poor?" In this crude manner they turn the liberty of the spirit into wantonness and licentiousness. We want them to know, however, that if they use their lives and possessions after their own pleasure, if they do not help the poor, if they cheat their fellow-men in business and snatch and scrape by hook and by crook everything they can lay their hands on, we want to tell them that they are not free, no matter how much they think they are, but they are the dirty slaves of the devil, and are seven times worse than they ever were as the slaves of the Pope.

As for us, we are obliged to preach the Gospel which offers to all men liberty from the Law, sin, death, and God's wrath. We have no right to conceal or revoke this liberty proclaimed by the Gospel. And so we cannot do anything with the swine who dive headlong into the filth of licentiousness. We do what we can, we diligently admonish them to love and to help their fellow-men. If our admonitions bear no fruit, we leave them to God, who will in His own good time take care of these disrespecters of His goodness. In the meanwhile we comfort ourselves with the thought that our labors are not lost upon the true believers. They appreciate this spiritual liberty and stand ready to serve others in love and, though their number is small, the satisfaction they give us far outweighs the discouragement which we receive at the hands of the large number of those who misuse this liberty.

Paul cannot possibly be misunderstood for he says: "Brethren, ye have been called to liberty." In order that nobody might mistake the liberty of which he speaks for the liberty of the flesh, the Apostle adds the explanatory note, "only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." Paul now explains at the hand of the Ten Commandments what it means to serve one another in love.

Verse 14. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, you will love your neighbour as yourself.

It is customary with Paul to lay the doctrinal foundation first and then to build on it the gold, silver, and gems of good deeds. Now

there is no other foundation than Jesus Christ. Upon this foundation the Apostle erects the structure of good works which he defines in this one sentence: "You will love your neighbour as yourself."

In adding such precepts of love the Apostle embarrasses the false apostles very much, as if he were saying to the Galatians: "I have described to you what spiritual life is. Now I will also teach you what truly good works are. I am doing this in order that you may understand that the silly ceremonies of which the false apostles make so much are far inferior to the works of Christian love." This is the hall-mark of all false teachers, that they not only pervert the pure doctrine but also fail in doing good. Their foundation vitiated, they can only build wood, hay, and stubble. Oddly enough, the false apostles who were such earnest champions of good works never required the work of charity, such as Christian love and the practical charity of a helpful tongue, hand, and heart. Their only requirement was that circumcision, days, months, years, and times should be observed. They could not think of any other good works.

The Apostle exhorts all Christians to practice good works after they have embraced the pure doctrine of faith, because even though they have been justified they still have the old flesh to refrain them from doing good. Therefore it becomes necessary that sincere preachers cultivate the doctrine of good works as diligently as the doctrine of faith, for Satan is a deadly enemy of both. Nevertheless faith must come first because without faith it is impossible to know what a God-pleasing deed is.

Let nobody think that he knows all about this commandment, "You will love your neighbour as yourself." It sounds short and easy, but show me the man who can teach, learn, and do this commandment perfectly. None of us heed, or urge, or practice this commandment properly. Though the conscience hurts when we fail to fulfill this commandment in every respect we are not overwhelmed by our failure to bear our neighbor sincere and brotherly love.

The words, "for all the law is fulfilled in one word," entail a criticism of the Galatians. "You are so taken up by your superstitions and ceremonies that serve no good purpose, that you neglect the most important thing, love." St. Jerome says: "We wear our bodies out with watching, fasting, and labor and neglect charity, the queen of all good works." Look at the monks, who meticulously fast, watch, etc. To skip the least requirement of their order would be a crime of the first magnitude. At the same time they blithely ignored the

duties of charity and hated each other to death. That is no sin, they think.

The Old Testament is replete with examples that indicate how much God prizes charity. When David and his companions had no food with which to still their hunger they ate the showbread which lay-people were forbidden to eat. Christ's disciples broke the Sabbath law when they plucked the ears of corn. Christ himself broke the Sabbath (as the Jews claimed) by healing the sick on the Sabbath. These incidents indicate that love ought to be given consideration above all laws and ceremonies.

Verse 14. For all the Law is fulfilled in one word.

We can imagine the Apostle saying to the Galatians: "Why do you get so worked up over ceremonies, meats, days, places, and such things? Leave off this foolishness and listen to me. The whole Law is comprehended in this one sentence, 'You will love your neighbour as yourself.' God is not particularly interested in ceremonies, nor has He any use for them. The one thing He requires of you is that you believe in Christ whom He has sent. In addition to faith, which comes first as the most acceptable service to God, you want to add laws, then you want to know that all laws are comprehended in this short commandment, 'You will love your neighbour as yourself.' "

Paul knows how to explain the law of God. He condenses all the laws of Moses into one brief sentence. Reason takes offense at the brevity with which Paul treats the Law. Therefore reason looks down upon the doctrine of faith and its truly good works. To serve one another in love, i.e., to instruct the erring, to comfort the afflicted, to raise the fallen, to help one's neighbor in every possible way, to bear with his infirmities, to endure hardships, toil, ingratitude in the Church and in the world, and on the other hand to obey government, to honor one's parents, to be patient at home with a nagging wife and an unruly family, these things are not at all regarded as good works. The fact is, they are such excellent works that the world cannot possibly estimate them at their true value.

It is tersely spoken: "Love your neighbour as yourself." But what more needs to be said? You cannot find a better or nearer example than your own. If you want to know how you ought to love your neighbor, ask yourself how much you love yourself. If you were to get into trouble or danger, you would be glad to have the love and help of all men. You do not need any book of instructions to teach

you how to love your neighbor. All you have to do is to look into your own heart, and it will tell you how you ought to love your neighbor as yourself.

My neighbor is every person, especially those who need my help, as Christ explained in the tenth chapter of Luke. Even if a person has done me some wrong, or has hurt me in any way, he is still a human being with flesh and blood. As long as a person remains a human being, so long is he to be an object of our love.

Paul therefore urges his Galatians and, incidentally, all believers to serve each other in love. "You Galatians do not have to accept circumcision. If you are so anxious to do good works, I will tell you in one word how you can fulfill all laws. 'By love serve one another.' You will never lack people to whom you may do good. The world is full of people who need your help."

Verse 15. But if ye bite and devour one another take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

When faith in Christ is overthrown peace and unity come to an end in the church. Diverse opinions and dissensions about doctrine and life spring up, and one member bites and devours the other, i.e., they condemn each other until they are consumed. To this the Scriptures and the experience of all times bear witness. The many sects at present have come into being because one sect condemns the other. When the unity of the spirit has been lost there can be no agreement in doctrine or life. New errors must appear without measure and without end.

For the avoidance of discord Paul lays down the principle: "Let every person do his duty in the station of life into which God has called him. No person is to vaunt himself above others or find fault with the efforts of others while lauding his own. Let everybody serve in love."

It is not an easy matter to teach faith without works, and still to require works. Unless the ministers of Christ are wise in handling the mysteries of God and rightly divide the word, faith and good works may easily be confused. Both the doctrine of faith and the doctrine of good works must be diligently taught, and yet in such a way that both the doctrines stay within their God-given sphere. If we only teach words, as our opponents do, we shall lose the faith. If we only teach faith people will come to think that good works are superfluous.

Verse 16. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

"I have not forgotten what I told you about faith in the first part of my letter. Because I exhort you to mutual love you are not to think that I have gone back on my teaching of justification by faith alone. I am still of the same opinion. To remove every possibility for misunderstanding I have added this explanatory note: 'Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.'"

With this verse Paul explains how he wants this sentence to be understood: By love serve one another. When I bid you to love one another, this is what I mean and require, 'Walk in the Spirit.' I know very well you will not fulfill the Law, because you are sinners as long as you live. Nevertheless, you should endeavor to walk in the spirit, i.e., fight against the flesh and follow the leads of the Holy Ghost."

It is quite apparent that Paul had not forgotten the doctrine of justification, for in bidding the Galatians to walk in the Spirit he at the same time denies that good works can justify. "When I speak of the fulfilling of the Law I do not mean to say that you are justified by the Law. All I mean to say is that you should take the Spirit for your guide and resist the flesh. That is the most you shall ever be able to do. Obey the Spirit and fight against the flesh."

Verse 16. And ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

The lust of the flesh is not altogether extinct in us. It rises up again and again and wrestles with the Spirit. No flesh, not even that of the true believer, is so completely under the influence of the Spirit that it will not bite or devour, or at least neglect, the commandment of love. At the slightest provocation it flares up, demands to be revenged, and hates a neighbor like an enemy, or at least does not love him as much as he ought to be loved.

Therefore the Apostle establishes this rule of love for the believers. Serve one another in love. Bear the infirmities of your brother. Forgive one another. Without such bearing and forbearing, giving and forgiving, there can be no unity because to give and to take offense are unavoidably human.

Whenever you are angry with your brother for any cause, repress your violent emotions through the Spirit. Bear with his weakness and love him. He does not cease to be your neighbor or brother because he offended you. On the contrary, he now more than ever

before requires your loving attention.

The scholastics take the lust of the flesh to mean carnal lust. True, believers too are tempted with carnal lust. Even the married are not immune to carnal lusts. Men set little value upon that which they have and covet what they have not, as the poet says:

"The things most forbidden we always desire, And things most denied we seek to acquire."

I do not deny that the lust of the flesh includes carnal lust. But it takes in more. It takes in all the corrupt desires with which the believers are more or less infected, as pride, hatred, covetousness, impatience. Later on Paul enumerates among the works of the flesh even idolatry and heresy. The apostle's meaning is clear. "I want you to love one another. But you do not do it. In fact you cannot do it, because of your flesh. Hence we cannot be justified by deeds of love. Do not for a moment think that I am reversing myself on my stand concerning faith. Faith and hope must continue. By faith we are justified, by hope we endure to the end. In addition we serve each other in love because true faith is not idle. Our love, however, is faulty. In bidding you to walk in the Spirit I indicate to you that our love is not sufficient to justify us. Neither do I demand that you should get rid of the flesh, but that you should control and subdue it."

Verse 17. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh.

When Paul declares that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh," he means to say that we are not to think, speak or do the things to which the flesh incites us. "I know," he says, "that the flesh courts sin. The thing for you to do is to resist the flesh by the Spirit. But if you abandon the leadership of the Spirit for that of the flesh, you are going to fulfill the lust of the flesh and die in your sins."

Verse 17. And these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

These two leaders, the flesh and the Spirit, are bitter opponents. Of this opposition the Apostle writes in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into the captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

The scholastics are at a loss to understand this confession of Paul and feel obliged to save his honor. That the chosen vessel of Christ should have had the law of sin in his members seems to them incredible and absurd. They circumvent the plain-spoken statement of the Apostle by saying that he was speaking for the wicked. But the wicked never complain of inner conflicts, or of the captivity of sin. Sin has its unrestricted way with them. This is Paul's very own complaint and the identical complaint of all believers.

Paul never denied that he felt the lust of the flesh. It is likely that at times he felt even the stirrings of carnal lust, but there is no doubt that he quickly suppressed them. And if at any time he felt angry or impatient, he resisted these feelings by the Spirit. We are not going to stand by idly and see such a comforting statement as this explained away. The scholastics, monks, and others of their ilk fought only against carnal lust and were proud of a victory which they never obtained. In the meanwhile they harbored within their breasts pride, hatred, disdain, self-trust, contempt of the Word of God, disloyalty, blasphemy, and other lusts of the flesh. Against these sins they never fought because they never took them for sins.

Christ alone can supply us with perfect righteousness. Therefore we must always believe and always hope in Christ. "Whosoever believeth shall not be ashamed." (Rom. 9:33.)

Do not despair if you feel the flesh battling against the Spirit or if you cannot make it behave. For you to follow the guidance of the Spirit in all things without interference on the part of the flesh is impossible. You are doing all you can if you resist the flesh and do not fulfill its demands.

When I was a monk I thought I was lost forever whenever I felt an evil emotion, carnal lust, wrath, hatred, or envy. I tried to quiet my conscience in many ways, but it did not work, because lust would always come back and give me no rest. I told myself: "You have permitted this and that sin, envy, impatience, and the like. Your joining this holy order has been in vain, and all your good works are good for nothing." If at that time I had understood this passage, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh," I could have spared myself many a day of self-torment. I would have said to myself: "Martin, you will never be without sin, for you have flesh. Despair not, but resist the flesh."

I remember how Doctor Staupitz used to say to me: "I have promised God a thousand times that I would become a better man,

but I never kept my promise. From now on I am not going to make any more vows. Experience has taught me that I cannot keep them. Unless God is merciful to me for Christ's sake and grants to me a blessed departure, I shall not be able to stand before Him." His was a God-pleasing despair. No true believer trusts in his own righteousness, but says with David, "Enter not into judgment with your servant; for in your sight shall no man living be justified." (Ps. 143:2) Again, "If you, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Ps. 130:3.)

No man is to despair of salvation just because he is aware of the lust of the flesh. Let him be aware of it so long as he does not yield to it. The passion of lust, wrath, and other vices may shake him, but they are not to get him down. Sin may assail him, but he is not to welcome it. Yes, the better Christian a man is, the more he will experience the heat of the conflict. This explains the many expressions of regret in the Psalms and in the entire Bible. Everybody is to determine his peculiar weakness and guard against it. Watch and wrestle in spirit against your weakness. Even if you cannot completely overcome it, at least you ought to fight against it.

According to this description a saint is not one who is made of wood and never feels any lusts or desires of the flesh. A true saint confesses his righteousness and prays that his sins may be forgiven. The whole Church prays for the forgiveness of sins and confesses that it believes in the forgiveness of sins. If our antagonists would read the Scriptures they would soon discover that they cannot judge rightly of anything, either of sin or of holiness.

Verse 18. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Here someone may object: "How come we are not under the law? You yourself say, Paul, that we have the flesh which wars against the Spirit, and brings us into subjection."

But Paul says not to let it trouble us. As long as we are led by the Spirit, and are willing to obey the Spirit who resists the flesh, we are not under the Law. True believers are not under the Law. The Law cannot condemn them although they feel sin and confess it.

Great then is the power of the Spirit. Led by the Spirit, the Law cannot condemn the believer though he commits real sin. For Christ in whom we believe is our righteousness. He is without sin, and the Law cannot accuse Him. As long as we cling to Him we are led by

the Spirit and are free from the Law. Even as he teaches good works, the Apostle does not lose sight of the doctrine of justification, but shows at every turn that it is impossible for us to be justified by works.

The words, "If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law," are replete with comfort. It happens at times that anger, hatred, impatience, carnal desire, fear, sorrow, or some other lust of the flesh so overwhelms a man that he cannot shake them off, though he try ever so hard. What should he do? Should he despair? God forbid. Let him say to himself: "My flesh seems to be on a warpath against the Spirit again. Go to it, flesh, and rage all you want to. But you are not going to have your way. I follow the leading of the Spirit."

When the flesh begins to cut up the only remedy is to take the sword of the Spirit, the word of salvation, and fight against the flesh. If you set the Word out of sight, you are helpless against the flesh. I know this to be a fact. I have been assailed by many violent passions, but as soon as I took hold of some Scripture passage, my temptations left me. Without the Word I could not have helped myself against the flesh.

Verse 19. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these.

Paul is saying: "That none of you may hide behind the plea of ignorance I will enumerate first the works of the flesh, and then also the works of the Spirit."

There were many hypocrites among the Galatians, as there are also among us, who pretend to be Christians and talk much about the Spirit, but they walk not according to the Spirit; rather according to the flesh. Paul is out to show them that they are not as holy as they like to have others think they are.

Every period of life has its own peculiar temptations. Not one true believer whom the flesh does not again and again incite to impatience, anger, pride. But it is one thing to be tempted by the flesh, and another thing to yield to the flesh, to do its bidding without fear or remorse, and to continue in sin.

Christians also fall and perform the lusts of the flesh. David fell horribly into adultery. Peter also fell grievously when he denied Christ. However great these sins were, they were not committed to spite God, but from weakness. When their sins were brought to their attention these men did not obstinately continue in their sin,

but repented. Those who sin through weakness are not denied pardon as long as they rise again and cease to sin. There is nothing worse than to continue in sin. If they do not repent, but obstinately continue to fulfill the desires of the flesh, it is a sure sign that they are not sincere.

No person is free from temptations. Some are tempted in one way, others in another way. One person is more easily tempted to bitterness and sorrow of spirit, blasphemy, distrust, and despair. Another is more easily tempted to carnal lust, anger, envy, covetousness. But no matter to which sins we are disposed, we are to walk in the Spirit and resist the flesh. Those who are Christ's own crucify their flesh.

Some of the old saints labored so hard to attain perfection that they lost the capacity to feel anything. When I was a monk I often wished I could see a saint. I pictured him as living in the wilderness, abstaining from meat and drink and living on roots and herbs and cold water. This weird conception of those awesome saints I had gained out of the books of the scholastics and church fathers. But we know now from the Scriptures who the true saints are. Not those who live a single life, or make a fetish of days, meats, clothes, and such things. The true saints are those who believe that they are justified by the death of Christ. Whenever Paul writes to the Christians here and there he calls them the holy children and heirs of God. All who believe in Christ, whether male or female, bond or free, are saints; not in view of their own works, but in view of the merits of God which they appropriate by faith. Their holiness is a gift and not their own personal achievement.

Ministers of the Gospel, public officials, parents, children, masters, servants, etc., are true saints when they take Christ for their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and when they fulfill the duties of their several vocations according to the standard of God's Word and repress the lust and desires of the flesh by the Spirit. Not everybody can resist temptations with equal facilities. Imperfections are bound to show up. But this does not prevent them from being holy. Their unintentional lapses are forgiven if they pull themselves together by faith in Christ. God forbid that we should sit in hasty judgment on those who are weak in faith and life, as long as they love the Word of God and make use of the supper of the Lord.

I thank God that He has permitted me to see (what as a monk I so

earnestly desired to see) not one but many saints, whole multitudes of true saints. Not the kind of saints the papists admire, but the kind of saints Christ wants. I am sure I am one of Christ's true saints. I am baptized. I believe that Christ my Lord has redeemed me from all my sins, and invested me with His own eternal righteousness and holiness. To hide in caves and dens, to have a bony body, to wear the hair long in the mistaken idea that such departures from normalcy will obtain some special regard in heaven is not the holy life. A holy life is to be baptized and to believe in Christ, and to subdue the flesh with the Spirit.

To feel the lusts of the flesh is not without profit to us. It prevents us from being vain and from being puffed up with the wicked opinion of our own work-righteousness. The monks were so inflated with the opinion of their own righteousness, they thought they had so much holiness that they could afford to sell some of it to others, although their own hearts convinced them of unholiness. The Christian feels the unholy condition of his heart, and it makes him feel so low that he cannot trust in his good works. He therefore goes to Christ to find perfect righteousness. This keeps a Christian humble.

VERSES 19, 20. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft . . .

Paul does not enumerate all the works of the flesh, but only certain ones. First, he mentions various kinds of carnal lusts, as adultery, fornication, wantonness, etc. But carnal lust is not the only work of the flesh, and so he counts among the works of the flesh also idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, and the like. These terms are so familiar that they do not require lengthy explanations.

IDOLATRY

The best religion, the most fervent devotion without Christ is plain idolatry. It has been considered a holy act when the monks in their cells meditate upon God and His works, and in a religious frenzy kneel down to pray and to weep for joy. Yet Paul calls it simply idolatry. Every religion which worships God in ignorance or neglect of His Word and will is idolatry.

They may think about God, Christ, and heavenly things, but they do it after their own fashion and not after the Word of God. They have an idea that their clothing, their mode of living, and their conduct are holy and pleasing to Christ. They not only expect to pacify

Christ by the strictness of their life, but also expect to be rewarded by Him for their good deeds. Hence their best "spiritual" thoughts are wicked thoughts. Any worship of God, any religion without Christ is idolatry. In Christ alone is God well pleased.

I have said before that the works of the flesh are manifest. But idolatry puts on such a good front and acts so spiritual that the sham of it is recognized only by true believers.

WITCHCRAFT

This sin was very common before the light of the Gospel appeared. When I was a child there were many witches and sorcerers around who "bewitched" cattle, and people, particularly children, and did much harm. But now that the Gospel is here you do not hear so much about it because the Gospel drives the devil away. Now he bewitches people in a worse way with spiritual sorcery.

Witchcraft is a brand of idolatry. As witches used to bewitch cattle and men, so idolaters, i.e., all the self-righteous, go around to bewitch God and to make Him out as one who justifies men not by grace through faith in Christ but by the works of men's own choosing. They bewitch and deceive themselves. If they continue in their wicked thoughts of God they will die in their idolatry.

SECTS

Under sects Paul here understands heresies. Heresies have always been found in the church. What unity of faith can exist among all the different monks and the different orders? None whatever. There is no unity of spirit, no agreement of minds, but great dissension in the papacy. There is no conformity in doctrine, faith, and life. On the other hand, among evangelical Christians the Word, faith, religion, sacraments, service, Christ, God, heart, and mind are common to all. This unity is not disturbed by outward differences of station or of occupation.

DRUNKENNESS, GLUTTONY

Paul does not say that eating and drinking are works of the flesh, but intemperance in eating and drinking, which is a common vice nowadays, is a work of the flesh. Those who are given to excess are to know that they are not spiritual but carnal. Sentence is pronounced upon them that they shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven. Paul desires that Christians avoid drunkenness and gluttony, that they live temperate and sober lives, in order that the body may not grow soft and sensual.

Verse 21. Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in the past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

This is a hard saying, but very necessary for those false Christians and hypocrites who speak much about the Gospel, about faith, and the Spirit, yet live after the flesh. But this hard sentence is directed chiefly at the heretics who are large with their own self-importance, that they may be frightened into taking up the fight of the Spirit against the flesh.

VERSES 22, 23. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

The Apostle does not speak of the works of the Spirit as he spoke of the works of the flesh, but he attaches to these Christian virtues a better name. He calls them the fruits of the Spirit.

LOVE

It would have been enough to mention only the single fruit of love, for love embraces all the fruits of the Spirit. In I Corinthians 13, Paul attributes to love all the fruits of the Spirit: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind," etc. Here he lets love stand by itself among other fruits of the Spirit to remind the Christians to love one another, "in honor preferring one another," to esteem others more than themselves because they have Christ and the Holy Ghost within them.

JOY

Joy means sweet thoughts of Christ, melodious hymns and psalms, praises and thanksgiving, with which Christians instruct, inspire, and refresh themselves. God does not like doubt and dejection. He hates dreary doctrine, gloomy and melancholy thought. God likes cheerful hearts. He did not send His Son to fill us with sadness, but to gladden our hearts. For this reason the prophets, apostles, and Christ Himself urge, yes, command us to rejoice and be glad. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, your king comes to you." (Zech. 9:9.) In the Psalms we are repeatedly told to be "joyful in the Lord." Paul says: "Rejoice in the Lord always." Christ says: "Rejoice, for your names are written in heaven."

PEACE

Peace towards God and men. Christians are to be peaceful and quiet. Not argumentative, not hateful, but thoughtful and patient.

There can be no peace without longsuffering, and therefore Paul lists this virtue next.

LONGSUFFERING

Longsuffering is that quality which enables a person to bear adversity, injury, reproach, and makes them patient to wait for the improvement of those who have done him wrong. When the devil finds that he cannot overcome certain persons by force he tries to overcome them in the long run. He knows that we are weak and cannot stand anything long. Therefore he repeats his temptation time and again until he succeeds. To withstand his continued assaults we must be longsuffering and patiently wait for the devil to get tired of his game.

GENTLENESS

Gentleness in conduct and life. True followers of the Gospel must not be sharp and bitter, but gentle, mild, courteous, and soft-spoken, which should encourage others to seek their company. Gentleness can overlook other people's faults and cover them up. Gentleness is always glad to give in to others. Gentleness can get along with forward and difficult persons, according to the old pagan saying: "You must know the manners of your friends, but you must not hate them." Such a gentle person was our Savior Jesus Christ, as the Gospel portrays Him. Of Peter it is recorded that he wept whenever he remembered the sweet gentleness of Christ in His daily contact with people. Gentleness is an excellent virtue and very useful in every walk of life.

GOODNESS

A person is good when he is willing to help others in their need.

FAITH

In listing faith among the fruits of the Spirit, Paul obviously does not mean faith in Christ, but faith in men. Such faith is not suspicious of people but believes the best. Naturally the possessor of such faith will be deceived, but he lets it pass. He is ready to believe all men, but he will not trust all men. Where this virtue is lacking men are suspicious, forward, and wayward and will believe nothing nor yield to anybody. No matter how well a person says or does anything, they will find fault with it, and if you do not humor them you can never please them. It is quite impossible to get along with them. Such faith in people therefore, is quite necessary. What kind of life would this be if one person could not believe another person?

MEEKNESS

A person is meek when he is not quick to get angry. Many things occur in daily life to provoke a person's anger, but the Christian gets over his anger by meekness.

TEMPERANCE

Christians are to lead sober and chaste lives. They should not be adulterers, fornicators, or sensualists. They should not be quarrelers or drunkards. In the first and second chapters of the Epistle to Titus, the Apostle admonishes bishops, young women, and married folks to be chaste and pure.

Verse 23. Against such there is no law.

There is a law, of course, but it does not apply to those who bear these fruits of the Spirit. The Law is not given for the righteous man. A true Christian conducts himself in such a way that he does not need any law to warn or to restrain him. He obeys the Law without compulsion. The Law does not concern him. As far as he is concerned there would not have to be any Law.

Verse 24. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

True believers are no hypocrites. They crucify the flesh with its evil desires and lusts. Inasmuch as they have not altogether put off the sinful flesh they are inclined to sin. They do not fear or love God as they should. They are likely to be provoked to anger, to envy, to impatience, to carnal lust, and other emotions. But they will not do the things to which the flesh incites them. They crucify the flesh with its evil desires and lusts by fasting and exercise and, above all, by a walk in the Spirit.

To resist the flesh in this manner is to nail it to the Cross. Although the flesh is still alive it cannot very well act upon its desires because it is bound and nailed to the Cross.

Verse 25. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. A little while ago the Apostle had condemned those who are envious and start heresies and schisms. As if he had forgotten that he had already berated them, the Apostle once more reproves those who provoke and envy others. Was not one reference to them sufficient? He repeats his admonition in order to emphasize the viciousness of pride that had caused all the trouble in the churches of Galatia, and has always caused the Church of Christ no end of difficulties. In his

Epistle to Titus the Apostle states that a vainglorious man should not be ordained as a minister, for pride, as St. Augustine points out, is the mother of all heresies.

Now vainglory has always been a common poison in the world. There is no village too small to contain someone who wants to be considered wiser or better than the rest. Those who have been bitten by pride usually stand upon the reputation for learning and wisdom. Vainglory is not nearly so bad in a private person or even in an official as it is in a minister.

When the poison of vainglory gets into the Church you have no idea what havoc it can cause. You may argue about knowledge, art, money, countries, and the like without doing particular harm. But you cannot quarrel about salvation or damnation, about eternal life and eternal death without grave damage to the Church. No wonder Paul exhorts all ministers of the Word to guard against this poison. He writes: "If we live in the Spirit." Where the Spirit is, men gain new attitudes. Where formerly they were vainglorious, spiteful and envious, they now become humble, gentle and patient. Such men seek not their own glory, but the glory of God. They do not provoke each other to wrath or envy, but prefer others to themselves.

As dangerous to the Church as this abominable pride is, yet there is nothing more common. The trouble with the ministers of Satan is that they look upon the ministry as a stepping-stone to fame and glory, and right there you have the seed for all sorts of dissensions.

Because Paul knew that the vainglory of the false Apostles had caused the churches of Galatia endless trouble, he makes it his business to suppress this abominable vice. In his absence the false apostles went to work in Galatia. They pretended that they had been on intimate terms with the apostles, while Paul had never seen Christ in person or had much contact with the rest of the apostles. Because of this they delivered him, rejected his doctrine, and boosted their own. In this way they troubled the Galatians and caused quarrels among them until they provoked and envied each other; which goes to show that neither the false apostles nor the Galatians walked after the Spirit, but after the flesh.

The Gospel is not there for us to aggrandize ourselves. The Gospel is to aggrandize Christ and the mercy of God. It holds out to men eternal gifts that are not gifts of our own manufacture. What right have we to receive praise and glory for gifts that are not of our own making?

No wonder that God in His special grace subjects the ministers of the Gospel to all kinds of afflictions, otherwise they could not cope with this ugly beast called vainglory. If no persecution, no cross, or reproach trailed the doctrine of the Gospel, but only praise and reputation, the ministers of the Gospel would choke with pride. Paul had the Spirit of Christ. Nevertheless there was given to him the messenger of Satan to buffet him in order that he should not come to exalt himself, because of the grandeur of his revelations. St. Augustine's opinion is well taken: "If a minister of the Gospel is praised, he is in danger; if he is despised, he is also in danger."

The ministers of the Gospel should be men who are not too easily affected by praise or criticism, but simply speak out the benefit and the glory of Christ and seek the salvation of souls.

Whenever you are being praised, remember it is not you who is being praised but Christ, to whom all praise belongs. When you preach the Word of God in its purity and also live accordingly, it is not your own doing, but God's doing. And when people praise you, they really mean to praise God in you. When you understand this—and you should because "what have you that you didst not receive?"—you will not flatter yourself on the one hand and on the other hand you will not carry yourself with the thought of resigning from the ministry when you are insulted, reproached, or persecuted.

It is really kind of God to send so much infamy, reproach, hatred, and cursing our way to keep us from getting proud of the gifts of God in us. We need a millstone around our neck to keep us humble. There are a few on our side who love and revere us for the ministry of the Word, but for every one of these there are a hundred on the other side who hate and persecute us.

The Lord is our glory. Such gifts as we possess we acknowledge to be the gifts of God, given to us for the good of the Church of Christ. Therefore we are not proud because of them. We know that more is required of them to whom much is given, than of such to whom little is given. We also know that God is no respecter of persons. A plain factory hand who does his work faithfully pleases God just as much as a minister of the Word.

Verse 26. Let us not be desirous of vain glory.

To desire vainglory is to desire lies, because when one person praises another he tells lies. What is there in anybody to praise? But it is different when the ministry is praised. We should not only

desire people to praise the ministry of the Gospel but also do our utmost to make the ministry worthy of praise because this will make the ministry more effective. Paul warns the Romans not to bring Christianity into disrepute. "Let not then your good be evil spoken of." (Rom. 14:16.) He also begged the Corinthians to "give no offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed." (I Cor. 6:3.) When people praise our ministry they are not praising our persons, but God.

Verse 26. Provoking one another, envying one another.

Such is the ill effect of vainglory. Those who teach errors provoke others. When others disapprove and reject the doctrine the teachers of errors get angry in turn, and then you have strife and trouble. The sectarians hate us furiously because we will not approve their errors. We did not attack them directly. We merely called attention to certain abuses in the Church. They did not like it and became sore at us, because it hurt their pride. They wish to be the lone rulers of the church.