

John Calvin

SERMONS ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD

Table of Contents

First Sermon—Matthew 26:36-39.....1
Second Sermon—Matthew 26:40-50.....9
Third Sermon—Matthew 26:51-66.17
Fourth Sermon—Matthew 26:67-27:10.....25
Fifth Sermon—Matthew 27:11-26.....34
Sixth Sermon—Matthew 27:27-44.....42
Seventh Sermon—Matthew 27:45-54.....50
Eighth Sermon—Matthew 27:55-60.....59

First Sermon—Matthew 26:36-39.

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.—Matthew 26:36-39

When Scripture speaks to us of our salvation it proposes to us three aims. One is that we recognize the inestimable love God has shown toward us, so that He may be glorified by us as He deserves. Another, that we hold our sin in such detestation as is proper, and that we be sufficiently ashamed to humble ourselves before the majesty of our God. The third, that we value our salvation in such a manner that it makes us forsake the world and all that pertains to this frail life, and that we be overjoyed with that inheritance which has been acquired for us at such a price. This is what we ought to fix our attention upon and apply our minds to when it is mentioned to us how the Son of God has redeemed us from eternal death and has acquired for us the heavenly life. We ought, then, in the first place to learn to give God the praise He deserves. In fact, He was well able to rescue us from the unfathomable depths of death in another fashion, but He willed to display the treasures of His infinite goodness when He spared not His only Son. And our Lord Jesus in this matter willed to give us a sure pledge of the care which He had for us when He offered Himself voluntarily to death. For we never shall be keenly touched nor set on fire to praise our God, unless on the other hand we examine our condition, and see that we are as sunk in hell, and know what it is to have provoked the wrath of God and to have Him for a mortal enemy and a judge so terrible and appalling that it would be much better if heaven and earth and all creatures would conspire against us than to approach His majesty while it is unfavorable toward us. So it is very necessary that sinners should be broken-hearted with a feeling and an understanding of their faults, and that they should know themselves to be worse than wretched, so that they may have a horror at their condition, in order that in this way they may know how much they are indebted and obligated to God, that He has pitied them, that He sees them in despair, and that He has been kind enough to help them; not because He sees in

them any dignity, but only because He looks upon their wretchedness. Now the fact is also (as we have said), forasmuch as we are surrounded by too much here below and that when God has called us to Himself we are held back by our affection and covetousness, that it is necessary to prize the heavenly life as it deserves, that we may know at how great an expense it was bought for us.

And that is why it is here narrated to us that not only our Lord Jesus Christ has been willing to suffer death and has offered Himself as a sacrifice to pacify the wrath of God His Father, but in order that He might be truly and wholly our pledge, He did not refuse to bear the agonies which are prepared for all those whose consciences rebuke them and who feel themselves guilty of eternal death and damnation before God. Let us note well, then, that the Son of God was not content merely to offer His flesh and blood and to subject them to death, but He willed in full measure to appear before the judgment seat of God His Father in the name and in the person of all sinners, being then ready to be condemned, inasmuch as He bore our burden. And we need no longer be ashamed, since the Son of God exposed Himself to such humiliation. It is not without cause that St. Paul exhorts us by his example not to be ashamed of the preaching of the Cross; however foolish it may be to some and a stumbling-block to many. For the more our Lord Jesus abased Himself the more we see that the offenses on account of which we are indebted to God could not be abolished unless He were abased to the last degree. And, in fact, we know that He has been made weak in order that we might be made strong by His virtue, and that He has been willing to bear all our sufferings, sin excepted, so that He may be ready today to help us. For if He had not felt in His person the fears, the doubts, and the torments which we endure, He would not be so inclined to be pitiful toward us as He is. It is said that a man who knows what neither hunger nor thirst is will not be moved with compassion or humanity toward those who endure them, because he has always been at his ease and has lived in his pleasures. Now it is true that God, although in His nature He endures none of our passions, does not cease to be humane toward us, because He is the fountain of all goodness and mercy. However, in order that we may be assured that our Lord Jesus knows our weaknesses in order to relieve us of them, and that we may come so much more boldly to Him and we may speak to Him more familiarly, the Apostle says that for this cause He was willing to be tempted like us.

So, then, we have to notice in the text we have read that when our Lord Jesus came into this village of Gethsemane, and even on the mountain of olives, that it was to offer Himself as a voluntary sacrifice. And in that He willed to fulfill the office and the charge which was committed to Him. For why did He assume our flesh and nature, unless to make reparation for all our rebellion by His obedience, to acquire for us full and perfect righteousness before God his Father? And still He came to present Himself for death, because we can not be reconciled nor can we pacify the wrath of God which had been provoked by sin, except by His obedience.

This, then, is why the Son of God came boldly to the place where He knew that Judas would find Him. And thus we know that it was necessary, since our father Adam by his rebellion had ruined us all, that the Son of God, who has sovereign control over all creatures, should subject Himself and assume the condition of a servant, as also He is called both a Servant of God and of all His own. And that is also why St. Paul, showing that we must have some support to call upon Him in full confidence that we shall be heard as His children, says that by the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ we are recognized to be righteous. For it is as a mantle to cover all our sins and offenses, so that the thing which could prevent us from obtaining grace is not taken into account before God. But on the other hand we see that the price of our redemption has been very dear, when our Lord Jesus Christ is in such agony that He undergoes

the terrors of death, indeed, until sweat as drops of blood by which He is, as it were, beside Himself praying if it be possible that He might escape such a distress. When we see that, it is enough to bring us to a knowledge of our sins. There is no possibility of lulling us to sleep here by flattery when we see that the Son of God is plunged into such an extremity that it seems that He is at the depth of the abyss. If that had happened only to a righteous man, we might be touched, of course, because it was necessary that a poor innocent endured for our ransom that which happened to the Son of God. But here is He Who is the fountain of life Who subjects Himself to death. Here is He Who sustains all the world by His power Who is made weak to this degree. Here is He Who rescues the creatures from all fear Who has to undergo such a horror. When, then, that is declared to us, we would be more than stupid, if each one of us would not meditate on that, and, being disgusted by his faults and iniquities, would not be ashamed before God, gasping and groaning, and if even by this means we were not led to God with a true repentance.

Now it is impossible that men become rightly converted to God unless they are condemned in themselves and they have conceded both the terror and the agony of the malediction which is prepared for them unless they are restored to grace with God. But again, to better understand the whole it is said that our Lord Jesus took only three of His disciples and left the company at quite a distance, and again those three He did not take all the way with Him, but He prayed to God His Father in secret. When we see that, we must notice that our Lord Jesus had no companion when He offered Himself as a sacrifice for us, but He alone completed and accomplished that which was required for our salvation. And even that is again better indicated to us, when the disciples sleep, and cannot even be awakened, although they had already been warned so many times that the hour was approaching in which our Lord Jesus would have to suffer for the redemption of mankind, and that He had exhorted them for three or four hours, never ceasing to declare to them that His death was approaching. However true all that may be, they do not cease to sleep. In this it is shown to us as in a vivid picture that it was most necessary that the Son of God bear all our burdens, for He could not expect anything else. And that is in order that our attention may be fixed so as not to wander in thought, as we see the poor unbelievers who cannot fix their attention upon our Lord Jesus Christ but who imagine that they must have patrons and advocates as if there were many redeemers. And we see even the blasphemies which are the rule in this wicked papacy, that the merits of the saints are to help the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, in order that by this means we may be freed and acquitted before God. Even if there had been, say they, general remission as far as the guilt of original sin as well as of actual sins is concerned; still there must be an admixture and the blood of Jesus Christ is not enough unless it is supplemented by the blood of the martyrs, and we must have our refuge in them in order to have God's favor. When the devil has thus broken loose we ought all the more to be watched that we hold fast to our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that in Him alone we must find the full perfection of salvation. And that is why it is said notably by the Prophet Isaiah that God marveled, seeing that there was no help anywhere else.

Now it is true that God well knew that He alone had to perfect our salvation, but it is in order that we may be ashamed and that we may not be hypocrites as if we have brought anything to help in the remission of our sins and to make God receive us in His grace and love, so that we do not run from one side to the other to find mediators. So that any such idea may be banished, it is said that God has used His own arm, and that He has completed all by His righteousness, and He has found no one to help Him. Now that is declared to us with extreme clearness when it is said that three of the disciples, those who were the flower of all, were sleeping there as poor beasts and that there was nothing else than brutal stupidity in them, that which is a monstrosity against nature to see that they slept at such a fatal moment. Then in order that our confidence be

turned away from all creatures and that it be entirely shut up to our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore it is said that He advanced to the combat. Besides in addressing God His Father He well shows us the remedy for our relief from all our agonies, to soften our sorrows, and even to raise us above them, even though we were, as it were, sunk under them. For if we are troubled and in agony we know that God is not called in vain the Father of Consolation. If, then, we are separated from Him, where shall we find strength unless in Him? We see, however, that He has not willed to spare Himself when we needed Him. So it is the Son of God Who leads us by His example to the true refuge when we are in sorrow and agony.

But let us notice also the form of prayer which He uses: "Father, if it be possible let this chalice be removed from me," or this drink, for it is a figure of speech whether He speaks of a goblet or of a glass or of a cup, all the more so because Scripture calls afflictions bitter drinks in order that we may know that nothing happens by chance, but that God as a father of a family distributes to each one of his children his portion, or as a master to his servants, thus God shows that it is from Him and from His hand that they are beaten and afflicted, and also when we receive good things that they proceed from His unmerited loving-kindness and He gives us as much as He wants to give us. Now according to this way of proceeding our Lord Jesus says that death is for Him such a bitter drink that He would prefer that it were taken away from Him, that is, "if it were possible." It is true that one could raise here many questions, for it would seem that for an instant Jesus Christ forgot our salvation or, still worse, that fleeing from the struggle He willed to leave us in a lost estate on account of the terror which He felt.

Now that would not agree with what we have said. And even the love which He has shown us would be much obscured. But we do not have to enter upon any dispute so subtle, because we know that suffering sometimes so ravishes the spirit of a man that he does not think of anything; but he is so weighed down by present suffering that he lets it get him down and has no regard for the means of restoring himself. When, then, we are thus temporarily out of ourselves that does not mean that everything else is entirely blotted out from our hearts and that we have no affection. As for example, he who will think on some affliction of the Church, especially a particular affliction, will pray to God as if the rest of the world were to him as nothing. Now is that to say that he has grown inhuman and that he is not concerned for his brothers who also have need that he should pray for them? Not at all, but it is that this feeling drives him with such a vehemence that everything else is cut off from him for a time. Moses prays to be removed from the book of life. If we would want to split hairs about it we would say that Moses blasphemed against God in speaking as if He were variable. For those whom God has elected to eternal life can never perish. So it seems that Moses fights here against God and that he wants to make Him like us whose counsel and talk often changes. And then what honor does he to God when he knows that he is of the number of His elect, and he knows that God had marked him from his infancy to be committed to a charge so excellent as being a leader of his people and yet he asks to be, as it were, rejected and exterminated by God? And what would that lead to? One could, then, do much arguing. But the solution is easy in that Moses, having such an ardent zeal for the salvation of the people, seeing also the horrible threat that God had pronounced with His mouth, forgets himself for a little time and for a minute, and only asks that he may help his people. To this state of mind our Lord Jesus had been brought. For if it had been necessary for Him to suffer a hundred deaths, even a million, it is certain that He would have been prepared previously. But so He has willed not so much for Himself as for us to bear the agonies which plunge Him even to that point, as we see. So much for point one.

Now for the second. If anyone asks how Jesus Christ, Who is entirely righteous, Who has been the Lamb without blemish, and Who has been even the rule and the mirror of all

righteousness, holiness, and perfection, has a will contradictory to that of God; the answer to that is that God has in Himself all perfection of uprightness, while the angels, however much they conform to the will of God and are entirely obedient to Him, nevertheless have a separate will. For inasmuch as they are creatures, they can have affections which do not belong by rights to God. As for us who are surrounded by this mass of sin, we are so burdened that we are far removed from the will of God, for in all our appetites there is some excess, there is even rebellion manifest oftentimes. But if we consider man in his integrity, that is to say without this corruption of sin, again it is certain that he will have his affections far removed from God, and yet they will not on that account be vicious. As when Adam was not yet perverted and he persisted in the estate and condition in which he had been created, it happened that he was both hot and cold and that he had to endure both anxieties and fears and like things.

That is how it was with our Lord Jesus Christ. We know that in all His feelings He had neither spot nor blemish, that in everything He was ruled by obedience to God, but still He was not prevented (because He had taken our nature) from being exposed both to fear, and to that horror of which it is now spoken, and to anxieties, and to like things. We are not able to perceive that in ourselves, as in troubled water one can distinguish nothing. So, the human affections make us drift from one side to the other to give us such emotions that we need to be restrained by God. But such as men have, being descended from Adam, are as a mire where there is a more and more mixed up infection of the kind that we cannot contemplate what this passion of our Lord Jesus Christ must have been, if we judge it by our own persons. For even if we have a good aim and an affection is upright in itself and approved by God, still we always lack something. Is it not a good and holy thing when a father loves his children? And right there we sin again. For there is never rule or moderation such as is required. For whatever virtues there are in us God shows us vices in them in order that all pride be more abased and that we have all the more occasion to bow our heads, even to be confounded with shame, seeing that even the good is corrupted by the sin which dwells in us and of which we are filled to excess.

Besides, as far as our Lord Jesus Christ is concerned (as I have already said) we ought not to be surprised if He had (insofar as He was man) a will different from that of God His Father, but on that account we must not judge that here was any vice or transgression in Him. And even (as we have already noted) in that let us see the inestimable love He bore toward us when death was to Him so dreadful and, nevertheless, He submitted to it of His own good pleasure. And even if He had not had any repugnance toward it, and even if without reluctance He tasted that cup, without feeling any bitterness in it, what kind of a redemption would that have been? It would seem as if it had only been a play, but when it happened that our Lord Jesus Christ endured such agonies it is a sign that He loved us to such a degree that He forgot even Himself and suffered that all the storm fell on His head in order that we might be delivered from the wrath of God.

Now it still remains to note that when the Son of God agonized in such a way it was not because He had to leave the world. For if it had only been the separation of body and soul, with the torments which He had to endure in His body, that would not have borne Him down to such a degree. But we must observe the quality of His death and even trace its origin. For death is not only to dissolve man, but to make him feel the curse of God. Beyond the fact that God takes us out of this world and that we are as annihilated with respect to this life, death is to us an entrance, as it were, into the abyss of hell. We would be alienated from God and devoid of all hope of salvation when death is spoken of to us unless we have this remedy—that our Lord Jesus Christ endured it for our sakes in order that now the wound which was there shall not be fatal. For without Him we would be so frightened by death that there would no longer be hope of

salvation for us, but now its sting is broken. Even the poison is so cleansed that death in humiliating us serves us today like medicine and is no longer fatal now that Jesus Christ swallowed all the poison that was in it.

This, then, is what we must bear in mind, that the Son of God in crying out "Father, if it be possible, let this drink be removed from me" considers not only what He had to suffer in His body, nor the disgrace of men, nor leaving the earth (for that was easy enough for Him), but He considers that He is before God and before His judicial throne to answer for all our sins, to see there all the curses of God which are ready to fall upon us. For even if there be only a single sinner, what would the wrath of God be? When it is said that God is against us, that He wants to display His power to destroy us, alas! where are we then? Now it was necessary for Jesus Christ to fight not only against such a terror but against all the cruelties one could inflict. When, then, we see that God summons all those who have deserved eternal damnation and who are guilty of sin and that He is there to pronounce sentence such as they have deserved, who would not conceive in full measure all the deaths, doubts and terrors which could be in each one? And what a depth will there be in that! Now it was necessary that our Lord Jesus Christ by Himself without aid sustained such a burden. So then, let us judge the sorrow of the Son of God by its true cause. Let us now return to what we have already discussed—that in one respect we may realize how costly our salvation was to Him and how precious our souls were to Him when He was willing to go to such an extremity for our sakes, and knowing what we deserved let us look at what would have been our condition—if we had not been rescued by Him. And yet let us rejoice that death has no more power over us that could hurt us. It is true that always we naturally fear death and we run away from it, but that is in order to make us think of this inestimable benefit which has been acquired for us by the death of the Son of God. This is in order to make us always consider what death is in itself, how it involves the wrath of God, and it is, as it were, the pit of hell. Besides, when we have to fight against such fear may we know that our Lord Jesus Christ has so provided for all those fears that in the midst of death we can come before God with uplifted heads.

It is true that we have to humble ourselves before all things, as we have already said, that it is very necessary in order that we should hate our sins and be displeased with ourselves that we be touched by the judgment of God to be frightened by it. But still we must raise our heads when God calls us to Himself. And this is also the courage which is given to all believers! So we see that St. Paul says, Jesus Christ has prepared a crown for all those who wait for His coming. If, then, we no longer have hope of life in coming before the heavenly Judge, it is certain that we shall be rejected by Him and that He will not know us, even that He will disown us, however much profession of Christianity we may make.

Now we cannot really wait for our Lord Jesus Christ unless we have understood and are persuaded that He has so fought against the terrors of death that nevertheless we are freed from them and that the victory has been gained for us. And even if we have to fight to make us feel our infirmity, to make us seek refuge in God, always to bring us to a true confession of our sins, so that God Himself alone be righteous, it is nevertheless true that we are assured that Jesus Christ has so fought that He has won the victory not for Himself but for us and we must not doubt that by means of Him we can now surmount all anxieties, all fears, all dismays, and that we can invoke God, being assured that always He has His arms extended to receive us to Himself.

This, then, is what we must consider: that we may know that it is not a speculative teaching that our Lord Jesus endured the horrible terrors of death, forasmuch as He felt that He was there before our Judge and He was our Pledge, so that today we can by virtue of His fight

win over all our infirmity and persist constantly in calling upon the Name of God, not doubting a single moment that He hears us, and that His goodness is always ready to receive us to Himself and that by this means we shall go through both life and death, through water and fire, and we shall feel that it is not in vain that our Lord Jesus fought to win such a victory for all those who have come to Him by faith. This is, then, in a word, what we have to keep in mind.

Now, however, we see how we must fight against our affections, and unless we do it is impossible for us to move a finger by which we do not in full measure provoke the wrath of God. For behold our Lord Jesus Christ Who is pure and entire, as we have already declared. If one asks what His will was, it is true it was weak as the will of a man, but it was not vicious as the will of those who are corrupted in Adam, for there was not a single spot of sin in Him. Behold, then, a man Who is exempt from every vice. But, however that may be, it is still necessary that He efface Himself and that He exert Himself to the limit and that He finally renounce Himself, and that He put all that underfoot, to yield obedience to God His Father. Let us look now at what shall become of us. What are our affections? What of our thoughts? All those are enemies that battle against God, as says; St. Paul. Here God pronounces that we are altogether perverse and that all that man can imagine is but falsehood and vanity. Even from our infancy we show that we are steeped in the complete infection of sin. Little children coming into the world, though the malice does not appear, do not always fail to be little serpents full of poison, malice and disdain. In this we truly realize what is in our nature even from the beginning. And when we have become of age, what of us then? We are (as I have said) so evil that we do not know how to conceive a single thought which is not at the same time rebellion against God, so that we do not know whether to apply ourselves to this or to that, since we are always led astray from the true norm, even if we do not come to a clash with God in a provocative way. What a fight, then, is necessary to draw us back to the good! When we see that our Lord Jesus, in Whom there was nothing but integrity and uprightness, had to be subject to God His Father, even to renouncing Himself, is it not important that we should give ourselves entirely to it?

So then, let us learn to fight more valiantly. But seeing that we are not able and that rather all our powers and faculties tend to evil and that we have not a single particle of good in our nature and that there is such a weakness that we would be conquered a hundred times each minute, we come to Him Who was made weak that we might be filled with His power, as St. Paul says. Next, so it is, then, that our Lord Jesus Christ has thus renounced Himself, that we might learn, if we wish to be His disciples, to do likewise. Seeing that we are not able of ourselves to succeed in it but that we always tend to go the wrong way, let us pray to Him that by virtue of His Holy Spirit He may rule in us to make us strong. As it is said, He suffered in the weakness of His flesh, but by virtue of His Spirit He was raised from the dead in order that we may be made partakers of the fight which He sustained and that we may realize the effect and the excellence of His power in us. This, then, in summary, is what we have to remember when it is said that Christ resigned all His will in order to submit fully to God His Father.

Now, however, we have always to remember that the Son of God does not here propose Himself to be only an example and a mirror, but He wishes to show us how dearly our salvation has cost Him. For the devil, wishing to obscure the infinite grace of God which was shown us in our redemption, has said that Jesus Christ was only, as it were, model of every virtue. Behold how the whining pretenders in all the Papal See prattle. Not only do they not know how to deduce what obedience is, nor what self-renunciation is, but they say, what the Gospel-writer recites of Jesus Christ is in order that we may follow Him and that we may be conformed to Him. Now that is, to be sure, something, but it is not all nor even the principal thing. For an angel could well have been sent that we might have followed him, but when Jesus Christ was the

Redeemer of the world He submitted and was subject of His own free will to that condition so miserable, as we see here. We must always recognize that we find nothing in us which can give hope of salvation. And therefore we must seek in Him what we lack. For we never can obtain the grace of God nor approach Him unless we come to Jesus Christ as poor beggars, which thing cannot be done until we have recognized our poverty and our indigence, in brief, that we lack everything.

This, then, is what we have to bear in mind in order that, after having heard that all the perfection of our life is to render us obedient to God and then to renounce our affections and thoughts and our whole nature to conform to Him, also after having heard that we must ask God for what we do not possess, we may know that our Lord Jesus Christ is given to us not only as an example, but He has fully declared to us that if we are separated from Him our life will necessarily be cursed and when in death we see the depth of misery that we shall see the pit of the wrath of God ready to swallow us up and that we be not seized with a single terror, but with a million, and that all creatures shall cry out vengeance against us. So we must feel all that, then, in order to recognize our sins and to groan and to be confounded in ourselves, and to have a desire and to have the courage to come to God with a true humility and repentance and that we should appreciate the goodness and mercy of our God according as it is seen here and that we should have mouths opened to give Him a sacrifice of praise, and that we should be turned away from the wiles of Satan, who has his nets spread out to retain us in the world, and that we leave also our conveniences and our comforts in order to aspire to this inheritance which was bought for us at such a price.

And since next Lord's Day we are to receive the Holy Supper and because God, after having opened to us the Kingdom of heaven, presents there to us a spiritual banquet that we may be even more touched by this teaching: In fact when we eat and drink daily for our restrengthening God declares sufficiently to us that He is our Father and that He cares for these earthly and frail bodies, so that we cannot eat a piece of bread without having the testimony that God cares for us, but in the Lord's Supper there is a special reason. For God does not fill our stomachs there, but He transports us to the Kingdom of heaven. He sets before us our Lord Jesus His Son for meat and drink. Jesus Christ is not satisfied only to receive us at His table, but He wishes to be in every respect our Food. He makes us feel by the effect that His body is truly meat to us and His blood drink. When, then, we see that our Lord Jesus so gently invites us to Him, must we not be the worst of villains if we are not drawn away from that which turns us away from Him? And even though we were coming with dragging foot, let us not fail to be grieved for our vices in order to draw near to Him and compel ourselves as far as it shall be possible for us to be detached from this world and to aspire to the Kingdom of heaven.

So then, let each one observe what benefit the Holy Supper ought to confer on us. For we see that our Lord Jesus calls us to it to be partakers of His death and passion that we should enjoy the benefit He acquired, for us and by this means we should be fully assured that God declares that we are His children and that we can claim Him openly as our Father. Let us bring a true faith knowing why our Lord Jesus was sent to us by God His Father, what His office is, and how He is still today our Mediator as He always was. Beyond that, let us try to be so united to Him, that it may be not only for each one of us that such a thing may be said, but for all in general. Let us have mutual concord and brotherhood together, since He has sustained and borne the condemnation which was pronounced by God His Father upon us all. So let us aim at that, and let each one come here not only for himself (as I have said), but let him try to draw his companions to it, and let us so urge one another on to walk steadfastly, noticing always that our life is as a road which must be followed to the end, and that we must not grow weary in the

middle of the journey, but let us profit so much day by day, and let us take trouble to approach those who are out of the road; let this be all our joy, our life, our glory and contentment, and let us so help one another until God has fully gathered us to Himself.

Now let us bow in humble reverence before the majesty of our God.

Second Sermon—Matthew 26:40-50.

And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me. And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.—Matthew 26:40-50

We have seen this morning how the Son of God, having to sustain so difficult a fight as to appear before the judgment-seat of God His Father to receive sentence of condemnation as our security, was made strong by prayer. For it was necessary that human weakness appear in Him, and it takes nothing away from His divine majesty when He has so bowed down to the dust to bring about our salvation. Now we have to note that it was not only once that He prayed. By which we see that by His example He has exhorted us not to faint if we are not heard as soon as we would wish. So, those who lose courage when our God does not respond to their first wish show that they do not know what it is to pray. For the certain rule for finding our refuge in God involves perseverance. Thus it is that the principal exercise of our faith is prayer. Now faith cannot exist without waiting. It is not possible for God to humor us as soon as we have opened our mouths and formed our request. But it is needful that He delay and that He let us languish oftentimes so that we may know what it is to call upon Him sincerely and without pretense, so that we may declare that our faith is so founded upon the Word of God that it checks us as a bridle so that we may be patient to endure until the opportune time to help us shall have come. Let us note well, then, that our Lord Jesus Christ did not pray to God His Father only once, but that He returned to it a second time.

Besides, we have to consider what we have already touched upon: that is, to know that our Lord Jesus has not formed here any trivial prayer, but He has, as it were, been willing to lay aside all selfish considerations. He Who is the power of God His Father, by Whom all the world is supported, nevertheless, forasmuch as He had to show Himself a weak man, taking our place,

being there in our stead; He has declared when He thus reiterated His prayer that it was not as a spectacle that He did it (thus several profane people imagine that when Jesus Christ appeared He suffered nothing), but it was so that we might be taught, that we cannot escape the hand of God and His curse except by this means. Now it is here declared to us (as it was this morning) that our Lord Jesus was crushed to the limit, even so far as that the burden He had received was unsupportable unless the invincible power of the Spirit of God had operated in Him. We must not think that it was superfluous language when He repeated these same words. For what is said in the other passage, that in praying to God we must not use a long babble, as those who believe that in dabbling in words they get much more, does not imply that we should not continue in our prayers, but it is to tax the hypocrisy and superstition of those who believe in breaking God's ear drums (after a manner of speaking) to persuade Him of what they want. As we see, how this folly has prevailed in the world! Again, how many there are among us who use this sorcery, how many who say no more than their Ave Maria, to whom it seems as if they have gained a great deal every time they say their Lord's Prayer, and that God will count all their words in which they dabble when they pray! Now I call that real sorcery. For they wretchedly profane the prayer which has been given us by our Lord Jesus Christ, in which He has comprehended in a brief summary all that we can ask of God and what is lawful for us to desire or ask for.

However, that does not imply that if a man is crushed in agony he should not return often to God, and that when he shall have heaved some sighs he should not begin again immediately afterwards. Supposing we come to it without ambition and without display and then that we have no idea of having gained anything by our babble, but that a dear feeling urges us on, then we have the true perseverance, similar to that of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now there is this article to note, as we have said, that the principal thing in all our prayers is that God should control us to such a degree that there is an agreement on our part to conform to His good will. That, surely, is necessary for us. Behold our Lord Jesus Christ, though all His affections were upright, holy, and conformed to righteousness, that, however, insofar as He was natural man, yet He had to fight against the agony and sorrow which might have crushed Him and He had to hold Himself captive under obedience to God His Father. How will it be with us who have nothing but malice and rebellion and who are so corrupted that we did not know how to apply our senses to anything whatever? Would not God be utterly offended? Since that is so, let us learn in praying to God so to hold ourselves in check that no one may give himself such license as he is accustomed to in following his own appetites. But let us know that we shall have profited much, being able to hold ourselves captives, in order that God may be complete master over us.

It is also a noteworthy sentence when our Lord Jesus says to His disciples, "Watch and pray in order not to enter into temptation; for if the Spirit is ready, the flesh is weak." He showed here, then, that the principal spur which ought to goad us to call upon God is that we have to fight, that our enemies are near, and that they are strong, and that we shall not be able to resist them without being helped and aided from on high, and that God fight for us. Now we know that when man is assured, he asks only to be given all his comforts and to sleep. For we do not voluntarily accept anxiety or melancholy unless necessity forces it upon us. To be sure, it is a sovereign good to have rest, or else we would be tired out. Nevertheless it is very necessary that necessity press us to be vigilant. Our Lord Jesus, then, not without cause declares that we have to sustain many alarms. For what is said only once to His disciples pertains to all of us in general, since in our lives we must always be ready to meet many temptations. For the devil is our perpetual enemy, if we are members of our Lord Jesus Christ. There will be, then, open war without ending and without ceasing.

Then let us notice what kind of enemy we have to deal with. It is not only one, but the

number is infinite. Moreover the devil has a vast number of means to cast us down; now he strikes openly, now he plots underground, and by craftiness he will have surprised us a hundred thousand times before we have thought of it. When it is only as St. Paul says that our enemies are powers who dwell in the air over our heads and that we are here as poor earthworms who only crawl below, that certainly ought to cause us to be concerned. As also St. Peter alleges this reason, that our enemy is like a lion who roars and seeks prey and who never rests. That, then, is what we have to observe in the saying of our Lord Jesus that we must be on our guard in order not to enter into temptation. Besides, although we are vigilant, though we keep good watch, yet we cannot be exempt from the devil's raising himself against us or our being assailed by him in many and diverse ways. We cannot, then, repulse the blows from afar. But before entering into combat, we must be on our guard lest we be plunged into temptation.

Let us learn, then, although the believers and children of God desire to have rest, nevertheless, they must not desire to be here at their ease. But let it be sufficient for them that God perfects His power in their weakness, as also St. Paul says that he had to pass through that. It is, I say, the condition of all the children of God to battle in this world, because they cannot serve God without opposition. But although they are weak, although they can be impeded, even often beaten down, may they be content to be helped and aided by the hand of God, and may they always lean upon this promise, that our faith will be victorious over all the world. Yet also the remedy proposed to us is that we fight. To be sure Satan is always making new beginnings to assail us, but Jesus Christ also commands us to watch. Besides, He shows that those who presume upon their own strength will be conquered by Satan a hundred thousand times before they obtain a single victory. What is needed, then? That, confessing with all humility that we can do nothing, we come to our God.

Here, then, are our real arms. It is He Who takes from us all fear and terror. It is He Who can give us assurance and resolution, that even to the end we shall remain safe and sound, that is, when we call upon God. As Solomon says, (Proverbs 18:10)

"His Name is a strong tower and the righteous man will have in Him his good and assured retreat."

Also says the Prophet Joel, "Although the world be turned upside down, whoever calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved." That is especially applied to the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ, in order that we may be entirely persuaded that, although our salvation may be, as it were, in suspense, and though we may see, as it were, a thousand hazards, yet God will always keep us in His protection, and we shall feel that His power is always near us, and ready to help us, provided we seek it by prayer of mouth and heart. That, then, in summary is what we have to remember. In order that we may be better confirmed in this doctrine, let us note that our Lord Jesus in praying not only called upon God for Himself and for His own use, but He has dedicated all our requests and prayers so that they are holy and God approves them and finds them acceptable. As it says in the seventeenth chapter of Saint John, He sanctifies Himself in order that we all may be sanctified in Him. Surely we must also conclude that He prayed in order that His prayer may avail today, and that it might have its full strength, and that by this means we might all be heard.

This consideration is very valuable when he adds, "*The Spirit is ready, but the flesh is weak.*" For it is to show that all have need of the advice which He here urged upon His disciples. For many think that they have gained all if they have some good desire. That makes them indifferent. Soon afterwards they are seized with such laziness and coldness that they recoil from

God and despise His help. That is also the cause why God often withdraws Himself and hides His power. For it is a good thing that men who confide too much in themselves find themselves frustrated and God mocks their arrogance and foolish imagination. In order, then, that both great and small may know that they cannot dispense with the help of God, and whatever graces they have received, God must still maintain in them what He has put there and even augment it that they may be strengthened, it is here said, "*The Spirit is ready, but the flesh is weak.*" That is, since we feel in us some good will, and God has already set us on the way, and has extended to us His hand, may we experience that He really governs us by His Holy Spirit. Although, then, we may have all of that, yet we must not be slow to pray. And why not? Let us consider whether there is in us only the Spirit. Surely we shall find many infirmities remaining. Although God may have already worked in such a way that we may have whereof to offer thanks to Him and to magnify His goodness; yet there is reason to bow our heads and to see that if He left us we would very soon be, I do not say weakened, but altogether fainting.

In a word, our Lord Jesus here wished to show that those who are the most perfect, the most advanced, and upon whom God has poured the graces and powers of His Holy Spirit, still must be humble, and they must walk in fear and carefulness, must call upon God every hour, knowing that it is not enough that He has begun if He does not finish. Surely every good must come from Him. When He has given the goodwill He must continue to carry it out more fully, since perseverance is the most singular and the most rare gift there is. That is why our Lord Jesus wished to exhort us. Now if those who can be called spiritual, that is, who have an ardent zeal to serve God, who are fully accustomed to have recourse to Him, who are exercised in prayer of mouth and heart to God, are still so weak that in a single moment they can be ruined unless they are calling upon God; what will happen to those who are still so earthly and so pitifully weighed down that they cannot drag their legs and they hardly have a good impulse or a single good thought? How they must have to struggle for the prize! So then, may each one of us examine himself, and we shall find that we are so lax and so dull in the matter of praying to God that there is sometimes more ceremony than feeling. Seeing that, may we learn to be displeased with ourselves for such a vice and such laxity. May we even detest such a corruption, may we take pains to call upon God, and to raise our spirits on high and to seek the remedy which is here proposed for us. That, then, in a word, is what we have to remember.

Now when it is said that the disciples went to sleep for the third time, even though they had been spurred so sharply (beyond what we discussed this morning, that is, that we see how Jesus Christ to perfect our salvation sought no other companion) let us also contemplate how slow we are. For it is certain that we have no more ability than these three who are here mentioned, and yet they were the most excellent of the company, and those whom Jesus Christ had marked as the flower of the twelve, who were to publish the Gospel to all the world. Although, then, there was already such a good beginning, yet we see how they weakened. Now it is in order that we may have recourse only to the Son of God and that we may seek in Him all that is lacking in us, and that we may not lose courage when we feel such a weakness in us. It is true that the example of the Apostles gives us no occasion at all to flatter ourselves (as many will say that they have as much right to sleep as Peter and John and James) but rather to make us displeased with our vices, that we may always know that our Lord Jesus is ready to receive us, provided we come to Him. Furthermore, there is always this special reason that we declared this morning, that it was necessary that everything that is man should give way in order that we may know that the accomplishment of our salvation is in Him who was appointed by God as our Mediator. We must also note when we are near our Lord Jesus Christ that it is then that we must be more vigilant. For the worldlings and those whom God has cut off entirely as rotten members whom He abandons, have no great fight. For the devil already has dominion over them. And that

is why they can sleep at their ease. But according as our Lord Jesus exercises toward us the grace to call us to Himself, and to draw near to us familiarly, the battles are also instigated by Satan, because he wishes to draw us back from the obedience of the Son of God. When (I say) he sees that we are on the right track, then we have all the more rude assaults. Thus may each one prepare himself, knowing for what he was called by God, and what is his charge. This, then, is, in summary, what we have to remember.

Besides, when it is said "*Sleep and rest, the hour has come*" that is, as it were, a declaration that they would soon be surprised unless God watched over them. However, He rebukes them by saying, "How now? Look where you are. For the devil is making every effort for the perdition of mankind, and in My Person the Kingdom of God must be recovered, or all creatures will perish. Yet here you are sleeping." Now this admonition hardly served for that time. But as time passed the disciples knew they must attribute all praise for their salvation to God, in view of their ingratitude, which was displayed in such brutish cowardice. So now we are admonished (as I have already mentioned) that the Son of God had to be shown to be our Redeemer by Himself alone and without aid. Besides, let us also learn that it is absolutely necessary that God watch over us even while we sleep. For how many times will it happen that the devil would have oppressed us a hundred thousand times? Yet what means have we to resist him, unless God have pity on us, although He sees us, as it were, reduced to insensibility. So that must not give us occasion to go astray and to quit addressing God in prayer. But still we must always remember this sentence from the Psalm,

"He who watches over Israel never sleeps; what is more He slumbers not." (Psalm 121:4.)

So for our part let us be vigilant, even as we are urged by this exhortation. But let us recognize that however vigilant we ourselves may be, God must still keep a careful watch. Otherwise our enemies would soon win against us.

It follows that Jesus Christ says to His disciples, "*Let us go; he who betrays Me draws near.*" He does not wish them to keep Him company (as we have already declared) except that they see how He does not spare Himself for their sakes, nor for the sake of the human race. For He presented Himself to receive all the blows and to exempt them from them, as it was necessary that this word might be fulfilled. "*He let nothing* perish of that which the heavenly Father had given Him and committed to His charge and protection." But by that he declares that He went voluntarily to death, following what we have treated this morning, that the sacrifice of obedience had to answer to wipe out all our rebellions. If Jesus Christ of His free will had not been offered to appease the wrath of God His Father, His death and passion would not have been of any use to us. But He holds Himself to it and declares that as He has put on our nature in order to accomplish our redemption, now in the supreme act, He did not wish to fail in His office.

According to the narrative, "*Judas had given a sign of Him Whom he betrayed, that it was Jesus, and that He was seized, and having arrived he kisses Him and says to Him, 'Hail, Master!'*" Now let us note that this was a manner of greeting. As in some nations they embrace, in other nations they shake hands. The Jews were entirely accustomed to this kiss, as one sees by Holy Scripture. Besides, one would find it strange that Judas, being part of the company of Jesus Christ a little while before, that is, even that same night, returns and kisses Him as if he came from a distant journey. But he uses this ceremony, because he comes there as a frightened man. And that is why the other Gospel-writer says, "Rabbi, Rabbi, Hail!" He makes believe, then, that

he is very sorry that his master is thus assailed. When he sees such a company who come to surprise Him, he draws near and kisses Jesus Christ, as if to say, "O my Master, they are looking for You, here are Your enemies who surround You, they seek to exterminate You, You will be cut off from the midst of men, once they put their hands upon You." That, then, is a sign of pity and compassion which Judas gives.

Further, it is said that Jesus Christ reproaches him, "Friend, why art thou come?" which is as if He said, "You villain, you who have been with Me at My table, you have been, as it were, of My blood, when we were united as children of God (for I being your Head, so I have recognized you as My members) and yet you come to betray Me, even by a kiss." Upon which let us note that the Son of God had to be marked, in order that Scripture might be so much better proved, and that it might be known that it was He Whom God had elected as our Redeemer. For all this had been typified in the person of David, who was, as it were, a mirror and image of the Son of God. Now it says that it is not strangers nor those who have openly declared themselves His enemies who molested and tormented Him, but "He (says He) who ate bread at My table has kicked up his heel for betrayal, he has surrounded Me, he has betrayed Me falsely." Indeed, even he (as He says in the other passage) who accompanied Me to go together into the house of the Lord." As if God said there was not only a private and human friendship, as it would be between those living in common, but that there was holy brotherhood dedicated to the name of God. This, then, is what the Holy Spirit wished to show us, that nothing happened to the Son of God which had not been testified previously and which had not been typified, in order that we may be all the better assured that it is He Who from all time had been established by God, since He bears such infallible marks.

Besides, in the person of Judas we see that the Church of God will always be subject to many betrayals. To be sure, it is something to have Satan with all his paraphernalia for an enemy, and everything we have already declared, and to have also those who fight openly against God and seek only the confusion of His Church. It is something (I say) that we have to fight against such enemies, but God still wills to prove our patience in this respect, that in our midst there may always be domestic enemies, who are full of betrayal and disloyalty. Although this plague is detestable, yet the Church never will be purged of it. Surely we must guard against it, and each one must try, as much as it is in his power, to scrape such an odor and infection. But when we shall have done all, still God will always permit that there be Judases. For since it was typified in David, and since it was fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ, we must be conformed to Him (as Saint Paul says), for He carries, as it were, the coat of arms of the house of God, being the first-born among; all believers. We must, then, have this condition in common with Him. But we can see here that it is from a frightened conscience, when God put there the spirit of disturbance, frenzy or stupidity, as He often spoke of it by His prophets. Judas, then, shows us the penalty of those who knowingly fight against God, that they must be so lost that they no longer have either sense of reason. However, they try to hide everything by hypocrisy even to saying that God forces them and that He leads them even to their final condemnation. At first glance it surely seems that these two things are opposed: (1) that a man comes to throw himself like a savage bull against God, that he has forgotten that it won't do him any good to spit at the sun, that often he wishes to spite nature, and (2) yet tries to hide himself by subterfuges, and he thinks to gain something by his hypocrisy. One will say that those two things are incompatible. But they are seen in Judas. For he had experienced the heavenly power of our Lord Jesus Christ, he had seen so many miracles, and on his part he had done them, even in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Having known, then, that the Son of God has all power both over life and over death, he betrays Him, and says he did justly. For otherwise he would have immediately escaped. Judas, then, is entirely depraved of sense and reason, and is, as it were, frantic. So it is

only by a kiss and by these sweet words, saying "Alas my Master," he does not yet allow himself to have subterfuges, thinking he will be acquitted by this means. But that is how Satan dazzles his lackeys.

Let us learn, then, in the first place, to humble ourselves that no one throw himself against this rock which is too hard. That is, may we not wage war against our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us watch carefully, then, lest we stand in this devilish rage, lest we fight against the truth, and lest we contend against our conscience, so that we knowingly provoke the wrath of God, as if we wished to defy Him. Let us guard against that. Let us not so flatter ourselves in our hypocrisy and in our fictions that we are finally cheated and deceived by them. For we see what happened to Judas (as it is mentioned in the account), that it was not necessary that a judge condemn him, that it was not necessary to compel him to recant. But he confessed that he had sold and betrayed righteous blood. However, he did not ask pardon for his misdeed, but he went away in despair to hang himself and he burst asunder. Let us be well advised, then, not to give such access to Satan that he tears our eyes when we are asleep in our sins, and not to expect by this means to escape the hand of God. But let us remove all this make-believe.

Besides, let us recognize that it is certainly commanded to us to kiss the Son of God in Psalm 2:12, but that is to do Him homage as our King and as Him Who has sovereign Dominion over all creatures. For the word "*Kiss*" implies only reverence and a solemn protestation that we are His own. As He said, "You call me Master, and you do well." But in coming to Him let us be advised not to call Him Master from the tip of the tongue while we are yet enemies to Him, not to practice toward Him a false reverence in order to kick against Him and to give Him the boot. That is, may we not be stubborn and peevish by our disloyalty, but may we show that we have sought to maintain ourselves in His Church only in order to serve our God. Let us, then, be admonished of all that. Besides, although the word of our Lord Jesus Christ did not immediately take effect upon Judas, finally by virtue of this word he had to hang himself without waiting for other condemnation.

In fact, Saint John tells us how our Lord Jesus struck like lightning, although He used only a single word against all those who came to seek Him, saying, "*I am He.*" There is a band sent by Pilate. There is a force of men gathered by the Priests. They come there furnished with clubs, swords, and other blades. Jesus Christ is alone. He is as a lamb led to the slaughter-house, as Isaiah says. And what word does He use? "*I am He.*" And all are thrown down. All fall immediately. And how comes this fall? By it we see that our Lord Jesus, although He is humbled for a time, even emptied of everything, never ceased to retain, when it seemed good to Him, His heavenly power in order to cast down all His enemies, if He had wished. Let us compare our times with what was done then. Jesus Christ had to be bound and fastened (as we shall see later). He had to let His enemies rule. For Satan had unleashed the bridle to urge them on to every rage and cruelty. This is what is said by St. Luke, "This is the reign of darkness." Be that as it may, when He said "I am He" His enemies had to be confounded. What will it be, then, when He comes in His majesty with all His Angels? When He comes to make all those who have resisted Him His footstool? When He comes with a dreadful face and an incomprehensible wrath? As Saint Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 1:8. Then how can wicked despisers of the majesty of God and of the word of our Lord Jesus Christ exist before His face? When He had thus thrown down His enemies, then He was ready to suffer and He did not use any defense. I say, even that of God His Father. As He said, He could ask that a million Angels might be sent to Him. But He abstained. Yet He surely wished to show that by His voice alone He could cast down everyone who was against Him, if He had wished.

By that we are taught to fear the word of our Lord Jesus. Although He does not converse here in a visible manner in our midst, yet since the Gospel is preached by His authority and He says, "He who hears you, hears Me;" let us learn to receive what is preached to us in His name with all reverence and to subject ourselves to it. We shall find that this word, which so caused to fall the guards and those who came against Him, will be our only foundation and prop. For how can we rejoice, except when the Son of God appear to us, and we see that He is near us, and He show us Who He is, and why He has been sent to us by God His Father? So then, it is in this word "*I am He*" that we may know, when it will please our Lord Jesus to manifest Himself as He does to all His believers, that in this word He declares to us why He calls us to Himself, why He has descended to us, and why He dwells in us by the power of His Holy Spirit, and that is wherein consists all our good and all our rest. But if we wish to be peevish and scorn the Word of God like many profane people, let us be assured that it will be a thunderbolt to cast us down into the depth of hell. So let us fear, and yet may our Lord Jesus open to us the door, and may He say to us in another fashion "Here am I," as He has not done to those who were already His declared enemies. Let us learn to come to Him.

Besides, let us also learn so to bear in patience the betrayals which we see today in the Church no matter how outrageous they may be to us, so that we shall show that we really cling to the Son of God, for He is our Head. Then may we have His truth. May we so converse with one another that we may be united in true concord and brotherhood together. That is what we have to remember.

But whatever else may be, may we accept the principal article of instruction which we must remember from this passage: namely, that the Son of God made Himself obedient in everything and by everything in order to make reparation for our rebellions. It is true (as I have said) that all the members of His body ought to be ruled by His example. There is good reason, since He Who has entire mastery and superiority is so humbled, that we be ready to obey our God unto life and unto death. Yet let us recognize that the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ in this place is special, that is, because of the fruit and the effect which proceeded from it. The Apostles have well chosen the death of Jesus Christ for an example. For they were strengthened for their needs when they had to fight for the witness of the Gospel. They were not then asleep. We see the vigilance which was in them and that they were ready to follow their calling. They even had fear neither of torments nor of the death which was presented to them when God called them for the glory of His Name, and the confession of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet they insisted principally on showing that by the pouring out of the blood of our Redeemer we are washed and cleansed of all our spots, that He made payment to God His Father for all our debts by which we were obliged, that He acquired for us perfect righteousness.

Let us recognize, then, the difference between the Head and the members. Let us learn that though by nature we are entirely given to evil, and although God may have regenerated us in part, still our flesh does not cease to chafe against God. However, by virtue of the obedience which we see in our Lord Jesus Christ, we do not cease to be acceptable to our God. If we do not yet do the good that we will, but the evil oftentimes pushes us, and there may be many failures, or perhaps we may be too slow to do good, let us look at what the Son of God suffered in order to make reparation for all our faults. Let us notice how He fought in such a way that there was no contradiction in Him when our crimes and sins were imputed to Him, as was explained more at length this morning. Let us see, then, how our Lord Jesus has made satisfaction in everything and for everything, but we today, although having taken the trouble to obey God, are not able to succeed, but we always droop our wings, must constantly repeat this: that we know that we shall not cease to be acceptable to God and that our imperfections will always be abolished by the

obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that they will not come into account before God. Besides, may each one according to the measure of his faith and of the grace which he has received exert himself to fight until we come to the heavenly rest. Seeing our weaknesses are still so great, being convinced that we shall not even know how to have a single good thought, and that having stumbled we shall not be able to raise ourselves, unless God extended to us His hand and strengthened us each minute, may we be advised to pray that He may augment in us the graces of His Holy Spirit; as He has promised it to us, and offers to us Jesus Christ for our Head and Captain, in order that after we are able to arrive at the victory which He acquired for us, of which we already experience the fruit, we shall experience it in perfection.

Now we shall bow in humble reverence before the majesty of our God.

Third Sermon—Matthew 26:51-66.

And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled. And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end. Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.—Matthew 26:51-66.

If we wished to judge superficially according to our natural senses the capture of our Lord Jesus Christ, we would be troubled by the fact that He offered no resistance. It would not seem consistent with His majesty that He suffered such shame and disgrace without hindering it. On the other hand, we would prize the zeal of Peter, since he exposed himself to death. For he saw the great multitude of enemies. He was alone, and a man who was not skilled at arms. Yet he draws out his sword on account of the love which he bears toward his Master, and prefers to die

on the field rather than allow such an injury to be done to Him. But by that we see that we must come with all humility and modesty to know where all that the Son of God did and suffered was leading, and that what seems good to us is worth nothing, but we must pray to God that He lead us and guide us by His Word and that we judge not except according to what He will have shown us. For that is how the Gospel is a scandal to many people. Others make fun of it, and all to their perdition. It is that they are inflated with presumption and are rash judges. But in order not to be deceived, we must always in the first place come back to what our Lord Jesus declares. It is the will of God His Father. That is one item. Then we have to consider the end of that which may seem strange to us. When, then, we shall have these two considerations, then there will be occasion to adore God and to know that what seems to be folly according to men is an admirable wisdom even to the Angels.

But to arrive at that, let us consider what is here told about Peter. It is said, "*Having drawn out his sword, he cut off the ear of Malchus, who was servant of Caiaphas.*" Here we see how men are too bold, when they follow their foolish opinion. Then they are so blind that they do not spare themselves under any conditions. But when they ought to obey God they are so cowardly that it is a pity. They even forget themselves in such a manner that it takes nothing to make them turn aside. That is how we shall always have hundred times more courage to follow our foolish imaginations than to do what God commands us and to do what our calling implies. We see too much of that in the example of Peter. For after he has shown that he has made confession and witness to our Lord Jesus, he blasphemes to his perdition. Yet he is content to die, even when it is not commanded to him. What moves him to draw out his sword? He does it as if in spite. For he received no such instruction from his Master. And when he renounces Jesus Christ, did he not already know the saying, "Whoever denies me before men, him I shall deny before God My Father Who is in heaven"? But (as I have said) he is hot-headed. This foolish desire to support our Lord Jesus in his own way and according to his fancy carries him on. Now by his example let us learn to exert ourselves to walk where God calls us. May nothing that He commands us be too difficult for us. But may we attempt nothing, not even to move our little finger, unless God approves it and we have testimony that it is He Who guides us. That is one item.

In fact, in the first place, our Lord Jesus shows him that he has offended grievously, because he was not ignorant of the law, where it is said, "Whoever spills human blood, his blood will be spilled." St. Peter, then, should well remember this lesson, that God does not will that either force or violence be used. And (what is more) in what school had he been nurtured during more than three years? Had not our Lord Jesus held back as far as it was possible for Him in humanness and gentleness? Where, then, does he expect to get approval for his boldness? We must observe further what we have already said. That is, if our zeal is prized by men and we are applauded, to that extent we shall not cease to be condemned before God if we transgress His Word ever so slightly. There is then no praise except in walking as God shows us by His Word. For as soon as a man goes beyond this line, all his virtues only stink. That is how it is with all our devotions. As soon as we have worked to do what we have imagined in our brain, God will condemn everything, unless we have heard His Word. For apart from that there is no truth which He approves and which is legitimate before Him.

But as for the account we are treating now, the second reason which our Lord Jesus alleges is more noteworthy. What we have already touched upon is general. But there is here a sentence which is peculiar to the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he says, "*Do you not think that I can now pray to my Father, and he will send me more than twelve legions of angels?*" Now one legion in that time customarily made four or five thousand men. "There is,

then, a heavenly army which I can have," says He, "and yet I do without it. And why, then, do you come here to usurp more than God either wills or permits?" Now it is surely permissible to call upon God and to pray to Him that He may be willing to sustain our life; and as He holds it precious, that He may keep it in His protection. Our Lord Jesus declares that He does not wish it now and that He ought not to do it. How, then, will Peter use violence, seeing it is outside the order which God has permitted and established by His Word? If a means which is permissible in itself ought not to come into use, how distinguish what God has defended and what He has declared worthy of punishment? Here (as I have already mentioned) we see how the Son of God subjected Himself to such shames and that He preferred to let Himself be bound and tied like an evil-doer and a criminal rather than to be a deceiver by miracle and that God employed His arm to protect Him. By that we have to recognize how He prized our salvation. Here is a point which I have already noted: namely, that He refers us to the will and to the decree of God His Father. For apart from that one would find it strange that He did not wish to implore His aid, as He might surely know that He could have it. It seems that He tempts God when He does not pray to Him at all. We have the promise that Angels will surround those who fear God, even that they will follow them to prevent them from hurting themselves, and that they may not have to meet any evil in their paths. Now when God has promised us something, He wills that it may be to invite us to prayer. Yet when we are in need we ought to run back to Him in order that He may use His Angels to guide us, for which cause He has given them this office. We see also that this was practiced by the holy Patriarchs and the Fathers. "The Angel of the Lord who has never failed me will be in thy way with thee and he will make thee prosper," said Abraham. Thus, then, have the holy Fathers used it. Why, then, did Jesus Christ not wish to have the Angels? For already He had been comforted (as St. Luke mentions) and Angels had waited upon Him in order to sweeten the anguish in which He was.

It seems, then, that He despises a necessary help from God. But He takes it into account when he adds "*How will the Scriptures be fulfilled?*" As if He said, "If we doubt something, we can, then, and ought to pray to God that He may look upon us in pity and that by all means He may make us to feel His power. But when we are convinced that He must pass by some need, and that the will of God is known to us, then it is no longer a matter of making of Him another request, unless that He may strengthen us in power and in invincible constancy, and that we may make no complaint, or that we may not be carried away by our affections; but that we may go with a ready courage through everything to which He calls us." For example, if we are persecuted by our enemies, and we do not know what God has in store for us, or what ought to be the outcome, we have to pray to Him as if our life were precious to Him and since He holds in His guard that He demonstrates this by the result and that He delivers us. But when we are persuaded that God wills to call us to Himself and that there is no longer any remedy, then we must cut off every dispute and fully resign ourselves that nothing any longer remains but to obey the decree of God which is immutable.

That, then, is the intention of our Lord Jesus. For He surely prayed throughout His whole life, and even previously in this great combat which He had sustained, He prays to God that if it were possible this drink might be turned away from Him. But now He has taken up His conclusion, because He was so ordained by God His Father and He saw that He must acquit Himself of the charge which was committed to Him, that is, to offer the perpetual sacrifice to blot out the sins of the world. Since, then, He saw Himself called to that place, and the matter was finished, that it why He abstains from praying to God to do the contrary. He wishes, then, to be helped neither by Angels nor by men. He does not wish that God make Him to feel His power to withdraw Him from death. But it was sufficient for Him to have this spirit of constancy, that He might be able to go by His free will to perform His office. That is what satisfies Him.

Now we see in the first place that the will of God ought to stop us and hold us in check so that, when things seem to us savage and against all reason, we may value more what God has ordained than what our brain can comprehend. Our imaginations, then, ought to be put under foot when we feel that God has proved otherwise. It is part of the obedience of our faith when we consider God to be wise, so that He may have authority to do everything that pleases Him. If we have reasons to do the opposite, may we know that it is only smoke and vanity and that God knows all and that nothing is hidden from Him, and even that His will is the norm of all wisdom and of all uprightness. Besides, what our spirit argues to the opposite, that comes from our rudeness. For we know that the wisdom of God is infinite, and scarcely have we three drops of sense. We need not, then, be astonished if men are scared when God does not govern Himself according to their appetite. And why not? For we are poor fools. In fact, there is only brutality in us however much our sense and reason rule. But since we do not understand the profound depth of the judgments of God, let us learn to adore what is hidden—to adore it (I say) in humility and reverence, confessing that everything God does is just and upright, though as yet we may not perceive how. That is one item.

Following that, since it is so that God willed that His Son might be thus exposed to death, may we not be ashamed of what He endured. May we not think that wicked men were in control and that the Son of God did not have the means to defend Himself. For everything proceeded from the will of God, and from the immutable decree which He had made. That is also why our Lord Jesus says in St. Luke, "Indeed, it is your reign now, and the power of darkness, As if He said, "Take no glory in what you are doing; for the devil is your master." However, He shows that it is by means of the permission which God gave them. Although the devil possessed them, nevertheless, neither they nor he could attempt anything unless God had unleashed for them the bridle. That, then, in summary, is how we must have our eyes and all our senses fixed upon the will of God, and upon His eternal plan, when the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ is spoken of to us. Now He declares that such is the will of God, because it is written. For if Jesus Christ had not had testimony of what was ordered by God His Father, He might still have been in doubt. But He knew His office. God did not send Him here below that He might not have given Him fully to His express charge. It is true, inasmuch as our Lord Jesus is eternal God, He did not need to be taught by any Scripture; but inasmuch as He is our Redeemer and that He clothed Himself in our nature to have a true brotherhood with us, He had to be taught by Holy Scripture, as we see, above all, that He did not refuse such instruction.

So then, since God has shown Him to what He was called, that is upon what He relies. That is why He is taken as a captive, in order not to draw back when He knew that He had to achieve the charge which was committed to Him, that is, to offer Himself in sacrifice for the redemption of us all. So, then, we must learn that, inasmuch as the will of God is secret to Himself and incomprehensible, we must have recourse to Holy Scripture. It is true that God does not cease to have His counsel ordered by things that we imagine to be by chance. But that is not declared to us. We shall not always have special revelation to say that God has determined this or that. Then, we must withhold judgment. That is why we pray to God that He may heal us of an illness or that He may deliver us from some other affliction when we have fallen into it. And why? We do not know what He wills to do. To be sure, we ought not to impose a law upon Him. This condition ought always to be added: that His will may be done. But all our prayers ought to lead here: to ask Him that He may know us to be necessary and useful, and that we may meanwhile refer everything to Him in His secret counsel in order that He may do as seems good to Him. But when we have testimony through Holy Scripture that God wills a thing, then it is not proper to offer any reply, as I have already said.

Here we are still better assured as to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He was afflicted cruelly and treated with such shame and haughty, scornful abuse, not only according to the desire of wicked and lawless men, but since God had so decreed it. And how do we know? By Holy Scripture. For had not the sacrifices been ordained in the Law two thousand years before Jesus Christ was born? And before the Law was given or written, had not God already inspired and taught the Ancient Fathers to sacrifice? And could the blood of brute beasts acquire remission of sins? Could it render men acceptable to God? Not at all, but it was to show that God would be reconciled by the blood of the Redeemer Whom He had established. Then He gives explicit testimony and declaration through the Scriptures. We see, indeed, that the Prophets have spoken of Him, and He also refers especially to them. When Isaiah said that He Who was to be the Redeemer, would be disfigured, that He would be held in disdain, that He would have no form or no more beauty than an adder, that he would be beaten and struck by the hand of God, that He would be a terrible thing to see, in summary, that they would take away His life, by what power did he prophesy that? Is it that God cannot resist Satan or all the wicked men? No but He pronounced by the mouth of Isaiah what He had previously ordained. In Daniel there is a still greater expression. Since it is so, then, that God had declared that His only Son had to be sacrificed for our redemption and salvation, now we are better assured of what I have said, that is, that we must always contemplate the hand of God Who governs when we see that our Lord Jesus is subjected to such shameful things at the hands of men. That is also why St. Peter says in Acts 4:27 that Judas and all the Jews and the police and Pilate did not act except as the counsel and the hand of God had determined, as will be declared still more at length. Here, then is where we must look, if we wish not to be troubled by our foolish imaginations. It is that God sent here below His only Son in order to accept the obedience when He would offer to Him in His death and passion to abolish all our faults and iniquities.

Now the second point which I have mentioned is the benefit which comes back to us from what our Lord Jesus suffered. For if we did not know why, that would be to take away the taste of what is here narrated to us. But when it is said that He has been bound and tied for our deliverance, then, indeed, we see our condition by nature, that is, that Satan holds us under the tyranny of sin and death, that we are slaves, so that instead of our being created in the image of God there is in us only entire corruption, that we are cursed, and that we are dragged like poor beasts in this cursed captivity. When, then, we know that and we see, on the other hand, that the Son of God did not refuse to be shamefully bound in order that the spiritual bonds of sin and death, which hold us under the servitude of Satan, might be broken, then we have to glorify God, we have to triumph with full voice in the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the capture which is here mentioned. So that is what we must remember from this passage.

Thereupon the Gospel-writer says that our Lord Jesus healed the servant who had been wounded by Peter. Not that he was worthy of it, but in order that the offense might be removed. For it would have been to defame the doctrine of the Gospel and the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ if this wound had remained (I call "redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ" what he acquired for us) so that it could be said that He had resisted the governor of the country and all the priests and that He committed, as it were, robbery in this lonely place. That, then, might have obscured all the glory of the Son of God and it would be to put the Gospel in perpetual shame. Also let us see that this action of Peter was by zeal of Satan. For the devil schemed to make Jesus Christ be rendered infamous with all His doctrine. That is also the tendency of all our beautiful devotions when we wish to serve God according to our desire and each one is given leave to do what he imagines to be good. Jesus Christ, then, wished to abolish such a scandal in order that His doctrine might not be defamed at all.

However, we see here a detestable ingratitude in those who were not moved by such a miracle. There are the police who come to bind our Lord Jesus Christ. They see that the power of the Spirit of God is at work in Him in so many ways. He made them fall back a little before a single word. Now He heals a man who has his ear cut off. All that is nothing to them. We see, then, when the devil has once bewitched men and he has dazzled their eyes, that neither the graces of God nor all His powers can touch them that they do not follow and walk always in their deeds, and they have, as it were, the snout of a pig which pokes itself everywhere. Whatever God does, whatever He says, they remain always in their obstinacy, which is a horrible thing. Yet we surely have to pray to God that He may give us prudence to profit from all His graces in order to be drawn by His love and also to touch us when He raises His hand to show us that He is our Judge in such a way that we are then frightened into returning to Him in true repentance. This, then, in summary, is what we have to remember.

Whatever it may mean, the mouths of the wicked men were closed when Jesus Christ healed the servant of Caiaphas. Thereupon it is said *"Jesus is led into the house of Caiaphas, where He is questioned,"* etc. For to abbreviate we omit what St. John tells of Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, and perhaps Jesus Christ is led there out of respect, or maybe it was along the road while they were waiting for everyone to be assembled. Jesus, then, is led as far as the house of Caiaphas and is there questioned. Especially is it said, *"The priests sought everywhere for false witnesses, and found none. Finally two false witnesses stood up and said, 'He said he would rebuild the temple in three days.'"* Here we see how Jesus Christ was charged. Not that the priests were moved by some holy zeal. Often those who persecute innocents imagine they are performing a service acceptable to God, as in fact we see that Saint Paul was possessed by such a rage, that, being, as it were, a brigand (so he is called) he spoiled and destroyed more. Even then he imagined himself to be a good zealot. But this was not so of Caiaphas and all his band. For what did they seek, except that Jesus Christ be unjustly oppressed? So we see that their ambition led them to fight openly against God, which is a horrible thing. For as for Caiaphas and all his band, they are sons of Levi, the holy line which God had chosen. It was not by men that they had been elected, but God had so ordained by His law. It is true that there was a villainous and enormous corruption, inasmuch as the office of the priest was sold in that time, and instead of being obligated for life (so God had ordained it) each one brought his companion and he who brought the most money carried away that dignity. It was, then, a villainous and detestable corruption that intrigues and underhanded practices were used in so holy and honorable an estate. However, the Priest always remained in this line of Levi which God had dedicated to His service. Nevertheless, look at them! all enemies of God, look at them! all intoxicated by Satan, indeed enraged against the Redeemer of the world, Who was the final purpose of the Law.

So let us note that those who are in high estate and dignity will not always acquit themselves so faithfully that it is not necessary to keep watch over them, as over those who can be enemies of God. By that one can see the altogether too dull-witted foolishness of the Papists, when they adopt the title and estate of Priest. Suppose that God had commanded that there be a Pope (which He never did). Suppose that He ought to have His throne at Rome (still less). Though all that might be true, yet in the person of Caiaphas and of his kind it is seen that all those who have been raised to honor can abuse their power. So then may we not be so foolish as to amuse ourselves with masks. And when there is some honorable title, may God not lose His authority over it, as we see the Papists renounce the whole Holy Scripture and do homage to their idols. Let us learn, then, that under shadow of some human dignity God must not be decreased, but He must retain His sovereign Dominion. That is one item. As for the scandal

which we could here conceive according to our fancy, let us note what is said in Psalm 118 (as also our Lord Jesus had previously alleged) that He is the rock which had to be refused by the builders. And who were the builders of the house of God and of His Church? The Priests. At least they ought to acquit themselves of that office. Yet they refused the stone which God had established as the cornerstone. And this stone, although it might have been rejected, has nevertheless been seated at the principal place of the building, that is, that God did not cease to fulfill what He had ordained by His counsel, when he raised from the dead His only Son, and raised Him higher than He was before He was emptied. For every knee must bow before Him.

When it is here said that the Priests sought false testimony, this was not simply to contrive a crime, but to have some pretext and disguise to burden and oppress the Lord Jesus. In truth He had pronounced these words, "Destroy this temple, and I shall raise it up in three days." Those, then, are the words of our Lord Jesus, just as they came out of His mouth. The witnesses who are produced recite them. One could say that they are good and faithful witnesses. Yet the Holy Spirit calls them false, since they have wickedly perverted this remark. For our Lord Jesus spoke of His body, which is the true temple of the divine majesty. The material temple which was built in Jerusalem was nothing but a figure. It was only a shadow, as we know. But in our Lord Jesus all fullness of the Godhead made His residence, as says St. Paul, indeed, bodily and in true substance. So then, let us note that we must look not simply at the words of a witness but at the intention of him who speaks. This is a good and useful instruction for us, because we see men are so given to their evil deeds and lies that when they have some cover it is enough for them and it seems to them that they are absolved before God when they have by this means falsely charged a man. May we not, then, be stopped simply at the words or at the formality or ceremony, but may we look at the true nature of the cause. For those who could always maintain that they gave no evidence except what was there, will not cease to be reputed before God false witnesses, as we see.

Whereupon it is said that Caiaphas says to Jesus Christ, *"How now? You answer nothing? Do you not see those who testify against you?"* Yet Jesus still remains entirely quiet and receives all those slanderous words in silence. One might find it strange that Jesus Christ, Who had a just enough occasion to repulse such a falsehood does not contradict. But (as already we have mentioned, as we shall see still more fully) Jesus Christ was not there to maintain His doctrine as previously. We must, then, distinguish prudently among all circumstances. For Jesus Christ, after having fasted in the desert, was sent by God His Father to publish the doctrine of the Gospel. During all that time we see with what magnanimity He always defended the doctrine of which He was minister. We see how He was opposed to all contradictions. That, then, is how He acquitted Himself of His office, since He was sent as minister of the Word. But here there is a special regard. It is that He must be Redeemer of the world. He must be condemned, indeed, not for having preached the Gospel, but for us He must be oppressed, as it were, to the lowest depths and sustain our cause, since He was there, as it were, in the person of all cursed ones and of all transgressors, and of those who had deserved eternal death. Since, then, Jesus Christ has this office, and He bears the burdens of all those who had offended God mortally, that is why He keeps silence. So, let us well note that when there was need that Jesus Christ maintained the doctrine of the Gospel, and that His office and His calling demanded it, He faithfully acquitted Himself of it. But when by keeping silence He performed the office of Redeemer, as if He accepted voluntary condemnation, it was not out of regard for Himself that He kept His mouth closed, for He was there (as I have already said) in our name. It is true that He speaks (as we shall see presently) but it is not for His defense; it is not without inflaming the anger and fury of the wicked men all the more against Him. That, then, is because He did not wish to escape death, but allowed Himself voluntarily to be oppressed, in order that He might show that He

forgot Himself in order to acquit us before God His Father. So, He had no regard for Himself, neither for His life itself nor even for His honor. It was all one to suffer the shames and disgraces of the world, provided that our sins be abolished and we be absolved from our condemnation.

Whereupon it is said, "*The high Priest adjures Him by the living God that He tell them if He is the Christ, if He is the blessed Son. He answers that so He is, but they will see His majesty when it is too late,*" that is, for them, since it will be to their confounding. Here our Lord Jesus speaks, but it is not to bow as a human being to the great Priest and all his band. Rather He uses threats to sting him still more. If previously he was full of malice and cruelty, this is to light still more fire. But we have already declared that Jesus Christ had no regard for Himself and that rather He acquits Himself of the duty of which He has taken the charge, that is, to be our Redeemer.

Besides, here we have in the first place, as it were, despisers of God, those who are entirely possessed by Satan, who yet will abuse some kind of cover of religion, for one might say that this great Priest still performs well his office, when he adjures Jesus Christ by the Name of the living God. But that is where men are plunged once Satan has bound their eyes. He flings them into such impudence that they have no reverence for God, no more than they are ashamed before men. In this answer of our Lord Jesus we have to note that He wishes to declare both to Caiaphas and to all the rest that if He is thus, as it were, crushed for a little time, that ought not to lessen His majesty, that always He may be held and reputed Only Son of God. But He has here a still higher consideration. It is that we may be assured that, having thus abased Himself for our salvation, nothing has been lost of His heavenly majesty, but that before men He was willing to be so oppressed, in order that we may be made fully certain that we shall be found honorable before God, because all the shames which we might have deserved will be abolished. Since, then, our Lord Jesus kept silence and He did not defend Himself in His good cause, now we have our mouths open to call upon God as if we were righteous. He is even our Advocate, Who puts in a word for us. When, then, our Lord Jesus stood by, it was in order that now in full liberty He intercedes for us before God His Father, although we are nothing except poor vermin. There is in us only all misery. Yet we have access to God to call upon Him privately and to claim Him openly as our Father.

This is what He wishes to show when He said, "*You will see afterwards the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the power of God.*" We must, then, be turned away from every regard which could bring us scandal, when we see that our Lord Jesus was thus humiliated. So let us look at what was the end of it. He willed, then, to be condemned without any resistance in order that we might be able to appear before the judgment-seat of God, and that we come there freely without any fear. Let us learn, then, in summary, every time the history of the Passion is recited to us so to groan and sigh seeing that the Son of God had to suffer so for us, that we tremble at His Majesty until it may appear to us. May we be so resolved that when He comes, it will be to make us experience in effect the fruit which He acquired for us by His death and passion. Besides, may we fear to be numbered with those whom He threatens so, saying, "*You will see henceforth.*" For it must be that the wicked and reprov'd will feel how terrible is the judgment-seat of God and how great is His power to cast them down when He will rise against them. When St. Paul also wishes to speak of the condemnation which the wicked and those who are cursed by God will endure, he says that they will be before His infinite majesty trembling and frightened at His look.

Since it is so, let us learn to humble ourselves before the Lord Jesus. Let us not wait to see with the eye the majesty which He will show at His second coming, but by faith let us

contemplate Him today as our King, and the Head of the Angels and of all creatures, and let us receive Him as our sovereign Prince. Let us attribute to Him the honor which belongs to Him, knowing that since He is given to us for wisdom, for redemption, for righteousness and holiness by God His Father, we must attribute to Him every praise, and that it is from His fullness that we must draw to be satisfied. Let us be advised, then, to do this honor to our Lord Jesus Christ, although today we do not yet see His judgment-seat prepared. But let us contemplate Him by the eyes of faith and let us pray to God that He may enlighten us by His Holy Spirit, that He may strengthen us to call upon Him in time of trouble, and that this may carry us above the world, above all of our senses and all our apprehensions, in such a way that our Lord Jesus may be magnified today by us as He deserves. That, then, in summary, is what we have to remember.

Touching the saying that Caiaphas and the Priests have condemned Him to death, may we learn not to be astonished by the obstinacy of the wicked and of the enemies of the truth. Today this doctrine is very necessary for us. For we see the great ones of this world blaspheme openly against the Gospel. We see even in our midst that those who make profession of the Gospel and wish to be considered reformed people and in whom it seems there is only the Gospel, yet condemn like devils incarnate, or even like furious beasts possessed by Satan, the doctrine of the Gospel. One need not go far to see all these things. So, may we be assured against such scandals, and may we learn to always glorify our God. Though Caiaphas and all his kind cough up their blasphemies as much as they wish, and though they say that Jesus Christ is deserving of death, it is necessary to keep silence on such an article, though it is bad. Though, then, they so infect the air by their villainous and execrable blasphemies, yet let us cling to this voice of our Lord Jesus Christ. If today His truth is so condemned by men falsely, and it is doubted, it is falsified, it is depraved, and people deliberately turn their backs on it, it is strong and powerful enough to maintain itself. Let us wait in patience until He appears for our redemption. Yet may all of us learn to humble ourselves, and to give Him all the glory, since He was so willing to stoop, indeed, to empty Himself of everything for our salvation.

Now let us bow in humble reverence before the majesty of our God.

Fourth Sermon—Matthew 26:67-27:10.

Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee? Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly. When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor. Then Judas, which had betrayed

him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.—Matthew 26:67-27:10

As Saint Paul says that the preaching of the Gospel is odor of life to those whom God calls to salvation and odor of death to all reprobates who perish, also we have two noteworthy examples who are here proposed to us to show that the death and passion of the Son of God was to the salvation of one and pushed another into condemnation. For in the fall of Peter is seen the need which he had of being drawn out of the pit in which he was trapped. For while he was there he was banished from the Kingdom of heaven, he was alienated from all hope of salvation and cut off from the Church, as a rotten member. Nevertheless the death of our Lord Jesus did not fail to benefit him, although he may not have been worthy of it. As for Judas, it is said that, seeing that Jesus Christ is condemned, he is seized with despair. Now in this condemnation of our Lord Jesus (as we have said) one must take courage to hope in God. For we are absolved by virtue of the fact that our Lord Jesus was condemned. But it was necessary that we had here these two mirrors in order that we might be able so much the better to know that unless we are by special grace called to be sharers of the fruit of the death and passion of the Son of God, it will be useless to us. It is not enough, then, that our Lord Jesus Christ has suffered, but the good which He acquired for us must be communicated, and we must be put in possession of it. That is done when we are drawn to Him by faith.

But to better understand all this let us follow the thread of the history which is here narrated to us. It is said that our Lord Jesus was treated with every shame in the house of Caiaphas, that they spit in His face, that He was insulted and made fun of by calling Him "Prophet," indeed in disgrace. Now that was in order that we might know that what He suffered in His person was to deliver us before God and before His Angels. For no one needs to spit in our face in order for us to bear many spots and blemishes before God. All of us are not only disfigured by our sins, but full of infection, and abominable. Besides, here is the Son of God, Who is His living image, where His glory and majesty shine, Who suffered such shames, in order that in His name now we can appear before God to obtain grace and that He may know us and own us as His children, and that all our stains and spots may be wiped away. That (I say) is what we have to consider in the first place.

Now we come to the fall of Peter. It is said, "*A chambermaid, seeing him, accused him of being a disciple of Jesus. He denies it.*" Another chambermaid returns. He denies it again. Then, more press him and make quite an issue of it. Then he begins to swear, and even to curse, and to use the form of execration. As if he said, "May I be damned, may I perish, may the earth swallow me up if I know Him." There, then, is the fall of Saint Peter, and not one, but three which are so heavy and so enormous that we surely ought to be frightened reading this history. Now we know the zeal which was in him. Moreover, he had been praised by our Lord Jesus Christ, and the name of Peter had been given to him to note the firmness and constancy of his faith; he had been

taught in such a good school. He had heard this doctrine: "Whoever will renounce Me before men, him will I also renounce before God My Father to disavow him from Me." Yet we see how he stumbles. Each one, then, ought surely here to have occasion to tremble. For unless we are sustained from on high, the weakness of Peter was no greater than ours. So, in the first place, we see how frail men are as soon as God has let go with His hand. For this is not spoken of some mocker, of some profane man, of someone who had never heard a particle of the Gospel, who had no fear of God, and who had borne no reverence to our Lord Jesus Christ. It is entirely the contrary. For there were already some excellent gifts in Peter. It had been said to him from the mouth of the Son of God, "Flesh and blood have not revealed to you these things, but My Father." It is, then, the Spirit of God which dwells in Peter. Yet how little he resists renouncing our Lord Jesus! A chamber-maid! If a man had assailed him, or if it had been some honorable person who had assailed him, there might have been some excuse. But we see that it required only a chamber-maid to make him give up hope of life and of salvation.

Let us contemplate, then, in the person of Peter, that it is very necessary that God strengthen us each minute of time. For it is impossible to persevere otherwise. Although we may have tried to draw near to God, and though we may have done many deeds of virtue, all the same at the least little turning of the hand we shall be entirely changed unless God continues to give us invincible constancy. Let us learn, then, to practice the admonition of Saint Paul, "Let him who stands take heed lest he fall." It is true that we cannot maintain ourselves. But let us have recourse to Him Who has the means. However, let us walk in all humility. As Saint Paul says in the other passage.

"Since it is God Who gives the will and the deed and He does it by His good pleasure, be advised (says he) to work out your salvation in fear and trembling." (Philippians 2:13, 12b.)

As if he said that all presumption surely ought to be beaten down, and indeed all indifference. When we see what necessity we have to be helped by God, and in so many ways, is it not right that we be on our guard, indeed that we do not presume at all on our own strength, but that we be solicitous to call upon God evening and morning, and to put ourselves in His keeping and leading?

That, then, is what we have to observe in the first place. It is even very necessary for us to assume that the temptations, although they may not be large, will have soon overwhelmed us, unless God by His grace works on it and He remedies it. And those who imagine themselves to be the most hardy, when they are far from blows, find themselves, as it were, lost if there is only a little wind that blows. It is true that if God assists us, we shall persevere, however great storms arise. For we know the figure of speech that our Lord Jesus Christ drew: that a building with a good foundation and built of good material, although there comes a great torrent, always remains whole; but what is built upon sand will soon go away in decay. So then, when we shall be founded upon our God and He will extend to us His strong hand, we shall surely be able to sustain great and very rough alarms. But although there may not be any enemy who fights us, yet we shall be conquered immediately when God withdraws from us or lets go of our hand, as we see in Peter.

But it is still worse that it is not only once that he denies the Lord Jesus. But he repeats it as many times as he is questioned. We see that it did not matter at all to him that he was going from bad to worse, even until he adds execration, as it were, asking that God may curse him and swallow him up. When we see that, let us know that he who has fallen, instead of wanting to be

raised soon, will plunge himself ever more deeply into ruin, until he completely perishes in it, unless God remedies it. This is the condition of men. From the beginning they make themselves believe that they are marvels in their own power. Yet our Lord shows by experience that it is nothing, and that only a little wind blows, and they are beaten down. Still they are persuaded that they can stand up again. But on the contrary they only augment their evil, adding fault upon fault, overflowing still more with preposterous deeds. If Saint Peter had been tempted a hundred times in a day, he would have renounced Jesus Christ a hundred times, and a thousand besides. That is where he would have been unless God had had pity on him. But He spared him, and did not wish to prove him further. Yet the three falls mentioned here are enough to show a dreadful example, and it ought to make our hair stand up on end when we see that for the third time Peter so forgot himself and that he was as senseless as a brute to renounce his salvation. Besides, we must always observe that if still other temptations had come upon him, he would have resisted them no better and he would have been put into the most profound depths unless God had spared him that much.

That, then, is how we have to profit from this doctrine. Now we do not hear these things in order to judge Peter and to condemn his cowardice. To be sure, we cannot do it justly, but if it is necessary in the first place to receive instruction, may we know our weakness, may we even know that we can do nothing at all, may we not be inflated with pride, attributing to ourselves by foolish opinion some virtue. However, may we also know, since the devil has so many means to plot our ruin, he would soon put an end to us, since St. Peter fell without his making any appearance. Then finally, let us know that our Lord Jesus has pity on us when He does not permit us to be tempted without limit. For it is certain that always so much more evil would be uncovered, and that there would be no end, unless we were held back by His goodness. These are all the things we have here to observe.

However, it is said, "*Peter, after having heard the cock crow (as St. Luke tells) after Jesus Christ looked at him, went outside and wept bitterly.*" By this conclusion it is shown us (as I have already mentioned) that the death and passion of our Lord Jesus has already produced its effect and its power in that Peter has been raised from such a horrible fall. For is it not a miracle that God had pity on him and that he still obtained mercy after having committed such a detestable fault? We have declared that he could not have the excuse of ignorance, as if his fault of having renounced Jesus Christ were small. For it had been said and pronounced to him that if he did not make confession of his faith and give testimony before men he would deserve to be entirely cut off before the Angels of God and that his name be erased from the book of life. However it does not matter to him that he sells this miserable and frail life by so villainous and so strange a renunciation. Indeed, he is not yet even led before the judges. He is not questioned to the limit. There is only a chamber-maid who speaks to him. When they might already have been rude to him, and well so, he had fought only as a poor ill-starred creature. Nevertheless, he did not forget all fear of God. When, then, we see that, let us think how much more necessary it was for us that God displayed the infinite treasures of His goodness, when He still made Peter sharer of the fruit of the death and passion of His Son.

It is, then, a miracle which ought to enrapture us, that Peter obtained remission for such a great offense, indeed, as it appears, by his repentance. For it is certain that if a man is touched to the quick, after having failed, and he moans and wails before God to obtain pardon, it is a sign that God has already received him, and that He has reconciled him to Himself. For also repentance is a peculiar gift proceeding from the Holy Spirit, Who shows us that God has pity on us and that He does not will that we perish. But He draws us to Himself. Now we see that in Peter. It follows, then, that already the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ was profitable

to him, indeed, in a marvelous way, as I have already said. But in the first place let us note that St. Peter always remained sleepy and stupid until he received the sign of which our Lord Jesus Christ has warned him, that is, that the cock would not crow until he renounced Him three times, or better, that the cock would not crow for the second time unless Peter had already made his renunciations. Since it is so, then, that if he had not been warned by our Lord Jesus Christ he would have remained there in his sin and he would be forever plunged into perdition, let us know that we need to be solicitous after we have committed some fault. For if we were deprived of the grace of God and He did not exhort us to return to Him, it is certain that we would be preoccupied by Satan and all our senses would be brutalized so that we would have neither any scruple nor good movement to return to the way of salvation.

That, then, is what we must contemplate further in the person of Peter. But when Saint Luke tells that Jesus Christ looked at him, through that we are so much better taught that it is not sufficient to be stung and that someone tug on our ears to make us return to God, but Jesus Christ must cast His glance and His look upon us. Now it is true that it is here spoken of only the look of the eyes. However our Lord Jesus does not converse with us in a visible manner. Yet it is certain that until He has cast His glance upon us we shall always be blockheaded dullards in our faults and we shall never think to moan and wail, although we may have provoked the wrath of God. Although He may have His bow bent and His sword unsheathed, we shall always remain in our indifference until our Lord Jesus has made us feel that He has not forgotten us and that He is not willing that we perish, but wishes to draw us back to Himself. And that it may be so, we hear daily sermons, by which we are exhorted to repentance. And how are we touched by them? There are as many admonitions as there could be. Does not all creation incite us to come to God? If our senses are well ruled so as to have some particle of prudence, when the sun rises in the morning, does it not call us to adore our God? After that, if we notice how the earth and all elements perform their offices, the beasts and the trees, that shows us that we must draw up to our God, in order that He may be glorified in us, and that we may not think of doing otherwise. The cock, then, has well crowed, and not only the cock, but God makes all his creatures above and below to crow to exhort us to come to him. What is more, He surely deigns to open His sacred mouth through the Law, through His Prophets, and through the Gospel, to say, "Return to me." However, it is seen, as it were, that we are dull-witted. Such a stupidity is seen in us that we are, as it were, monsters. It is very necessary, then, that our Lord Jesus regard us in pity, as He did Peter, in order to draw from us true wailing's to give testimony of our penitence. For when it is said that Peter wept bitterly, it is to note the sorrow of which Saint Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians, when he says that it works toward salvation (2 Corinthians 7:9, 10) and that we ought not to flee it but that we even ought to seek it. Although naturally we wish to enjoy ourselves and not to experience any nuisance, yet we must have some melancholy. As when God touches us with anguish, we must be tormented in our hearts after having offended Him. For such unrest is to lead us to real rest and such sorrow is to make us rejoice both before God and before Angels.

Soon we shall well see that Judas repented, but it is in another and diverse fashion. But as for Peter, he wept to show that he was greatly displeasing in his sin and he has fully returned to Jesus Christ. Let us note also that "*he went out to weep.*" It is true that it still proceeded from his weakness, that he feared to show his repentance before the crowd. But though that may be, when he, weeps alone, he well shows that he is touched by his fault and offense. For he does not seek men to witness his repenting, but being alone, he weeps before God. That is also how we must do it. For if we weep only before men, by that we show our hypocrisy. But when each one has collected his thoughts, and he examines his faults and sins, if he is then touched with anguish, it is a sign that there is no make-believe in him, and that he knew his Judge, and that he

is there to ask pardon, and he well knew that it is the office of God to draw back from the depths those who are already, as it were, damned and lost. That, then, in summary, is what we have to remember from the account here given of the fall of Peter, and concerning these three renunciations, by which he had deserved to be cut off from the Kingdom of God, unless Jesus Christ had already displayed the power of His death and passion in order to draw him to repentance, as we see that it came to pass.

Next it is said, "The priests and governors took counsel to condemn Jesus." But because that was not in their power, they led Him bound and tied to the governor who had jurisdiction over the country, that is, Pontius Pilate. After that the Gospel tells that Judas repented, seeing that Jesus Christ was condemned, and threw down the money which he had received as the price and payment for his betrayal and completely confessed his fault. However the Priests are not willing to receive the money, but it buys a potter's field, where there had been some tile-making so that the field was useless and could be neither cultivated nor seeded. They buy, then, this field to bury passers-by. Indeed, they do it under cover of some devotion. For they said that it was not lawful that this money be put with the offerings of the Temple. Whereupon the Gospel-writer says what was said by the Prophet was fulfilled, that the thirty denarii, by which God had been appraised by the people of Israel, could be used for the pottery. We have here to consider what was already begun, that is, that the death and passion of our Lord Jesus does not bear fruit in all men, because it is a special grace that God gives to His elect when He touches them by His Holy Spirit. Although they have fallen, He raises them. Although they have gone astray like wandering sheep, He corrects them and extends to them His hand to bring them back to His fold. For there is Judas who is entirely cut off from the number of the children of God. It is even necessary that his condemnation appear before men and that it be entirely obvious.

So let us learn (following what I have already mentioned) to know in everything and by everything the inestimable goodness of our God. For as He declared His love toward mankind when He spared not His Only Son but delivered Him to death for sinners, also He declares a love which He bears especially toward us when by His Holy Spirit He touches us by the knowledge of our sins and He makes us wail and draws us to Himself with repentance. The entrance, then, that we have to come to our Lord Jesus Christ does not proceed from us, but it is inasmuch as God governs us and it pleased Him to show His election. And these circumstances are good to note. Behold Judas who had been a disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ. He had done miracles in His Name. Yet what is the issue of it? May we, then, learn to fear and to walk in solicitude, casting ourselves entirely upon our God; and may we pray that He may not permit us to fall into such confusion as this miserable wretch. And even when we have fallen, that He may raise us again by His power, and that we may return to Him; not with such a repentance as that of Judas, but with a true and right confession. For the wicked mock God as much as they can. They are pleased in their sins. They even take glory in them, and in the end they become as shameless as prostitutes, as it is said by the Prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Besides, in the end God makes them feel their sins, and they are in such fright that they fret and cry "alas!" But it is not in order to conceive some hope and to present themselves to God. Rather it is a fury which drives them. They flee as far as possible and they would like to pull down God from His throne. It is only a matter of fretting and of gnashing their teeth in complete rebellion against Him.

Now we surely must come to another kind of repentance; that is, not that we be frightened, seeing that we cannot escape the judgment and the hand of God; but that we confess our sin, and detest it; and next that we do not cease to draw near to God, indeed, being summoned before Him without being drawn to Him by force; but that of our own good pleasure we come to do Him homage, and to confess that we deserve to perish; nevertheless, being

assured that although we deserve a hundred thousand deaths, He will not, however, cease to have pity on us. That was the repentance of Peter. But that of Judas ought to show us that it is not sufficient to have some feeling of our faults and some scruple, but we must be fully converted to God. This is very noteworthy, because we see how many, and nearly all, flatter themselves. When they have made confession in a word of their faults, however grievous they are, it seems to them that they are free and clear, as if all they had to do was to wipe their mouths. And even if some instance is mentioned to them, they imagine that they are done a great wrong. "Why?" they say, "Have I not recognized my fault? Have I not done penitence?" That is all the payment they make, as if God were a little child Who was appeased by some laughter, even a false laughter which is full of hypocrisy and lying. But since it is common among men that they wish to appease God I do not know how all, so it is said that Judas repented. Let us fear, then, when God admonishes us and He makes us feel our faults, but let us not stop everything there. For that is not properly repentance. But here is the test by which we can know whether we are truly repentant or not. It is when of our free will we seek complete accord with God and we do not flee being judged by Him, indeed, provided that He receives us in mercy. This is what He will do after we plead guilty. For he who will judge himself in order to plead guilty before God, before Angels, and before men will be justified and absolved, since he asks only that God may be favorable toward him. That then, in summary, is what we have to observe.

Now this confession of Judas had to be made in order to render the Priests all the more inexcusable. Also the Gospel-writer gives this account so that we may contemplate so much the better the blindness that Satan had put into all these reprobates, and that each one may think of himself. When God proposes to us such examples of His wrath and of His vengeance and He shows that men are, as it were, mad, that they are depraved of sense and of reason, that they are (briefly) brutish to fling themselves with an infernal fury; it is in order that each one of us may bow his head and that each one of us may know that we could often come to that, unless we were preserved by the goodness and grace of our God. However, let us be advised not to fight against our own consciences as the Priests did. For all those who so harden themselves against God in the end will fall into such a reprobate condition that they will no longer have any reason in them. Even after being thus undone before God, they will also cease to be at all ashamed before men. For it is a good thing that their baseness is shown to all and that they be put in such disgrace that everyone may be horrified by their villainy.

That, then, is why the Gospel-writer has here related to us that when Judas came to pay back the money, the Priests were not at all moved by it. It is true that they do say that it is not lawful to put it into the coffer of the treasury, but that it is the price of blood. That is how hypocrites always guard well I do not know what appearances to make a shadow and a covering for their iniquities. But this is only mocking God. For they never come in integrity and openness to Him. For what is there to say? "Oh, we shall not put this money with the sacred oblations, because it is the price of blood." Then this money, had it been stolen? It is known that the Priests lived on the oblations of the Temple. As today in the Papacy those who are called Prelates and people of the Church gobble up the oblations and do not care for what purpose they apply them. Although the Priests had drawn from the oblations of the Temple the money which they had given to Judas, it does not matter to them; they have no regard. Now they make an issue of putting this money back into the coffer of the oblations. By which means they repulse Judas, as it were, by mockery, and as if they said, "Perhaps this wicked man has betrayed his master. We have only to determine whether he has done good or evil. Yet in order that we may not be sharers in his offense on our part, and in order to keep our hands clean (since they had used this money for such a purpose) we shall buy with it a field for the burial of strangers." Indeed, to say that they have surely satisfied God and that He might not know how to ask more, though there

was some fault in what they did.

That is how hypocrites will always have their satisfactions, thinking to buy their way out, but this is only child's play. Yet let us know that this is recited to us in order that we may learn when we have fallen to recognize our faults in truth and not to make circuits from one side or from another, but in everything and by everything to frankly bear condemnation. That, then, is what is shown to us. Meanwhile, let us pray to God that He remove from us the blindfold Satan is trying to put on in order that we may not croak on our flatteries, wishing to excuse evil, but that more and more we may take the trouble to examine well all our vices to condemn them and to make an upright confession of them. Besides, we see also how God overthrows the opinion of hypocrites, that in the end they remain frustrated by what they had pretended. For the Priests had surely wished to erase their fault and that no one might ever mention it. That is why they pretend when they buy a field for the burial of strangers. But God turns that entirely to the contrary of their intention. For this field must be called "*field of blood*" or "*field of murder*." That memorial must be perpetual and it remains forever on the mouths of men, women and little children, so that this detestable crime which had been thus committed by the Priests is daily known and manifest, and they say, "Behold, the field of blood, that is, the field that was bought with the price of betrayal. And who did it? The Priests and the chiefs of all the people." So then, we see when hypocrites try to hide themselves in their crimes and to disguise themselves, that God uncovers their villainy all the more and causes their shame to be known by all men and that everyone hold them in detestation. That is why I have said it is all the more necessary that we be advised to come to God and there to uncover all our offenses, in order that it may please Him to bury them before Him, before His Angels, and before all the world, when we have thus recognized them on our part.

Finally the Gospel-writer cites a passage from the Prophet to show that this is not recited only on account of the sin of Judas, or on account of the devilish obstinacy of the Priests, but on account of the condemnation of all people in general. He says, then, "*What was written by the prophet has been fulfilled, that God was appraised at thirty denarii and that was applied on a potter's field.*" Now Zechariah, from whom this passage is drawn, compares our Lord Jesus Christ to a Shepherd, and says that wishing to govern the Jewish people, He had taken His staff, or His shepherd's crook, which was called "Beauty," in order to say that He had a condition so well ordered that it was possible among those people, indeed, that He might be allowed to be led by the hand of God. For is there anything more desirable? And that it may be so, where is our sovereign joy and bliss, unless God cares for our salvation and He performs the office of shepherd among us? That, then, was a government of God in those people, when it is spoken of this rod, not of a staff which is to strike and break everything, but to lead and govern peaceably the sheep which become docile. Now it is said that again He took a second rod. As in fact, when the people have been returned from the captivity of Babylon, God has then gone back to His position as shepherd. After such a horrible dissipation as had existed previously, He gathers in the people to govern them peaceably under His hand. But in the end there was such villainous ingratitude that God had to quit everything. So He says, "Oh, I see what it is; I need not lose My time or My trouble with you." He speaks here in the common fashion of men. "Let us get on the march at once. Pay me, that I may go away." Whereupon they brought Him thirty denarii. "What?" says He, "is this the reward and the payment I get from you?" For when He speaks of thirty denarii, He considers the oblations which they made in the Temple. They were (since they used them in hypocrisy without faith and without repentance) only vain ceremonies which, nevertheless, the Priests and the Jew's prized highly. As today the Papists, when they have done many "holies" and all their beautiful devotions, it seems to them that God is almost indebted to them. Now God says all that is only rubbish. "How," says He,

"have I gained from your having gone through it? Perhaps that is the payment for a shepherd, I am much obliged to you. Oh, oh, no! I have nothing to do with it. Go, throw that in the pottery, and may you decorate the mouths and handles of your pots with it! Go! I am leaving you. Use that in your tile." As if He said, "If it rains in your Temple, fix it yourselves. As for Me, I no longer have any part or portion with you. I wish you would go away. And do not think to appease Me here by bringing Me, as it were, the payment of a scoundrel. I do not approve at all of any of it." That, then, is what the Prophet, in summary, has intended.

Now we know that what was predicted of our God then, was fulfilled in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is our true God manifest in the flesh. So it was necessary that in a visible manner this passage be verified, and that Jesus Christ was appraised at only thirty denarii, that is, that the people showed such villainous ingratitude toward Him, Who was the Eternal Shepherd, Whom God had established over His people. It is certain that since the people had left being governed by God, also our Lord Jesus always performed the office of Mediator, indeed, although He had not yet appeared in human flesh. We must remember this well, in order that we may learn on our part, if God has exercised the grace to receive us, as it were, under His hand, and we are His flock, and He gives us our Lord Jesus Christ for a Shepherd, not to sting Him so that His Spirit is saddened and wearied by our acts of rebellion and ingratitude. Also may we not throw Him any bouquets of flowers (as they say in common proverb), but since He gives Himself to us, may we cling to Him as our God and King, may we dedicate our whole lives to Him, and may we not bring Him a payment that He rejects; but may we present to Him both our souls and our bodies. For it is also very right that He should have all preeminence over us and that He possess us entirely, when we see that He seeks only our salvation.

Now to end it and come to the conclusion, it is said, "*Our Lord Jesus having been led before Pilate answered nothing. Pilate asked him, saying, 'Do you not speak at all? Do you not see the witnesses they have brought here against you?' And he held his peace, so that the judge marveled greatly.*" In the first place we have to keep in memory, when our Lord Jesus Christ is judged before, an earthly judge, that it was in order that we might be exempt and absolved from the condemnation which we deserved before the heavenly Judge. We know that we cannot escape what is written by the Prophet Isaiah, that every knee must bow before God. (Isaiah 45:23.) Since God is the Judge of the world, how can we subsist before His face and before His majesty? There is not one of us who is not constrained to condemn himself a hundred thousand times. When we have lived only a year in the world, there are already a hundred thousand faults, by which we deserve to be condemned. There is no one who has not this testimony engraved upon his heart, and who is not convinced of it. Now God, Who sees much more clearly than we, how will He not condemn us when each one is constrained to condemn himself, indeed, in so many ways? But here our Lord Jesus is subjected to this extremity of being accused before an earthly judge, even before a profane man, before a man who was pushed only by his greed and his ambition. When, then, the Son of God is humiliated to that extent, let us know that it is in order that we may be able to come with heads raised before God, and that He may receive us, and that fear may no longer cause us to draw back from His judgment-seat, but that we may dare to approach it boldly, knowing that we shall be received there in mercy. We even know that Jesus Christ acquired authority and power and sovereign dominion to be Judge of the world. And when He is thus condemned by Pilate, it is in order that today we may come boldly to Him, indeed, knowing that power is given to Him to judge us. Since He stood there, may we know that He wished to bear our condemnation and that He did not intend a trial to justify Himself, also knowing well that He had to be condemned, indeed, in our person. For although He was without spot or blemish, He bore all our sins upon Himself. We need not be astonished, then, that He stood there as if He had been convicted. For otherwise He could not have performed the office of

Mediator except by accepting sentence and confessing that in our persons He had deserved to be condemned. That, then, is what the silence of our Lord Jesus Christ implies, in order that today we can call upon God with full voice, and that we can ask Him for pardon for all vices and offenses.

Now let us bow in humble reverence before the majesty of our God.

Fifth Sermon—Matthew 27:11-26.

And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly. Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered him. When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.—Matthew 27:11-26

We have already seen by the preceding verses that our Lord Jesus so offered Himself of His own will as a sacrifice to make reparation for all our iniquities by His obedience and He was willing to be condemned to wipe them out. That is why it is said that He did not answer at all the accusations that were raised against Him. He had enough wherewith to answer, but He was silent, as is also mentioned by the Prophet Isaiah. That was not only to show his patience, but in order to acquire for us liberty to be able today to glory in being righteous and innocent before God (indeed, notwithstanding that our conscience accuses us and condemns us), knowing that God has received us in mercy, and that all our faults are abolished by the perfection which was found in our Lord Jesus Christ. That, then, is how the Son of God acquired for us the liberty to be able to glory boldly that we are the children of God and reputed righteous before Him, that is, when He willed to offer no reply to show His integrity. Besides, one might at first find it strange that He is thus captured and nevertheless responds that He is King of the Jews. For these things seem contradictory; but Saint John proceeds still further, and says that He declared that His

Kingdom was not of this world, and then He declared also that He was Son of God, indeed, He protested that He had come into the world to maintain the truth. But all this agrees easily. For our Lord Jesus surely had to declare Himself to be King of the Jews, unless He wished to reject the Prophecies. Also He had to be declared Son of God. But that did not lead to His absolution. It was rather that there might not be a long drawn-out trial, but that He might be condemned. Let us note well, then, when the silence of Jesus Christ is spoken of, that it was inasmuch as He did not wish to offer any excuse. As for His person, He kept His mouth closed. However, He did not cease to make such confession as He had to make. That is also why Saint Paul says that He made a good confession before Pontius Pilate (1 Timothy 6:13). For if it had been a matter of Jesus Christ's entering into His own self-defense, already the judge was persuaded of His integrity. He could, then, easily have won His case by speaking. That is what amazes Pilate. Yet our Lord Jesus Christ did not cease to render such testimony as God had committed to Him—not tending to instruct (for this was not the place) but to confirm and ratify the doctrine to which He had previously borne witness.

However, we have to note on the one hand that the crime which troubled the Jews most was that He had stirred up trouble and prevented them from paying tributes to the Emperor of Rome. That also was to irritate the Governor, a pagan man who was sent there by the Emperor. Now it is very certain that our Lord Jesus had declared Himself to be King, but not an earthly king. As, in fact, we see that when the Jews wish to crown Him, He withdraws Himself and hides on the mountain. Still further He dulls the edge of that calumny, because it would have been a slander against the Gospel, if He had perverted the order and law-enforcement of the world. For He Who has come to call us all to the heavenly Kingdom and to make us sharers in it did not wish to abolish earthly kingdoms, since even they are sustained by Him and in His power. The Gospel, then, need not be blamed, saving that Jesus Christ had come to usurp any power or worldly authority. That is why He said to Pilate especially that His kingdom is not of this place.

In fact, what would happen if the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ were earthly? What would we gain by hoping in Him, since our condition is so miserable in the world? Unbelievers have a much better lot than we, concerning the afflictions which we must endure. True it is that the chastisements of God have effect everywhere and that those who wish it as much as they possibly can do not cease to be subject to many miseries and afflictions. But all the same let us always be ready for more rigid discipline. For God must begin His chastisements in His house and in His Church. If, then, our Lord Jesus were an earthly King, it would seem that we might be entirely alienated from Him. Further, suppose we had everything easy in this world and that by means of the Son of God we had here, as it were, a paradise, yet our life is only a shadow. Our happiness, then, would be very brief and frail. So we must surely know and be entirely persuaded that the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus is heavenly, in order that we may reach the life everlasting to which we are called. That, then, is how the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is perpetual, because it does not consist in anything which is of this world, here where everything is corruptible.

Let us learn, then, to bear patiently our adversities, knowing that they neither diminish nor impair at all the grace which was acquired for us by our Lord Jesus Christ. For indeed, these are aids to our salvation, as St. Paul shows in Romans 8:28. When we are despised and mocked by the world, that we have to suffer many reproaches, that we are hungry and thirsty, that our wings are clipped, that we are harassed from all sides; we must consider "So it is that God accepts us." That is as if He said to us. "Look on high. Do not set your minds on what is in this world." That, in summary, is what we have to observe. In fact, it is not without cause that our Lord Jesus wished to add as a confirmation that He was born and came into the world to speak

the truth. Whoever has clearly heard it stops at the sound of His voice. By this we see that it is a doctrine of importance to know that the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is not from this world. For if it had been a trivial sentence, He might have passed it quickly. But when He pronounced that He had come into the world to speak the truth, it is as if He wished to render us attentive, and that each one should meditate in his heart, and apply well his study to this doctrine. That is, that we be withdrawn from the world and from all creatures, in order to come to this heavenly King, and to seek in Him the spiritual benefits which are here communicated to us, in order that we might enjoy them according to the measure which He knows to be useful to us for our salvation. Indeed in all that we see to be of the summary of the Gospel, let us note particularly this word: that Jesus Christ came into the world to speak the truth, in order that we may come to the conviction from it, when we are attentive to His doctrine that we shall not be at all disappointed, since it is an entirely sure and certain thing that what He has promised He will bring to pass. When David wishes to be assured against all temptations, he says that the Word of God is as silver purified seven times and which has been well tried by fire. So as often as we shall enter into doubt about the promises of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as we shall be troubled and molested (as the devil also uses such craftiness in order to dishearten us and to make us lose courage), let us return to this testimony, that in any case our Lord Jesus appeared in the world in order to be to us a faithful witness. Let us wait today for Him to show in effect that it is not in vain that He gave us all these promises, because they are infallible. That, then, in summary, is what we have to remember.

Besides, when Pilate says, "*What is truth?*" let us note that it was not, as it were, through a desire to learn that he asked such a question, but it was, as it were, through spite and in mockery, as today this vice is seen in many. When we speak of the truth of God, we mean the doctrine of the Gospel. Saint Paul (in Ephesians 1) attributes to it this title in order that we may be able to distinguish it from all other knowledge. To be sure, if someone gives us all account of something which has happened, it is truth; but when God calls us to Himself, and He wishes to withdraw us from this world in order that we may arrive at the heavenly life, that is a truth which ought to be put in sovereign position and by comparison all the rest should be nothing. Now let us notice how the world bears reverence toward the doctrine of the Gospel. The wisest men in the world (who are considered to be such) are so blinded by presumption that when it is spoken of to them, "How now?" they say, "Have we lived such a long time in the world, and we should know the Gospel only and nothing else that exists. All of them, then, will be scandalized when it is said to them that the truth of God has been buried and that it is now necessary to guard it more closely. We hear how they scoff at that idea. So it was with Pilate. For inasmuch as he was sent by the Emperor to be his lieutenant in the country of Judea, it seemed to him that a great wrong was done to him when a truth was spoken of which was unknown to him. "And how so? Must we, then, act like idiots? Is there nothing but lies in us? Can we not discern between good and evil? And I who am appointed to office, who take the place of the Emperor, representing his person, must you reproach me just because I have not known what truth is?" This, then, is the intention of Pilate. He is inflated with pride like a frog and he does not wish to have the reputation of not knowing the difference between good and evil. In fact, we do not see that he waits for the answer of our Lord Jesus, but he throws in this word as if in spite, and leaves the place. Since it is so, then, let us be advised. If today there are many Pilates who refuse to be taught in the school of God and become teachable, as if they were already wise enough, may we not be hindered from placing ourselves under the obedience of faith, in order to accept what our Lord shows and proposes to us; that is, knowing that the truth does not grow in our minds, inasmuch as there is only vanity and falsehood there and we are plunged in darkness until our Lord draws us out of it. Let us recognize, then, that the truth surpasses all our senses and faculties and God must surely be our Master to keep us in it; also that we are little to receive

what He shows us. May we hold this truth so precious that, when we shall have circled the heaven and the earth, and it seems that we have learned everything, we may know that it is only smoke and that it will prove ephemeral until we are founded upon this Word, Who is certain and immutable. That, then, in summary, is what we have to remember.

Now it is said, "*As Pilate was seated upon his throne his wife commanded him not to condemn Jesus Christ, because she had been tormented by many dreams.*" There is no doubt that God wished to testify to the innocence of Jesus Christ in many ways; as even by the mouth of Pilate (as already we have mentioned and as we shall see still more fully), not that God had not already concluded what ought to be done by His Only Son. So, since He willed that He be the Sacrifice to wipe out the sins of the world, Scripture had to be fulfilled. Yet our Lord Jesus also had to be proved righteous and innocent, in order that we might know all the better that He suffered the condemnation which was due to us and which we deserved, and that we might always look at our faults and sins in everything that is here told us of the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Whereupon it is said, "*Pilate desires to be able to acquit our Lord Jesus.*" For although he had sovereign authority beyond appeal, still he was in a foreign country and with a mutinous people, though he had a garrison in the city, the sedition troubled him. That is why he wished to proceed by subtle and amiable means, in order that the people might be appeased. It is then said that he presents what was his custom, "*At the feast of the Passover he released a prisoner whom the people willed.*" He allows them to choose either Jesus Christ or Barabbas, who was (as says Saint John) a robber. The other Gospel-writers say that he was a well-known malefactor, who had even been a murderer, and had stirred up sedition and trouble in the city. He is a pest who should be detestable to everyone. Yet, nevertheless, the people cry, "Let us have Barabbas, and let him be pardoned, and let Jesus Christ be crucified."

As for this custom of releasing a prisoner at the Passover, we see where men are led by their foolish devotions. For it surely seemed that the feast was so much better kept by delivering a prisoner, and that it was a service of God. Nevertheless, all that was only an abomination. For it is said that he who justifies the malefactor is just as blameworthy before God as he who punishes the innocent. There must, then, be a sense of equity in those whom God sent and established upon the throne of justice. For in arming them with His sword, He has not said to them, "Do what seems good to you." He surely wishes that they have a fatherly care over the people and that they guard well against rising in cruelty to do wrong to others by abusing their credit and authority, but rather that they be humane and pitiful. However, evil-doers must be chastised, and so God commands it. But what do men do? They imagine they are keeping the feast of the Passover, when they are offending God and they are transgressing openly His Word. By that we ought to be admonished not to follow our fancies when it is a matter of honoring God, but to please His will in everything and by everything. So then, let us not conjure up any devotion according to what seems good to us, but let us be satisfied to do what God orders us to do and what He approves. We even see what this custom is, which men make law today, that everything that is received as a common statute seems to be lawful. Though that may be, God does not fail to condemn it. We see the abuse that took place, that this corruption brought about—that Barabbas was preferred to the Son of God.

Also at first, one might find it strange that our Lord Jesus is thus cried down and that a robber and murderer is more privileged than He, that he finds more favor among men, and that Jesus Christ has received such shame and disgrace. For was it not enough that the Son of God be crucified and that He endured a kind of death full of opprobrium and that furthermore there

were great torments? For death by the cross was, as it were, the punishment of robbers. It was not only like the gallows would be today, but like the wheel. Would it not have been enough, then, that Jesus Christ, after having been whipped and spat upon in the face, should be plunged into the depths, with its being necessary by comparison to show Him to be execrable to all the world? For if we judge by our senses and we do not look beyond what appears, surely we shall be confounded, but we must raise our eyes higher by faith and come to what we have previously mentioned: namely, that God governs all this by His counsel. Let us not stop then with what the people did with Pilate, but let us contemplate this immutable decree of God: that to better humble us He willed that His Son be plunged into complete confusion and that He be put even below all the malefactors of the world, as He was crucified between two robbers, as we shall see later. That, then, is what we have to observe when it is here said that Barabbas had to be set free and Jesus Christ put there, as it were, the most detestable man in the world.

Pilate, even after all that, tries to make our Lord Jesus escape, but by a devilish means: namely, he whips Him (what was then called "chastise") and wished to release Him after having thus chastised Him, as one who had committed some fault. For by that he pretended to quiet the people. Now if our Lord Jesus had thus escaped, what would have become of the Gospel, what would have become of the salvation of the world? For this "correction" as Pilate called it, might forever have been a mark of shame, as if the Gospel had been a wicked doctrine, since the judge of the country condemned it, and our Lord Jesus in His person would have been entirely rejected. Meanwhile we would have perished, since there was no other means to reconcile us to God, except by the death of His only Son. This, then, is the overture of life—the death of our Lord Jesus. So we see that the devil exerted himself very greatly that our Lord Jesus might not die at all. Yet who drove the Priests and their kind to pursue Jesus Christ to death, unless the devil? It is true, for he works, as it were, like a madman. According as we see that God sends a spirit of disturbance and of frenzy upon all wicked men so that they contradict themselves and are like waves of the sea which beat upon one another, so the devil was carried away when he tried to abolish the memory of our Lord Jesus on the one hand and then, however, wished to prevent the redemption of mankind. But God so worked that He willed that the innocence of His Son might have witness through the very mouth of the judge; however, He also willed nevertheless that He should die in order to make the sacrifice for our salvation and redemption. God has only a single and simple will, but it is admirable to us, and He has such strange ways of proceeding that we must bow our heads in awe and yet recognize that our Lord Jesus suffered, not at all according to the desire of men, but because we had to have such a gage of the infinite love of our God, and Jesus Christ had to declare it to us to show how precious our souls are to Him and how dear is the salvation of them to Him. Let us, then, consider all these things.

Besides, it is said at the end by St. John, although Jesus Christ had been whipped, the people strive still more by crying that He be put to death. Then Pilate questions Him again; indeed, because he heard that Jesus made Himself the Son of God, and this word touches him, and he is more frightened by it than before. That is why he asks Him, "Where are You from?" When Jesus Christ does not answer at all, "Do You not know says he, that I have power to release You or power to condemn You?" Now here we see why the Jews bring such an accusation against our Lord Jesus Christ. It is true that the crime which could better move the Governor of the country was having attributed to Himself kingdom and dominion; but when they see that their malice is discovered, and that Pilate well understands that they are only trumped-up lies, thereupon they say, "We have the law by which He ought to die." For that privilege had been reserved for them, in order that they might not have any religious disputes. For the Romans, who were profane people and who served their idols only through ceremony, wished to maintain their empire by means of letting each one do according to his religion.

Whereupon they say, "*He made Himself* the Son of God and thereby He blasphemed." It is true that, if our Lord Jesus had not been the Redeemer of the world, it would have rendered Him subject to the death penalty to make Himself the only Son of God. For we are all children of God when He has adopted us through His grace. That is the common manner of speaking of it in Holy Scripture. Those who have received some special grace are called "Sons of God" in still another manner, as Princes and Magistrates. With greater reason, then, Jesus Christ, Who was supremely anointed with graces and powers by the Holy Spirit, might well be called "Son of God." But if He had not been Redeemer of the world at all and called Himself "Only Son of God" *par excellence*, that would truly have been a mortal crime. But how is it that the Jews accuse Him of that? It is first of all by ignorance of the Scripture, inasmuch as they do not know that He Who should be the Redeemer should be the living God manifest. Since, then, they did not have the real understanding of Scripture, and they were not trained in it, but they were made brutish by their indifference, that is why they are so bold to condemn Jesus Christ. Now we see a like temerity in all ignorant people. Today when they cry "Heretic" it is not that the proofs are on hand, but the most block-headed people are driven by such a rage that they wish to be zealots to honor God, and they know neither why nor how. Further, it was necessary to investigate whether Jesus was Christ the Messiah or not. But the Jews rejected Him without making any inquiry. Let us learn by that, if we wish to have a zeal which God approves, we must be ruled by true knowledge and be taught by His Word. For we may be able to skim the surface, but it will be only by wild arguments of Satan, if we do not speak as scholars of God's truth; because He is the only competent Judge, and He reserves to Himself the office of showing us what is His will. Since it is so, then, let us follow the Word of God with simplicity, and also let us be peaceable. Then may our zeal be ruled by that. That is what we must observe in the first place.

But when it is said that *Pilate* feared more than ever to hear the Son of God spoken of, here we see in the person of a poor Pagan some semblance of religion which moves him, and stings him, and speaks to his conscience, so that he does not know which way to turn. There stands Jesus Christ entirely disfigured and with the marks of the whipping still upon Him. He had previously suffered so much reproach and ignominy, so many drops of spit, so many blows on the head which had been given to Him in the house of Caiaphas. Briefly, here is a man who is despised and rejected by everyone. Yet, nevertheless, the name of God moves Pontius Pilate and arouses in him fright and astonishment. What of us, then, when we behave like savage beasts? And when one wishes to speak to us of God, if we are not held in check at all, must not the example of Pilate condemn us even to the last day? We see today mockers, people full of the devil. If one proposes to them, "Look what God shows us," if one declares to them His Word, if one wishes to prove what they reject; one thing is as good as another to them. They stop up their ears, they bind up their eyes, they are entirely preoccupied in their natural senses, and they are so proud that they would not even consider giving any audience. For they are satisfied as they are. "We have ordained it," they say, "and so it must be done." Indeed? However, here is Pilate who had never heard a single word of the doctrine of God, even the Law was to him in disdain, so that everything that the Jews do he considers to be something trumped-up, and he adores his idols. Yet the name "God" affects him, and he is held back when it is spoken of. Is it on account of some majesty or some pomp which he sees in Jesus Christ? Not at all. It is only the name "God" which draws him to reverence. How much, then, some people will be condemned by this fear of Pilate, when they follow their beaten path and no progress can be made among them, although the name "God" is spoken of to them, and not only as a word in passing, but offering to teach them and to show them with the finger the testimonies of Scripture! If they condescend neither to think about nor to apply themselves with any diligence, must not the devil possess them entirely? Must they not know that they are as it were monsters, who have abolished every

germ of religion, inasmuch as they have made themselves obstinate against God, as it were, defying all nature? That, then, is what we have to remember.

Though that may be, on the contrary we also see that all the fears which men have, and all sentiment and apprehension they have to honor God, will be, as it were, only a flash of lightning which passes before their eyes and immediately vanishes. For how did Pilate fear God? We see that it does not grip him at all, that he only shows such a great pride, that it seems to him that God is no longer anything. That, then, is how all those who are not governed by the Spirit of God will have on the one hand some fears by which they are seized, so that they will humble themselves for a time before God, but they do not cease to raise their horns, then to forget, and to dull their consciences to do evil. As we see in Pharaoh that sometimes he is quite astonished. "And pray to God for me," he says. And when he sees the power of God so apparent, "Oh, it is the finger of God," he says, "one must be subject to Him." But soon after he is worse than ever. Thus, then, it was with Pilate. This admonishes us not to have any fears of God like gusts of wind, but to have a good root which remains firm in our hearts. For how is it that Pilate feared God? It is only to render him more inexcusable. That is why God awakens the sleeping consciences, which wish to reject every yoke, and He brings them back and incites them to think of themselves more closely, so that in spite of themselves they must recognize their poverty and feel their vices, although they wish to sleep in them. All the scruples, then, which condemners of God and all wicked men have—these are to be regarded as summonses which God issues to take away from them every excuse of ignorance. But then they slacken the reins, they throw themselves with abandon, and so they are in no wise held back—as we see in Pilate. At the beginning he is quite astonished, but soon afterwards he goes back to his natural self. "*And do you not know*," he says to Jesus Christ, "that I have power to release you or to condemn you." Here let us note first of all, if He had been a robber, nevertheless, he would not have been able to move a finger unless God had given him the power. How is it, then, that Pilate dares to assume such unbounded license as to condemn and to set free according to his desire and by virtue of his position? For it would be better that the check be released from all robbers and that they had liberty to exercise their cruelty in the forests than for people to sit on such an honorable throne—people who take pleasure in power without thinking of their consciences and meanwhile throwing the world into entire confusion. Here we see (as I have shown) that there was no living root in Pilate, but only a gust of wind. So then, let us learn to so fear God that there may be a firm constancy in us to walk in His obedience, and that we may fight virtuously against everything that could turn us aside, and that always this check may hold us back: that it is not fitting to provoke the wrath of Him Who has all power over us. That, in summary, is what we have to remember.

However, also there is to consider how the glory which Pilate attributes to himself is nevertheless a great shame upon him. For his enemies could have reproached him no worse than this: namely, that he wishes to be held and reputed to have no discrimination between good and evil. Nevertheless he boasts of it. We see, then, inasmuch as the despisers of God imagine themselves to be raised, they must always feel themselves to be further cast down in confusion. God puts in them such a sense of disapproval that they boast of their iniquities in order to render themselves detestable both in heaven and on earth. What, then, is to be done? Let us learn to glory in the good, and let us consider what is lawful for us. For those who glory in their greatness, it is certain that they provoke God, inasmuch as they have often acquired their riches and their credit by unlawful means, by excess, by cruelty, and all kinds of extortion's. When, then, they glory in that, it is, as it were, by defying God. He who has plundered from all parts will say, "I have done well." And there is the blood of poor people which he has sucked. He will say, "I have acquired it." And how? By frauds, wicked practices, pillaging one, gobbling up another, and having perverted all order. The other through ambition and unlawful means will have arrived at

some dignity. Whereupon he wishes to be held in awe. This is manifestly to defy God.

Let us learn, then, (as I have already said) to glory in what God approves. It is true that although there might be some good in us, it is not lawful to usurp the praise which God reserves to Himself, and on account of which we must pay Him homage, inasmuch as He has given us everything. It is not proper, then, here to glory in ourselves, as if what God gives us belonged to us. But I say we must glory only in that it pleased God to adopt us for His children, and inasmuch as He gives us grace to walk in fear of Him, inasmuch as He gives us power to abstain from evil. In that we must glory. Then, if we are little and contemptible according to the world, let us pray that He may give us patience, and that we may prefer to be in such an estate than to be raised and meanwhile to enjoy ourselves like worldly people do, who make merry in such a way that nothing can restrain them. This, in summary, is how we have to glory, that is, that we may not wish to be more than God allows us, and that we may despise everything He disapproves of, although the world may applaud those who exercise tyranny and who practice every evil to excess. Let us leave, then, easily and willingly all such glories, not seeking anything else except to be recognized and confessed before God as His children. That, in summary, is what we still have to remember.

In conclusion it is said, "*Pilate, seeing that he was gaining nothing and that the tumult among the people was increasing, washes his hands and says, 'I am innocent of the blood of this man.'*" We have already declared that the innocence of our Lord Jesus had to be proved and it was testified to through the mouth of the judge himself. For when it is said that Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate and that He was condemned, it is not enough to have heard the account, but we must be fully aware that Jesus Christ not only is innocent, but that He is the fountain of all holiness and perfection. Why, then, is He condemned? There are here two different things, it seems. It is said that He is the Lamb of God without spot. Since He is the Lamb of God, He must be condemned for the sacrifice. The word "Lamb" implies that He is to be offered. And what does the Law pronounce of sacrifices? That they stand for sins and curses. That is why it is said that our Lord Jesus was accursed for our sakes, that is, that He received the curse which was due to our sins. This, then, is the quality and condition under which He is condemned, since God appointed Him as a lamb which must be offered in sacrifice. But also He had to be known without any blemish, and His purity had to come before our eyes, in order that we might understand our sins, as far as we have known that Jesus Christ is the mirror of all perfection; and that we might enter into examination of our faults to be displeased with them and to pass condemnation, which was prepared for us unless we had been delivered by Him. Now when Pilate took the basin and the water to wash his hands, it was far too frivolous a ceremony, as if he could be acquitted before God by that. But it was not to make his excuse before God when he tried to appease the fury of the people. For he did not protest before God that he was innocent, but he only said to the people, "Look to yourselves. As for me, I am innocent." As if he said, "You force me to this." But all that (as I have said) is not to excuse him. Also he is not performing at all the office of judge. For he ought sooner to die a hundred times than to swerve from his office. When he saw all the troubles of the world, he ought to have this magnanimity to do what he knew to be good and just. But when he sees the people to be so inflamed, he lets himself be carried away. However, it had to be, cursed as it was, that he testifies to the innocence of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that from his own mouth he justifies Him. Nevertheless, that does not excuse him from condemnation, but in that rests our consolation. For we know that if we should be brought before God today to appear before His throne, it would not be to receive condemnation; but since the fact that the blood of our Lord Jesus was spilled is the true purging of our souls, He receives us as pure and clean.

There, then, is where we must have our recourse. However, we see the word which is pronounced by the Jews. For they are flung headlong in such a way by Satan that they say, "His blood be upon us and upon all our children." Now they were the heritage of God, the people elected and chosen from among all the nations of the earth. Yet they renounce this dignity, and all the promises of salvation, this sacred alliance which God had established with their line. They are, then, deprived of all the benefits that God had previously distributed to them, inasmuch as they were descended from the race of Abraham. And the blood of our Lord Jesus had to fall upon them, indeed, to the confounding of them and all their descendants. As also He had previously declared to them,

"Your iniquity must come to the full, and the blood of the Martyrs, from Abel the righteous even to Zacharias son of Barachias, who was murdered not long ago, must be brought upon you, and you must see that you were always murderers of the Prophets, and by this means you have fought against God and against His Word." (Matthew 23:34-36, Luke 11:49-51, 2 Chronicles 36:15-16.)

That, then, is how the blood of our Lord Jesus, which ought to be the salvation of all the world, and indeed especially of the Jews, since the birthright belonged to them, cried vengeance against them. But now let us learn to look deep inside ourselves, and to pray to God that it may come upon us in another manner, both upon us and, in particular, upon our children; namely, may we be washed and cleansed, seeing that we are abominable before God on account of our sins until we are washed and we suffer that the blood which was once poured out for our Redemption come upon us and that thereby we are sprinkled by the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:2) (so says Saint Peter in his Canonical letter) and may we be careful not to reject the grace which is offered to us by God, of which the Jews have been deprived because of their ingratitude, and have done nothing but provoke more and more His vengeance. May we, then, today be disposed to receive the purging of our Lord Jesus Christ, which cannot be apprehended except by faith. May we pray to God that we may not have received this washing in vain, but from day to day may we be purified from all our blemishes. May it please our God to make the most of this purity which was acquired by our Lord Jesus Christ until we have arrived in His Kingdom, where we shall be freed from all corruption's of our vices.

Now we shall bow in humble reverence before the majesty of our God.

Sixth Sermon—Matthew 27:27-44.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. And they

crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there; And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.—Matthew 27:27-44

Following what we have mentioned about this before, we must consider still better that the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is not of this world. For we see how He was in disgrace, they mocked Him, and instead of a Royal diadem He had a crown of thorns. Instead of a scepter He had a reed. Then everything that could be imagined to heap shame upon a man, was done to Him. If we limit our attention to what is here narrated, it will be as it were an object of scandal to alienate us from our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently from all hope of salvation. But we have to contemplate by faith the spiritual Kingdom which was mentioned above. Then we can conclude, although men mock the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ that He never ceased to be prized according to His worth both before God and before His Angels. Indeed, we have to remember that the Son of God was thus treated in His person, in order to receive upon Himself all the shame which we deserve. For how can we stand before God while we are defiled in our iniquities? But since our Lord Jesus suffered them to spit in His face, He was willing to be buffeted on the head. He received all insults, that is how today we are recognized and avowed as children of God and therein consists our confidence. Indeed, also we have always to consider that God wishes to induce us to be more deeply touched by our faults, to hold them in horror and detestation, when we see that it was necessary that the Son of God, to make reparation for them and to acquire for us grace and absolution, so endured, and that the heavenly Father spared Him not at all. Seeing then, the confounding of our sins to be such in the person of the Son of God, we surely have to humble ourselves and to be entirely confounded in ourselves. However, we ought also to take courage, and to be grounded in such confidence that we may not doubt at all, when we shall come before God, that our Lord Jesus Christ acquired grace for us when He suffered Himself to be so vilified because of us. For He acquired for us glory and dignity before God and His Angels by this means.

Now it is here said that our Lord Jesus *was led to the place which is called "Golgotha,"* that is to say *"the place of a Skull."* The Hebrew word from which this is derived means "to roll," but they so used it because when a body has decayed, they find the skull dry, and it is like a ball which rolls away. They called, then, this place *"Golgotha"* because many evildoers were punished there, and their heads were seen there. Here we have to remember what the Apostle says in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that our Lord Jesus Christ was led outside the city, as was customary with sacrifices, that is, those that had been burned, and of which the blood was carried into the Sanctuary to wipe away the blemishes of the people. (Hebrews 13:11, 12.) It was said that such a sacrifice was as it were a curse. It must, then, be disposed of far away. Behold the Son of God Who was willing to receive this condition upon Himself, in order that we may know that in truth we are now set free and absolved before God. For we deserve that God reject us, even that He pour out His horrible vengeance upon us, while He looks at us as we are. There

is, then no other means to acquire grace, except that we come to our Lord Jesus Christ, and that we have all our refuge in Him, since we are unburdened of such a load, when He was willing to be as it were cursed and detestable for our sakes, in order that we might find favor before God and that we might be acceptable to Him. For although already Pilate His judge had justified Him many times, yet He had to receive in His person everything that was required to redeem us. For He was our pledge, and in everything and by everything He had to answer for us. So then, after having known that our Lord Jesus was thus rejected, as not being worthy to be of the company of men, even, as it were, bearing such an infection that He could not be endured; seeing, I say, that, let us learn to follow Him, and to renounce the world, as we are exhorted in this passage. And if we must be mocked, cut off as rotten members, and be held in detestation, let us endure it all patiently, yielding submissively, until the day come that our sorrows are converted into joy, that God will wipe away the tears from our eyes, and indeed, that what we now judge to be shame will be converted for us into glory. For it is certain that all that we endure for our Lord Jesus Christ is more honorable before God than all the pomp of this world. That, then, is what we have to remember on this point.

Now the Gospel-writer adds that our Lord Jesus was mocked by all those who passed by, and above all by Priests and Scribes and their kind. And what was the occasion of it? "*If He is the Son of God let Him come down,*" they say, "and let Him save Himself, for He surely saved others. If He is King of Israel, let Him show it." Here we see a terrible blindness in these miserable people, who were possessed by Satan, for not having any more feeling or insight. Behold the Priests who ought to be the Messengers of God. For He had ordained them to this function, in order that His Word and His will might be known through their mouth. Behold the Scribes who are trained in the Law, and nevertheless they, supposing that they can crush our Lord Jesus, show that they tread under foot all Holy Scripture and all the religion of which they boasted. When the Messiah was previously spoken of to them, they certainly responded that He had to be born in Bethlehem. They ought also to have been warned and informed that the Redeemer Who was promised to them had to suffer such a death. This was not an obscure thing. The passage from Isaiah (Isaiah 53) was as clear as if one gave a recitation of what our Lord Jesus Christ endured. They ought, then, to have known that it was impossible to have a clearer picture of things than did the Prophet although he had spoken of them such a long time before. Then there are as in Zechariah so in Daniel the declarations that God must gather His people, and exalt His Church: (Daniel 12:1-3; Zechariah 2:11) namely, that the Redeemer of the world should suffer every reproach and curse before the world. How is it, then, that they so defied the Son of God when He exercises His office, as it had been sufficiently declared by the Prophets? So we see that Satan carried them away, when they forgot everything they had previously known.

So let us be advised so to walk in the fear of God that, after having tasted His Word, we may receive it with reverence and obey our Lord Jesus Christ Who is presented to us there. For it is also in Him that we shall find entire perfection of virtues, indeed, if we come to Him in humility. For if we presume to play with God our audacity must receive such a reward as we read here of these miserable men who were so carried away by their rage. Yet we have to profit from these blasphemies, learning from them to do the opposite. For since our Lord Jesus willed to be our King and our Head, that is why He did not save Himself. The enemies of truth said, "Let Him save Himself if He is King of Israel." But He had to endure in His person to acquire for us salvation. Why, then, did our Lord Jesus not spare Himself? Why did He endure a death so bitter and so shameful, unless it was necessary in order that we might be delivered through such a ransom. We have, then, to defy all agents of Satan, and all his villains who vomited up such blasphemies as the Gospel-writer describes, and to be all the more sure that we really have a King Who preferred our salvation to His own life, and suffered everything that was required for

our redemption, and had no other consideration except to redeem what was lost. For we would have been devoid of all hope if the Son of God had left us in our estate and condition. But when He was so swallowed up in death, that is where our deliverance lies. When He endured everything so patiently, that is the cause why God now extends His hand and His power to help us in time of need. Our Lord Jesus, then, had to be there, as it were, abandoned by God in order that today we may feel that He watches for our salvation, and He will always be ready to aid us in necessity when we require it. However, let us also learn to arm ourselves against all temptations, when the devil comes to assail us and he wishes to make us believe that God has forsaken us and that He has turned His back upon us and that it is a disappointing thing to hope in Him. Let us know, then, when Jesus Christ is the true pattern of all believers and He has shown us the way we must go, that it is sufficient reason for us to be patterned after Him. He suffered that such blasphemies were poured out against Him, and yet He constantly resisted them in such a way that by this means the victory was acquired for us. Let us fight, then, today when the devil comes to lay siege against us, as it were, to overthrow our faith and to close the door upon us, so that we may not be able to have access to God, as if He had forgotten all about us. Let us follow our Lord Jesus Christ and let us wait for the hour when God extends His arm to show that He is pitiful toward us and He is Father to us, although for a time He suffers that we are thus beaten down.

So much, then, for these taunts and mockings which were heaped upon our Lord Jesus. There are still others. "*He trusted in God. Let God save Him if God loves Him.*" That had already been typified in the person of David, for these very words (Psalm 22:8) are recited when he complains that his enemies have taken occasion to shoot out their tongues at him, (Psalm 22:7) and they almost put their feet on his neck, in reproaching him for the confidence he had in God. Now it is certain that this is the most fatal plague that Satan can devise against us. For, the life of men consists in faith, and in the refuge which we have in God, leaning upon His promises. If we are robbed of these, we are done, we are entirely lost and cast down. That is also why Satan tried to destroy the confidence which our Lord Jesus had in God His Father. It is true that Jesus Christ fought with a greater power than we are capable of. For He was not subject to any unbelief. Though that may be, yet He felt such fury as there was in these temptations. For as the devil had previously plotted such things, now he also doubles his efforts. He had said to Him,

"If you are the Son of God, let these stones be changed into bread, and eat, for you are a poor starved man. (Matthew 4:3.)

And do you not see that you must experiment to see if you have any power or not?" Now in that Jesus Christ was not insensible, any more than when they reproach Him for the confidence He here had in God. So now, although we may not have the same power to resist, so that we may not come to grief, yet we ought to be strengthened in Him, knowing that it is for us and to our profit that He conquered such assaults and rose above them.

There are also those who say, "*He saved others and He cannot save Himself.*" We see once again how they were confounded. For was not the fact that He had saved others a certain and infallible mark of His Divine power? Jesus Christ had raised the dead. This was not unknown to them. He had given sight to the blind; He had healed paralytics, the lame, even demoniacs. Behold, then, Jesus Christ, Who unfolded the great treasures of His goodness and power in all the miracles which were done by Him. Yet that is still an objection against Him. We see, then, how these poor madmen, unless someone restrains them, are their judges to deprive them of every excuse; so that, when they will come before the great judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, they will not be able to allege anything to cover themselves. For there they are, condemned by their own mouths. If our Lord saved others, it is certain that He could have saved

Himself, unless He preferred others to Himself. What can be perceived there except an admirable goodness, that He wished to be cast into the abyss according to men in order to draw us out of the depth of the abysses, that He was willing to suffer everything we deserved in order to acquit us from it, briefly, that He renounced all temporal salvation, that is, He did not wish at all to bring His own life into consideration, He did not wish at all to spare His person, in order that we might have such a gage and such a ransom. All the more, then, ought we to be confirmed in our faith. Seeing everything the devil plots to trouble us and to hinder us from coming to our Lord Jesus, ought to serve to make us all the more sure. May we know how to profit from all this. Now it is certain that the devil makes all his efforts to hinder us at this point. For knowing wherein rests our salvation, he applies every means in order to be able to deprive us of it. For he knows, if he can induce us to be scandalized in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he has won his case. And we experiment with him too much. Besides, all the scandals which the devil raises up and puts before our eyes, to make us turn away from the Son of God, ought to serve us as confirmation. For when it is said that Jesus Christ saved others and does not save Himself, it is a proposition which, according to our human judgment, should be to make us conceive some disdain against the person of the Son of God, to reject Him, and not to put our hope in Him. But quite the contrary, let us know when the Son of God had no regard for Himself and He had no concern at all for His own life, it is because He held the salvation of souls so dear and so precious that He wished to employ everything to that end. Since it is so, we ought boldly to be founded upon Him to call upon Him and to be made entirely sure that it is not in vain that He suffered so for our sakes.

As for their saying "*Here is He who destroys the Temple and rebuilds it in three days,*" there is too villainous a malice in contriving that Jesus had said that He would destroy the Temple. But He had said, "Destroy this Temple and I shall rebuild it at the end of three days." It was not, then, referred to the destruction of the Temple, except by His enemies. And when they crucified Him, should they not have known that the thing already began to be fulfilled? For they were not ignorant of the fact that Jesus Christ had declared Himself to be the true Temple of God with respect to His human body. For since He is God manifest in the flesh and His Divine essence is united to His nature which He took from us, since, I say, all fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him, it is very certain that His body deserves to be called "*Temple,*" more than the one in Jerusalem and more than all the heavens. Now they destroyed it, inasmuch as He was among them, and He rebuilt it at the end of three days. Also they did not forget that; for they knew well afterwards what to say to Pilate. (Matthew 27:63.) But by that we see that if the devil possesses men he makes them so stupid that they can no longer distinguish between good and evil. They are full of such fury that they throw themselves with abandon against God, as if they wished to defy Him fully and with deliberate purpose. Let us see that, that we may be admonished to walk all the more in the fear of God, when we know how He worked by His admirable power to declare that it was not in vain that Jesus Christ had pronounced by His mouth, "Destroy this Temple and I shall rebuild it." For we see only confounding in His death according to appearances and according to the common sense of men. But Jesus Christ repaired every thing by His resurrection. Since it is so, then, all the more ought we to be confirmed in the faith, and to defy Satan with all the gestures he can make to shake us and to cause us to doubt.

Concerning the saying "*They gave our Lord Jesus vinegar mixed with gall and myrrh to drink,*" it is proper to assume that this was done according to the custom of that time to shorten the death of evil-doers. All the same, Jesus Christ, having tasted it, did not wish to drink, because He knew that His hour had not yet come. They were accustomed, then, before evil-doers

were raised on the cross, to give them this drink in order that the blood might be stirred up and they gave up their spirits sooner. For this kind of death was cruel enough, and they needed to be helped through it. In fact, we shall see later how the robbers had their bones broken and snapped in order that they might not languish any further. Though that may be, our Lord Jesus did not wish to drink this beverage, to declare that He was ready to receive in obedience the condition which was committed to Him by God His Father. It is true that this death was very hard for Him. For apart from its being dreadful, He had in it spiritual torments, of which we shall treat tomorrow, God willing. All that, then, might well have induced our Lord Jesus Christ to approach death as soon as it was possible for Him, But He wished to place Himself with entire obedience to endure until He might be delivered without any human means. That, then, in summary, is what we have to remember. But it is in these articles, when His clothing was divided among them and they cast lots over them, that the Scripture was fulfilled. David, a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, makes such complaints. It is true that this is by figure of speech, when he says that they have put gall in his drink, and vinegar, and they have divided his garments, and that in his affliction they still stung him and put him in further agony, (Psalm 69:20, 21; Psalm 22:18) as cruel and inhuman people would still like to molest their poor victim who can make no resistance. David, then, uses such a figure of speech when he says that his wealth was divided among them. (Psalm 22:18.) Under that word he speaks of his wife, of his house, of all his goods, and of all his estate. But in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ this had to be seen with the eye. They gave Him, then, vinegar and gall, in order that it might be known that David was really the type of Him, and that He was the true Redeemer Who had been promised from all time. For why was the Kingdom raised in the house of David, unless with promise that it would endure longer than sun or moon? There was, then, this eternal Kingdom which today has been established in the person of the Redeemer. For these things, which were, as it were, in shadow and type in the person of David, had to have their perfection in Jesus Christ, as we see here.

Besides, as for the Gospel-writer's adding that even the robbers who were with our Lord Jesus mocked Him, it was said by only one, as it appears by St. Luke, who declares these things more at length. But it is a common enough manner of speaking, as when one says, "One speaks even to little children," Although there may be only one, the speaker takes the plural number. "There must be women among them." Yet there need be only one. In this way, then, it is said that our Lord Jesus was spited, mocked, and blasphemed by all, even by the malefactors. For when He was identified with two robbers, it is in order to aggravate all the more the shame of His death. It is true that this was the place where they were accustomed to executing evil-doers. All the same, they are

not satisfied with such a shame. But He had to be considered worse and more detestable than all the robbers in the world, when they put one on each of His two sides, to say that He is the chief of them all. And in that, as says St. Mark, was verified what, is said by the Prophet,

"He was reputed among the transgressors." (Mark 15:28; Isaiah 53:12)

Now without this reputation, today in what place and condition would we be before God? For we cannot obtain grace without righteousness. God must hate us and reject us until we are righteous and purged of all spots and offenses before Him. And that it be so, can God renounce Himself? Can He strip Himself of His holiness, justice, and integrity? Since, then, we bring before Him our stains, we must be abominable to Him. Now, how shall we now be justified before God, except inasmuch as our Lord Jesus Christ was reputed among the malefactors? We are, then, exempt from this class and God receives us, and we are as acceptable to Him as if we were entirely pure and innocent, inasmuch as our Lord Jesus suffered being in such shame and disgrace before men. That, in summary, is what we have to remember about the robbers.

But we must insist to the end upon the account of St. Luke, that is, that one of the robbers rebukes his companion when he sees him so obstinate. "How now?" says he, "will there never be a time when you will be humiliated? For the condemnation and the punishment which you endure are for your misdeeds and for your crimes. You are a man plunged into every curse, and though during your entire lifetime you were so brutish as to take pleasure in your faults, so now you must begin to groan." For a man, however undone he may be, although he makes merry his whole lifetime, and thinks he will never come to account at all, he mocks justice, and even defies it, inasmuch as he trusts that he will remain unpunished, yet when he is captured, he must drop his cackling. "Now here you are," says he, "in great torment. You see that God and men are now bringing you to account. Also your conscience rebukes you that it is for your crimes that you endure. And must you still defy God?" Here is a sentence which well shows that this robber had been taught by the Spirit of God. Although we shall soon see it incomparably more, already in this word we can judge what kind of a teacher the Spirit of God is, when He gives such instruction to those who have been entirely led astray, indeed, made brutes; that they not only recognize their faults and prepare themselves so as to obtain grace, but they can speak just like learned doctors, and people who for a long time have been trained in Holy Scripture. For the principal remonstrance that we can make against a man so hardened and who still does not cease to storm against God when he ought to bend and come to repentance, is it not what this poor robber did? But though that may be, such an admonition profited nothing except to render inexcusable him who was so possessed by Satan. Even though it served no purpose toward him to whom it was addressed, it certainly ought to be useful to us today.

So let us learn to fear God, although He spares us. But above all if we are beaten by His rods, and He makes us feel that He is offended against us, then may we be all the more incited to groan, and may we also have constancy to endure patiently our afflictions, as we see that this poor robber did, and not to raise ourselves at all in pride and fury like the other. What is more, in these two we see, as it were, mirrors of all mankind. For we see the miseries with which we are surrounded. This life is, as it were, a depth of all privations, and these are the fruits of our sins. For we have been deprived of the blessing of God in the fall of Adam. It is true that although God by His inestimable goodness rises above this curse, when He always declares Himself Father in many ways and makes us feel His gentleness and the love which He bears toward us and the care which He had for us, yet we have many marks of our sins, and high and low we ought to perceive that we are cursed by God. Death finally is common to all. When we shall have languished in this world, when we shall all have been subject to many maladies, to heat and to cold, when we shall have been tormented in one way and another, briefly, when we shall have endured infinite miseries, what will be the issue of it? We must return to corruption and ashes. However, we see those who are touched by God in such a way that the afflictions which they endure serve for their salvation and turn to their aid, as St. Paul speaks in the 8th chapter of Romans. Others grow worse and worse, and instead of humbling themselves and being touched with any repentance, only make themselves to fester still more, and increasingly provoke the wrath of God and light still more fire to be consumed by. We see that, then. So, let us cast our eyes upon these two robbers as upon mirrors of all the world. For from the greatest to the least we are all blameworthy before God. And if all together we shall endure, who will boast of his innocence? Who will be able to be absolved? Being then plunged into condemnation, we endure rightly for our sins. However, we do not all make equal confession of it. For there are those who grow from bad to worse, and their rebellion which they make against God is manifest. They gnash their teeth, they foam at the mouth in their rage and cruelty. And they do not wish in any wise to come to this condemnation. Or perhaps they take the bit in their teeth and show a willful contempt to say that God will not get them anything at all and that they will have no master over them.

Now let us conclude that, when poor sinners recognize themselves, when they humble themselves, when they confess their debt, when they give glory to God, declaring that He treats them in all equity and uprightness, and that there is good reason why they are suffered to be so chastised, when, I say, poor sinners are drawn to such reasonableness, let us know that God has put His hand upon them, that He has touched them by His Holy Spirit and that in this one can observe an infinite goodness, when He so draws back from perdition and hell, those who were, as it were, devoid of all hope. Now, in summary we see in the person of this poor robber an example of faith which is as excellent as any there ever was. So much more ought we to be carried away and astonished by such a miracle which God performed. For in what estate is he? There he is near death, he endures horrible torments, he waits for someone to come and break and snap his legs, for himself to be dismembered there, who is still in a torment so bitter and dreadful that it is to make him lose sense and memory, he sees our Lord Jesus Who is also in the same desperate situation, indeed, with greater shame, and how does he speak? Not only does he recognize his faults to humble himself before God, not only does he exercise the office of teacher to convert his companion and to lead him back to the good way, but he makes a confession which deserves to be preferred to all others, if we consider well such circumstances. "Remember me," says he, "when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom."

How is it that he is able to conceive of a Kingdom in Jesus Christ? He there perishing on the cross, He is cursed both by God and by men. For this sentence of the law had been pronounced by the mouth of God,

"Cursed is he who will hang on the tree. (Deuteronomy 21:23.)

And that was not done in a chance case, but God put there His only Son. When, then, he sees Jesus Christ to be there under the curse both before God and before men, indeed in the depth of despair from the human point of view, he cannot collect his thoughts to say that Jesus Christ is King, except it be in faith and in spirit. So then, he sees there things which could turn him away from the Son of God and which could make him conclude that it would only be an abuse and a mockery to trust in Him. Yet he calls Him King, seeing Him in His death. "Save me," says he, "Give me life. For if You will remember me, in that will consist all my bliss." Now when we shall have well pondered all these circumstances, it is certain that the faith which was in this robber was as excellent as was in any man who ever lived. However, let us not be ashamed to be his disciples, for in fact the death of our Lord Jesus Christ will not profit us unless we are, as it were, condemned in ourselves, in order to obtain salvation in Him. And we cannot be absolved before God, unless we have confessed that there is in us only iniquity and filth. Since it is true, then, that we are blameworthy before God, and that our own conscience judges and condemns us, let us not be ashamed to follow this robber, seeing that he can be to us a good teacher.

And even now that our Lord Jesus has ascended into heaven, that He has taken possession of the glory which was given to Him by God His Father, in order that every knee may bow before Him, let us not doubt that we are fully restored to His keeping, and conclude that there is wherein consists all our bliss, to know that Jesus Christ remembers us and that He governs us. Inasmuch as He has been ordained our Shepherd, He watches over our salvation, in order that we may be secure under His hand and under His protection. Besides, may we learn to bear patiently the miseries of this present life, and may that not turn us aside from coming to our Lord Jesus Christ. The robber was heard, as we see. Yet he did not escape death, which was very hard and terrible. So then, may we so esteem the spiritual grace which is given us in our Lord Jesus Christ, and which is offered us every day by the preaching of the Gospel, that it may

be to make us rise above all the anguishes, quarrels, cares, troubles, and assaults which we could experience. May all our afflictions be sweetened, inasmuch as we know that all will turn out for our good and salvation, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That, then, is what we have to observe. Besides, let us add to it the answer of our Lord Jesus Christ, when He promises to the robber that he will be with Him that day in Paradise. Although, then, our Lord Jesus was not yet raised from the dead, and He had not even fulfilled all that was required for our redemption and salvation, already He displayed the power and the fruit of His death and passion. It is true that the fulfillment was in the resurrection. But since it is conjoined to His death and passion, and since we know that, as He suffered in the infirmity of His flesh, so, He is raised in the power of His Spirit. As He endured for our sins in order that we might be acceptable before God, also He is raised for our justification. When, I say, we know all that, with how much greater courage may we come freely to Him. May we not doubt at all, when it will please Him to remember us, and to hide us under the shadow of His wings, that we can defy Satan, death and all miseries, and glory in our infirmity. Although according to the world we are poor ill-starred creatures, may we never cease to rejoice in God, from the foretaste He gives us by faith of the heavenly glory and of this inheritance which He has acquired at such a price and from the hope of which we can never be cheated.

Now we shall bow in humble, reverence before the majesty of our God.

Seventh Sermon—Matthew 27:45-54.

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.—Matthew 27:45-54

We saw yesterday that the mockeries and blasphemies of the enemies of God did not hinder the death and passion of our Lord Jesus from producing and showing His power in the midst of such contempt and ingratitude of the world. For here we see all those who were in some reputation and dignity among the Jews, who openly mock the Son of God. Yet that did not hinder Him from pitying a poor robber and receiving him into eternal life. It is not necessary at all that personality obscure or diminish the glory of the Son of God. If it is argued that a poor robber is not at all to be compared with those who rule the Church, who were teachers of the law; it is not proper, when we speak of the salvation which was acquired for us through the gratuitous goodness of God, to seek any excellence in our personalities, but rather we must come

back to what St. Paul says,

"This is a faithful teaching, that Jesus came to save poor sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15.)

So then, when we shall consider the fruit of the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, all men have to be humbled, and there will have to be found in them only poverty and shame, in order that God may by this means pour out upon them the treasures of His mercy, having no other consideration to provide for us, except inasmuch as He sees that we are cast into the depths in all miseries. Since then, this robber was a man disapproved of by all, and God called him so suddenly, when our Lord made effective for him His death and passion which He suffered and endured for all mankind, that ought all the more to confirm us. It is not at all, then, a matter of God's showing here how He extends His hand to those who seem to be worthy of it and who have some merit in them, or who were respectable and in general reputation among men. But when He draws from the depth of hell poor damned souls, when He shows Himself to be pitiful toward those on whom all hope of life had been foreclosed, that is wherein His goodness shines. That is also what ought to give us entrance to salvation. For hypocrites, although they profess to be somewhat restrained by the grace of God, yet close the door against themselves by their arrogance. For they are so inflated with pride that they cannot adjust themselves to our Lord Jesus Christ. So first may we be very certain that Jesus Christ calls to Himself poor sinners who have only confusion in their persons, and that He extends His arms to receive them. For if we are not sure, we shall never be able to take courage to come to Him. But when we shall be well persuaded that it is to those who are the most miserable that He addresses the salvation which He acquired, provided they recognize themselves as such, and they humble themselves, and they are entirely confounded, rendering themselves blameworthy (as they are) before the judgment of God; that is how we shall be assured, that is how we shall have easy access to be sharers of the righteousness which is here offered to us, and by which we obtain grace and favor before God.

Whereupon it is said, "*From the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness.*" I speak differently from our common language, for we would say twelve o'clock until three o'clock. But the Gospel-writer followed the common manner of speaking of that time. For when he says the third hour, it is not to say three o'clock, but it is at the first part of the day. There are here two things to note in summary. One is that they counted the hours differently from what we do today. For they counted the day from sunrise to sunset, and there were twelve hours in the day, whereas we measure the day by twenty-four hours, figuring from midnight to the following midnight. Clocks had to be managed differently, so that the hours were longer in summer than in winter. According as the days were longer or shorter, so the hours were long or short. The other point is that they divided the day into four quarters of three hours each, and each part was named by the first hour of the quarter. So all the time from sunrise to the second part of the day, was called the first hour. The second part, which extended to noon, was by them named the third hour. And the sixth hour began at midday and lasted until the third, or four hours later. The other part, which was the last, lasted until the sun set and day was ended. That is why it is said by one of the Gospel-writers that Jesus Christ was crucified about the third hour. And it is here said that this was about the sixth hour. Our Gospel-writer meant that from the sixth hour to the ninth hour there was darkness. For our Lord Jesus was crucified between 9 a.m. and noon, and He had been condemned about 9 a.m. by Pilate. And St. Mark means the end of the three hours, not the beginning, when he described the time that Jesus Christ was led to Golgotha. Now He was on the cross until the ninth hour, when already the end of the day was approaching. So it is most likely that our Lord Jesus did not remain in agony upon the cross more than three hours.

During which time it is said that there was darkness over all the land, that is, Judea. For the eclipse was not general through all the world. In fact that would have obscured the miracle which God wished to show. Because they might then have attributed this eclipse to the order of nature. On the other hand there are not many people who have spoken of it in the sense that it happened in other countries. Indeed, those who make mention of it are rightly suspected. But behold the country of Judea which is covered by darkness. And at what hour? For about the three hours after noonday, when the sun was not yet near his rest, as they say. But apart from the common order of nature there had to be darkness to cause fright and astonishment to all. Many consider that this was done as a sign of detestation, as if God wished to call the Jews to account, in order that they might have some feeling for such an enormous crime as they had committed, and as if He signified to them by this visible sign that even all creatures ought, as it were to hide themselves from such a horrible thing, when Jesus Christ is thus delivered to death. But we have to note that in a way the death of our Lord Jesus Christ had to be held as a dreadful crime, that is, with regard to the Jews. God has well detested their so villainous iniquity. For it surpassed all others. In fact, if we hate murder and such things, what will it be when we come to the person of the Son of God? That the men had been so mad as to wish to annihilate Him Who was the Fountain of Life, that they rose up to destroy the memory of Him by Whom we were created, and in the power of Whom we subsist!

Yet the death of our Lord Jesus did not remain merely a sacrifice of sweet savor. For we must always remember that it was the reconciliation of the world, as we have declared above. Besides, the darkness came in order that the sun give testimony to the Divine and heavenly majesty of our Lord Jesus. Although, then, for that minute He was not only abased and rendered contemptible before men, even emptied of everything, as St. Paul says; yet the sun shows that it does Him homage, and as a sign of that, it remains hidden. Since it is so, then, let us know that God, to render the wicked all the more inexcusable, willed that Jesus Christ in His death be declared sovereign King of all creatures, and that this triumph of which St. Paul speaks in the second chapter of Colossians began already, when he says that Jesus Christ triumphed in the cross. (Colossians 2:14, 15.) It is true that he applies that in that He tore up the writ which was against us, and that He acquitted us before God, and by this means Satan was conquered; yet that was already shown by this eclipse of the sun. However, the Jews were convinced of their ignorance, even of a malicious and fanatical ignorance, as if it had been seen with the eye that Satan possessed them, and that they were, as it were, monsters made contrary to nature. That, in summary, is what we have to remember when it is spoken of the darkness which occurred.

It is true that we are enlightened today by the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. For how is it that the Gospel shows us the way to salvation? How are we illumined to come to God, unless since there the Son of God is presented to us with the fruit and the power of His death? Jesus Christ is really, then, the Sun of Righteousness, because He acquired for us life by dying. But the Jews have been deprived of such a benefit. And in that the sun was obscured they were convinced that they were of all people reprov'd, and that there was no longer doctrine which would serve them, nor be useful unto salvation, since by their malice they had tried to extinguish and abolish everything that could give them hope. For it was entirely in the person of the Mediator, Whom they tried to destroy by their malice and ingratitude. It was quite right, then, that they were completely destitute of all light of salvation, in order that the wrath of God declared itself in a visible manner upon them.

It follows that our Lord Jesus cried, saying, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" St. Matthew and St. Mark recite in the Syriac tongue the words of our Lord Jesus, which are drawn from Psalm 22. And the words are not so pronounced by all the Gospel-writers as

what the text of the Psalm bears. Even in this word "Eli," that is "My God," we see that St. Mark says "Eloi." (Mark 15:34) But this is by the corruption of language, as we have noted before this. For the Jews having returned from Babylon, have never had a language entirely pure, as before. All the same this query and complaint is drawn from Psalm 22:1. God willed especially that this be recited in two tongues, to show that it was a thing of importance, and to which we ought to be attentive. In fact, unless we would wish to imagine (as do many fantastic people) that our Lord Jesus spoke according to the opinion of men and not according to His sense and His feeling, we surely must be moved by this, and all our senses must be rapt, when Jesus Christ complains of being forsaken and abandoned by God His Father. For it is a thing too dull and too foolish, to say that our Lord Jesus was not at all touched with anguish and anxiety in His heart, but that He had simply said, "They gather that I am forsaken." That shows that those who look for such glosses, are not only ignorant, but are altogether in jest. Besides, they never cease to blaspheme, like mastiff dogs, against God. And all those who speak thus, it is certain that they have no more religion than dogs and brute beasts, for they do not know how much their salvation has cost the Son of God. And what is worse, they mock it just like the villains which they are.

Then, we must hold it as a conclusive fact, that our Lord Jesus, being brought into such extremity and anguish, cried with a loud voice (yes, like those who are tormented to the limit), "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" In fact, we have said above that it would be a cold statement from the history of His death, if we would not consider the obedience which He rendered to God His Father. This, then, is the principal thing we have to consider when we would be assured of our salvation. It is that if we have committed many faults and rebellions and iniquities against God, all of it will be buried, inasmuch as our Lord Jesus by His obedience has justified us and rendered us acceptable to God His Father. Now this obedience, in what did it consist, unless Jesus Christ, although death was to Him hard and terrible, nevertheless did not refuse to be subject to it? For if He had experienced in it no difficulty or contradiction, it would not have been obedience. But though our Lord Jesus by nature held death in horror and indeed it was a terrible thing to Him to be found before the judgment-seat of God in the name of all poor sinners (for He was there, as it were, having to sustain all our burdens), nevertheless He did not fail to humble Himself to such condemnation for our sakes, we know in Him a perfect obedience, and in that we have a good cause to glorify Him, as says the Apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews,

"Our Lord Jesus was heard in that he feared." (Hebrews 5:7)

But though that may be, yet He had to sustain what was so hard and burdensome, indeed, entirely contrary to all human affection. It was necessary, then,

that God His Father so trained Him in order that His obedience might be known.
(Hebrews 5:8.)

We see, then, the Apostle, who specifies particularly that our Lord Jesus had to be astonished with fear. For without that we would not know what this sacrifice by which we have been reconciled is worth. In fact, St. Peter also shows that our Lord Jesus suffered not only in His body, but in His soul, when He says that He fought against the pains of death.

It is true that Scripture will often say that we are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, inasmuch as He offered His body as a sacrifice. That is also why it is said that His flesh is to us meat and His blood is to us spiritual drink. But that is said out of regard to our uncouthness. Because we are gross, the Holy Spirit brings us back to what is visible in the death of Jesus

Christ, in order that we may have a completely certain pledge of our salvation. However, this is not to exclude what is shown in all the other passages, and even to derogate from the article that the death and passion of our Lord Jesus would not have served anything to wipe away the iniquities of the world, except insofar as He obeyed, indeed, abasing Himself even to so frightful a death. And He obeyed, not at all that His senses were taken away. But although He had to sustain great and extreme terrors, yet He put our salvation above every other consideration. This, then, is what we have to observe in this passage: That is, that the Son of God not only endured in His body such a cruel death, but that He was touched to the quick, having to sustain horrible assaults as if God had abandoned Him. For, in fact, He also sustained our cause, and He had to experience what condemnation there was upon poor sinners.

By our sins we are, as it were, alienated from God, and He must withdraw Himself from us, and we must know that He has, as it were, rejected us. That is the proper thing for sinners. It is certain that Jesus Christ has never been rejected by God His Father. Nevertheless, He had to sustain these sorrows and He had to fight valiantly to repulse them, in order that today the fruit of the victory may come back to us. So we have to remember that, when our Lord Jesus was put into such an extremity, as if God His Father had cut off from Him all hope of life, it is inasmuch as He was there in our person, sustaining the curse of our sins, which separated us from God. For wherein rests our felicity, unless we are made alive by the grace of God, and enlightened by His brightness? He is the fountain of life and of every good, and our sins put, as it were, a long distance between Him and us. Jesus Christ, then, had to experience this. Let us consider now what someone might say. Is it possible that Jesus Christ experienced such terrors, since there is in Him only complete perfection? For it seems that it takes away from the faith which He must have had and from everything that we ought to believe of Him. That is, that He was without any spot of vice. Now the answer to that is very easy. For when He was tempted by Satan, it is certain that He had to have this apprehension that He was, as it were, on top of a tower and that He was subject to such an illusion according to His human nature. However, that took nothing away from His divine power. Rather we have occasion to magnify His goodness toward us, inasmuch as He thus abased Himself for our salvation.

Now it is said that He cried, "*My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" In the first place it is very certain that Jesus Christ, insofar as He was God. could have no such apprehension. No, no. But when He suffered His Deity had to give place to His death and passion, which He had to endure. That, then, is the power of our Lord Jesus which was kept, as it were, hidden for a time, until He had accomplished all that was required for our redemption. Yet according to man, let us note that this complaint, this feeling and terror of which we now speak, in no wise detracted from the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. For inasmuch as He was man He had all His confidence in God, as we have seen, and yesterday it was sufficiently treated. It was, then, the true pattern of a true, perfect, and entire confidence. It is said now that He was in such anguish that He seemed to be forsaken by God His Father. However His faith was always perfect, was neither beaten down nor shaken in any manner whatever. How, then, does He say, "*Why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" It is by natural apprehension. Behold, then, our Lord Jesus Christ Who according to the weakness of His flesh is, as it were, abandoned by God, and yet He does not cease to confide in Him. As in fact we see two parts in these words which are superficially contrary, and yet it all agrees very well. When He says "*My God, My God*" and He repeats the word in such a way, by that He shows the constancy of His faith. He does not say, "Where is God? How does He leave me?" But He addresses Himself to Him. He must, then, be entirely persuaded and assured that He will always find favorable access toward God His Father. Behold (I say) a certain and infallible testimony of the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. When in the midst of the extremity and anguish where He was, He does not cease to call God His Father, and not in pretense, but

because He was assured that He would find Him propitious in calling upon Him. Behold (I say) the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ which is sufficiently declared. Yet He repeats the word, because this fight is difficult, as if He would defy all the temptations which Satan prepared for Him, and He sought confirmation of faith that He might always persist in calling upon God.

Now He said further, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Of course that was according to what He could conceive of as man. For He had to enter into that experience, not to be conquered by it. For St. Peter says,

"It was impossible that He be held by the pains of death," (Acts 2:24)

that is, that He be seized like a poor man who altogether gives way and is crushed. "It was impossible," says St. Peter. And so the victory was in the midst of the fight. And that is to glorify all the more our Lord Jesus Christ. David had experienced this in part. For it is certain that in the midst of his afflictions, however great they were, he persisted to call upon God, indeed hoping in Him. But since he was frail man, his faith was very often shaken, as he confesses. But in our Lord Jesus, there was a special consideration (which was treated last Lord's Day), that is, that He had all His passions well controlled, because of the integrity that was in Him and there was in Him no natural corruption. As sometimes it will happen to us that our pains will proceed from a good cause, indeed, both our fears and our anxieties. But all the same there will always be vice mixed in it, since corruption is in all our passions. But in our Lord Jesus there was nothing troubled or disordered. It follows, then, that He was not so seized with anguish, that He did always have His hope fixed rightly on God, that He called only upon Him and remained firm and constant in that, knowing well that He would be Savior even to the end.

Whereupon it is said, "*Some of those who were near Him mocked Him.*" "*He who calls Elijah, let us see if Elijah will come to help Him.*" One supposed that the guards, as ignorant of the Law, spoke thus. But this is too foolish an abuse, for they did not know who Elijah was. There is no doubt, then, that this blasphemy was pronounced by none others than the priests who were trained in the Law. And are not they themselves deceived in what Jesus said? Not at all. For the Prophet whom they called Elijah is not named thus. The name, then, had not deluded them. For there is no doubt implied, seeing that the word "*Elijah*" is pronounced entirely differently from the word "*Eli*," that is, "My God." That could not cause any ambiguity. It is, then, by certain malice and impudence that the reproach that "*He calls Elijah*" was put upon our Lord Jesus Christ. And if we find that strange, would to God that there were no such examples today. For one will see today the Papists who turn away and deprave by their calumnies what we teach, that is, what is drawn from the pure truth of God, and they knowingly blaspheme to render our doctrine odious to many ignorant people and people who do not hear what we preach every day. They deprave, then, falsely what we say and they take it entirely the wrong way, in order to give plausibility to their lie and entertain poor ignorant people with it. That is how the enemies of God, possessed by Satan, have turned aside by certain malice the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and today among the Papists one sees the same thing. And not only is that perceived in the Papacy, but even among us there are belligerents who will say that we wish to make believe that Jesus Christ was devoid of all hope when we see that He sustained the anguish of death, that He was as it were cast into the depths, inasmuch as He was there in our name and He sustained the burden of our sins. But that in no wise takes away from the constancy of His faith, that it might not always remain in its entirety. And these rascals who make profession of the Gospel, never cease to knowingly blaspheme, by which they show that they are worse than those of whom it is here spoken. Seeing then that the devil today sharpens the tongues of his agents, and that each one by such brutal impudence comes to disgorge his venom against the purity of doctrine, let us

not think it strange if our Lord Jesus was thus slandered. But may we bear patiently these blasphemies, praying to God (as it is said in the twelfth Psalm) that He may destroy these villainous tongues (Psalm 12:3) which are so full of villainy and of execration, and which tend to blaspheme His Name and to obscure His truth.

Whereupon the Gospel-writer records that there was *there a vessel full of vinegar* (indeed, as we have already seen, which was mixed with gall) and that they took a reed, or better (as says St. John) a hyssop in order to have a long branch, and at the end of it they attached a sponge to make it reach the mouth of our Lord Jesus. St. John speaks here more distinctly, for he says that Jesus Christ, knowing that all things were fulfilled, said that He was thirsty, and thereupon He pronounced once again "*It is done, all is fulfilled.*" This, then, is what we have to note here, when this drink was given to the Son of God: namely, that He did not ask to drink because He was thirsty, for He had refused it, as already we have seen above. Why? For this drink was given in order to shorten the life. Now our Lord Jesus wished in everything and by everything to wait for the hour of God His Father in patience and rest. That, then, is why He did not wish to hasten His death, but rendered Himself peaceable and obedient, until all was fulfilled—indeed, although He had not yet given up the Spirit and He was not raised from the dead. For he means that until this hour He had shown a complete obedience, so that nothing now hindered Him from giving His soul to God His Father. This, then, is how we must take this passage: It is that our Lord Jesus declared that nothing more was lacking for our redemption except to depart from the world, which He was ready and prepared to do, and to surrender His soul to God. Seeing, then, that He had acquitted Himself of His whole duty as Mediator, and that He had done all that was required to appease the wrath of God toward us, and that the satisfaction for our sins was accomplished, He was willing to ask for this drink.

Now we have here a very noteworthy and excellent sentence, when it is said, "All is fulfilled." For it is certain that the Lord Jesus does not speak at all of any little or common things. But He intends that by His death we have all that we need to seek to have access to God and to obtain grace from Him. Not that His resurrection should be excluded by that, but it is as if He said that He has performed His office faithfully, and that He has not come to be a partial Savior, but that until the last moment He has executed the charge which was committed to Him, and that He had omitted nothing according to the will of God His Father. Since that is so, we are instructed to fully fasten our confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that all parts of our salvation are fulfilled in what He did and endured for our sakes. That is also why His death is called a perpetual Sacrifice, by which the believers and elect of God are sanctified. Do we wish, then, to have certainty that God is Father to us? Do we wish to have liberty to call upon Him? Do we wish to have rest in our consciences? Do we wish to be made more fully certain that we are held to be righteous in order to be acceptable to God? Let us abide in Jesus Christ and not wander here or there, and let us recognize that He is wherein rests all perfection. Those, then, who wish other props, and who look from one side to the other to supply what must be lacking in the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, renounce fully the power of which we are now speaking. Briefly they tread under foot the blood of Jesus Christ, for they dishonor it. Now in all the Papacy what is there except renunciation of the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ? For though they think to do good works, because they call them merits, by which they are confident that they acquire grace before God, it is certain that they disavow what was pronounced by our Lord Jesus Christ, "All is fulfilled." And since it is so, when they think to obtain salvation before God, and they wish to have remission of their sins, where do they go, except to their foolish devotions? For each one will perform his little duty at his post, so that all the so-called devotions in the Papacy are so many blasphemies to nullify what was pronounced when our Lord Jesus said, "All is fulfilled." What follows, then? That we may know that there is

not a single particle of virtue or merit in us, unless we apply ourselves to this Fountain wherein is all fullness of it.

That, then, is how our faith ought to be fastened on our Lord Jesus Christ. Besides, may we know above all that when He was offered as a sacrifice it was to absolve us forever and to sanctify us perpetually, as Scripture says. (Revelation 13:8) May we, then, have no other sacrifice than this One. It is true that in the Papacy, this diabolical abomination of the mass is called daily Sacrifice; and they say that Jesus Christ surely once offered Himself as a Sacrifice to obtain for us the remission of our sins, but that it is still necessary that He be offered daily, which is blasphemy fully manifest, inasmuch as they usurp the office which was given to our Lord Jesus Christ, when He was ordained only eternal Sacrifice, indeed, with an oath that God adjures that it should be perpetual. When, then, mortal men take it upon themselves still to come to present and offer Jesus Christ to God, do they not rob the honor which God reserves to Himself alone, and which cannot be attributed to any creature? Since it is so, then, we see how these poor blind men, supposing themselves to keep appointment with God, provoke His wrath and His vengeance, renouncing the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so much more ought we to magnify the grace of God by which He has withdrawn us from such an abyss, that when we claim to approach Him, it is to defy Him openly. For we deprive ourselves of Him and of the fruit of His death and passion when we seek other sacrifice than that which He offered in His person. That, then, is what we have to remember.

Now it is said, "*Once again He cried with a loud voice and gave up the spirit.*" And this cry was, "*I give back my soul or My spirit into Thy hands.*" In that we see how our Lord Jesus Christ so fought against the pains of death, that from then on He was conqueror over it and He could gain His triumphs as having surmounted what was the most difficult. And this pertains to us, that is, we must apply it to our use. For we are assured not only that the Son of God fought for us, but that the victory which He acquired for us belongs to us, and that today we ought not to be in any wise frightened by death, knowing that the curse of God, which was terrible to us, is abolished, and that death, instead of being able to wound us like a fatal plague, serves us as medicine to give us passage into life. Now as previously by the example of David He said,

"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"(Psalm 22:1)

so now He takes the prayer made by David in the thirty-first Psalm,

"I commend to Thee my spirit."(Psalm 31:5.)

It is true that David said that, being in the midst of dangers. As if he said, "Lord, hold me in Thy protection; for my soul is as it were between my hands; it is there as it were fluttering. For I see myself exposed to all hazards; my life is as it were hanging from a thread. It does not remain, then, unless Thou takest me into Thy keeping." That is how David by this prayer constituted God as his Protector. However, he did not leave it until death itself to call upon God, and to be assured that always God is the Savior of His elect, not only to maintain and guard them in this world, but also when He withdraws them to Himself. For the principal guard that God keeps over us is that being withdrawn from this world we are hidden under His wings to rejoice in His presence, as St. Paul speaks of it in 2 Corinthians. (2 Corinthians 4:3) And our Lord Jesus also pronouncing this prayer declares that He dies peaceably, having conquered in all the combats which He had to sustain for us, and achieves already His triumphs in our name and to our profit and salvation. He fully declares by this same means that God is His Savior and that He keeps His soul as a safe trust. For that is what this request that He makes of Him implies, when He says,

"My God, be Thou guardian of My soul, even after death."

When our Lord Jesus speaks so, it is as if He assured us all that we cannot fail in committing ourselves to our God, since He surely condescends to take charge of us, in order to sustain us, and that we shall never perish being thus under His hand. Now especially we have to note that Jesus Christ, saying, "My God, I commend to Thee My spirit," acquired the privilege which is attributed to Him by St. Stephen in Acts 7. It is that He was constituted guardian of all our souls. For how is it that Saint Stephen speaks in His death?

"Lord Jesus, I commend to Thee my spirit."(Acts 7:59.)

This, then, is how St. Stephen shows the fruit of this request which was made by Jesus Christ: namely, that now we can address ourselves to Him, and we ought to do it, declaring that since He was given to us as Shepherd by God His Father, we need have no doubt to be peaceable both in life and in death, knowing all will profit us and will be turned to our advantage. As St. Paul says, having Jesus Christ he will find gain in everything, that he will no longer lack anything in either life or death, for all will be useful to him. (Philippians 1:20-24.)

So then, let us learn now, when we shall be besieged by death, that Jesus Christ has taken away the sting which might prick us fatally in the heart, and that death will no longer be harmful to us, and that when our Lord Jesus gave His soul to God His Father, it was not only to be preserved in His person, but in order to acquire this privilege which is entirely preserved for us by virtue of this request; indeed, when we shall have our recourse to Him, as to the One under the protection of Whom we cannot perish, since He declares it. There is still this triumph of which we have made mention, which already profits us. For our Lord Jesus shows how precious His death is, when He so confidently departs to God His Father to lead us to Him and to show us the way to Him. But the principal thing is that we may know that the fruit of it comes back to us, inasmuch as He tore up the writ which was against us, as He acquired for us full satisfaction for our sins, so that we can appear before God His Father in such a way that even death is no longer to do us evil or any harm. Although we still see in us many things which might astonish us, and we experience our poverty and misery, yet let us not cease to glory in Him Who was then abased for us in order to raise us with Him.

In fact, although on man's side there is only complete shame, yet when Jesus Christ was hanged there on the cross, already God wished at that time by the mouth of Pilate that He be declared King. So, although the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is vilified before the world, may we not, however, cease to hold it as the foundation of all our glory, and may we know that being in shame under His leading, we have nevertheless whereof to rejoice; since our condition will always be blessed, because all the miseries, afflictions, and ignominies which we endure are more honorable and precious before God than are all the scepters, all the pomp, and things honorable, to which men are addicted. That, then, is how we must come to our Lord Jesus Christ, and cling in such a way to Him that we may know what the riches which He brings to us are worth, and above all when He leads us by His Gospel, may we reject all the conveniences and comforts of this world; indeed, may we hold them in detestation when they would turn us aside from the good way. Briefly, may our Lord Jesus obtain the honor which He deserves, and on our part may we also not be as reeds shaking with every wind, but being founded in Him may we call upon God, and in life and in death may the victory be given to us in which He has already triumphed. And while we are still here below may we give Him the honor of recognizing that it is He Who sustains us. This is what He will do when we shall really have our refuge in Him: He will do it, I say, not in a common manner but miraculously. For when we shall be cast down to the

very bottom of the abyss of death, it is His office to withdraw us from it and to lead us to the heavenly inheritance which He has so dearly acquired for us.

Now we shall bow in humble reverence before the majesty of our God.

Eighth Sermon—Matthew 27:55-60.

And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children. When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.—Matthew 27:55-60

We have seen above how our Lord Jesus declared the fruit and the power of His death in the poor robber, who surely seemed to be, as it were, a damned and lost soul. Now if all those who had previously been taught in the Gospel, and had had some taste of it, were alienated seeing the Son of God die, it would seem that the preaching of the Gospel had been vain and useless. Besides we know that the Apostles had been elected to the condition of being, as it were, the first-fruits of the Church. One could, then, have thought that this election had been a disappointing thing, and that they had been chosen to such office and estate. For this cause it is here declared to us that, although the Apostles had fled and in that was shown a villainous cowardice, St. Peter had even renounced our Lord Jesus and was, as it were, cut off from all hope of salvation, indeed, being worthy to be reputed as a rotten member; yet God did not permit the doctrine which they had previously received to be extinguished and entirely abolished. It is true that St. Matthew puts more faith in the constancy of women than of men. That is in order that we may learn to magnify all the more the goodness of God, Who perfects His power in our weakness. That is also what St. Paul says, that God has chosen the weak things of this world, in order that those who suppose themselves to be strong may bow their heads and not glory at all in themselves. (1 Corinthians 1:19-31.) If it were, then, here spoken of men and of their magnanimity, and that they had followed our Lord Jesus Christ to death, one would take that as a natural thing. But when women are led by the Spirit of God, and there is in them more boldness than in men, indeed, than in those who had been elected to publish the Gospel to all the world, in that we recognize that God was at work and that it is to Him that the praise ought to be attributed.

Now it is said especially, "*These women had followed our Lord Jesus, doing Him service.*"> Which is to better declare the inclination they had to profit by the Gospel. For it was no small excellence that they left their houses to traipse here and there, indeed, with great effort and even with shame. For we know what the condition of our Lord Jesus Christ was while He went about in the world. He says that foxes have caves and little birds are able to build their nests, but He has nowhere to lay His head. (Matthew 8:20, Luke 9:58.) We see on the other

hand that these women had the wherewithal to feed themselves peaceably and at their comfort. When, then, they traipse so without being able to find lodging except with difficulty, they have to go without food and drink, they are subject to many mockeries, they are driven away and molested everywhere, and yet they rise above all that and bear it in patience, we can easily judge how God had strengthened them. However, at the death they still declare the hope that they had in our Lord Jesus Christ. For although they are bewildered, yet if they had supposed that our Lord had come to grief, they could have judged that He had completely failed. For He had spoken to them of the Kingdom of God which was to be restored by His means. He had spoken to them of the perfect bliss and of the salvation which He would accomplish. And where are all these things? We see, then, how these poor women, although they had been bewildered and however much they are troubled, not knowing what would be the outcome of our Lord's life, nevertheless were held back by His authority. And yet He causes that in the end they could recognize and judge that He had not promised them anything in vain. They have, then, waited for the promise of the resurrection, although according to men they might have judged entirely to the contrary. However, we see how their faith was trained, in order that we might not be troubled beyond measure, if in appearance it seems that we are forsaken by God, and that all the promises of the Gospel are, as it were, abolished, but that we persist nevertheless. For these women give testimony against us, and to our great condemnation, if we fail in such combats. Would we wish a ruder example than what they have endured? However, they were victorious, indeed, by means of faith.

So then, let us arm ourselves when we are warned of the assaults which Satan makes against us, that we are armed to meet the blow, and we show that we are so supported by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ that although we may not perceive at first glance the fulfillment of what is said to us, we may not cease to rest in Him, and to bring to Him this honor and reverence, that He will show Himself faithful in the end. And we need to be thus proved to the limit. For otherwise we would be too delicate, and even our faith would be deadened, or perhaps we would imagine an earthly paradise, and we could not raise our senses high enough to renounce this world. As also we see it better in the person of the mother of John and James. We know that previously she had been driven by such an ambition that she had wished that our Lord might be seated on His Royal throne, and that He might have had there only pomp and bravery, and that her two sons might have been there as two lieutenants of our Lord. "Command, Lord," she says, "that one of my sons be at your right hand, and the other at the left." What a foolish woman! who is mindful only of glory and who wished to see an earthly triumph in her children. Now here is another and very different experience. For she sees our Lord Jesus hanged on the cross, in such shame and disgrace that all the world is opposed to Him, and He is even there, as it were, cursed by God. So we see this, when we shall be led into such a confusion that our spirits will be astonished with terror and anguish, but by this means God robs us of all earthly affections, in order that nothing may hinder us from being raised into heaven and to the spiritual life to which we must aspire. And we cannot do it unless we are purged of everything that holds us back on this earth. That, then, in summary, is what we have to remember concerning these women.

However, that is not to say that there may not also have been men, but the intention of the Holy Spirit was to put before our eyes here such a mirror in order that we might know that it is God who led these women by the power of His Holy Spirit, and He wished to declare His power and His grace, choosing instruments so feeble according to the world. The like is also seen in Nicodemus and in Joseph. It is true that St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke speak only of Joseph, who came to Pilate, and Nicodemus took courage, seeing he had such a leader. It is true that Nicodemus was a teacher of great esteem. Joseph was a rich man of property, indeed, also a

member of the council. However, let us look to see whether there was in them such a zeal as to expose themselves to death for our Lord Jesus, and indeed if during His life they have left their houses to follow Him. Not at all. But when it comes to the death God moves them and incites them beyond all human expectation. We see, then, that God worked here a strange and admirable change, when He gave such boldness to Joseph and to Nicodemus, that they were not afraid of the rage of all the people, when they came to bury our Lord Jesus. Previously Nicodemus had come by night, fearing to be marked with infamy. Now he buries our Lord Jesus, indeed, when He has come to the extremity. God, then, had to give him a new courage, for he had hidden himself, and, indeed, no shadows had been dark enough for him, seeing his timidity and cowardice, unless God had corrected this vice in him. Briefly, we see how the death of our Lord Jesus profited, and that already He then displayed the graces of His Holy Spirit upon these poor people, who previously had never dared to make a declaration of their faith. Now not only do they speak by mouth, but what they do shows that they prefer to be held execrable before all the world and yet be disciples of Jesus Christ, than to lose what they had obtained; namely, the free salvation which had been offered them.

That is also why it is said that Joseph *waited for* the Kingdom of God. By this word it is declared to us that we are alienated from God and banished from His Kingdom until He gathers us to Himself for His people. We see, then, how miserable is the condition of men, until our Lord Jesus has called them to Himself to dedicate them to His Father. And if we are separated from this good, woe and confusion upon us! It was a great virtue then to wait for the Kingdom of God, because the Jews had corrupted it, and the occasions of it were great according to the world. For the Prophets had declared, when the people had returned from Babylon, that God would be in such wise their Redeemer that there would be a kingdom flourishing in all dignity, that the Temple would be built in greater glory than ever, that then they would enjoy all benefits, and that it would be a happy life, that all would have rest and that the only concern would be to enjoy God, and bless His Name, and give Him praise. That is what the Prophets had promised. But what is the condition of the people? They are consumed and gobbled up by their neighbors, they are stung, they are molested. Sometimes there is such tyranny that innocent blood is spilled throughout all the city, the book of the Law is burned, and they are forbidden to have a single reading of it under penalty of death. Such great cruelties are practiced that it is horrible to think of it. The Temple is full of pollution. The house of David—what has become of it? It has entirely fallen and the state of things continuously goes from bad to worse. So then, one must not be astonished, if in a people so rough and given to its appetites and affections, there were very few who retained the true religion and who had not lost courage; as we see also that the number of those who endured patiently and who were firm in the faith was very small and very rare. That is said of Simeon, it is said of Anna the prophetess, it is said of Joseph. But why? In a multitude so great, among the Jews in a country so populated, the Holy Spirit sets before us four or five as a thing which was not at all usual, and gives testimony that those people were waiting for the Kingdom of God. But it is in order that we may learn, when everything will be confused and in despair, to have our eyes fixed upon God. And inasmuch as His truth is infallible and immutable, let us remain firm until the end, and let us rise above all troubles, scandals, and perplexities of this world, and however we may groan let us not cease to aspire to what our Lord calls us to, that is, to wait patiently for His Kingdom to be established in us, and yet may it suffice us to have the Gage which He gives us of His Holy Spirit, by Whom He testifies to us of the free adoption He has made of us. When God declares that He holds us and regards us as His children, and when it is engraved on our hearts by His Holy Spirit, when we have daily the doctrine of the Gospel which resounds and rings in our ears, let us be confirmed in the faith and not fail at all, even though things are so confused that one could not imagine them any worse. That, then, in summary, is what we have to remember from this passage.

Now it is also necessary to note what St. John recites before our Lord Jesus was taken down from the cross: namely, that they pierced His side to see if He had already given up the spirit. For they had not hurried His death as they had with the two robbers. But seeing that it appeared that He had already passed away, they came to probe Him with a blow of a spear, and then they knew that He had died, and so the guards are satisfied. Now it is true that this, if the testimony of the Law were not added, would seem to us a somewhat cold statement. But St. John wished to give us proof that our Lord Jesus was the true paschal Lamb, since by the providence and the admirable counsel of God He had been preserved from every mutilation. For it is said in the 12th chapter of Exodus that they should eat the paschal lamb, but that the bones should not be broken, and that they should remain entirely whole. (Exodus 12:8, 9, 46.) Why was it important that Jesus Christ should not have His bones broken? For it was the common custom, as we see. They did not wish to spare Him, and He was even set in the midst of the robbers to be held, as it were, the most detestable, to be reputed the principal one among wicked men and criminals. We see, then, that God was here at work when He held back the hands of the guards, and even willed that His Son expired in order to be preserved, and that we might have here an evident sign that it was in Him that the truth of this ancient figure had to be fulfilled. Thus, then, we must notice that the Son of God was preserved from all breaking of His bones, in order that we might hold Him for our paschal Lamb, Who is to preserve us from the wrath of God, when we shall be marked with His blood. For we must come to this: that, if He is our Passover, we must every last one be sprinkled by His blood, for without that it profits us nothing that it has been spilled. But when we shall accept Him with this sacrifice, also we shall find there the remission of our sins, knowing that until He washes and cleanses us we are full of pollution. Then we are sprinkled by His blood, by this besprinkling which is made in our souls by the Holy Spirit. Then we are purified and God accepts us for His people, and we are assured; although His wrath and His vengeance is upon all the world, yet He regards us in pity and He owns us as His children. That, then, is what we have to remember from this passage when it is said that the bones of our Lord Jesus were not broken or snapped at all, in order that we may know that what had been declared by a figure in the Law has been verified in His person.

However, it is also said, "*Water and blood came out of His side, and he who saw it has given testimony of it.*" When we see that water and blood came out thus, it ought to remind us that it brings to us our purging and the agreement to wipe away our sins, indeed, by His Sacrifice, as St. John speaks in his Canonical letter. (1 John 1:7) It is true that the blood will be able to congeal in death, as that is done by nature, and that with the blood water can come, that is, the most fluid, inasmuch as the color and the thickest part of the blood will have coagulated. But St. John declared, though that may be, that God wished to show wherein the death of His Son profits us: namely, in the first place that by the shedding of blood He is appeased toward us, as it is said that no remission of sins is possible without shedding of blood. For that is why from the beginning of the world sacrifices were offered. God surely declared that He would be propitious to all poor sinners who would have hope in Him; but He wished that sacrifices be added, as if He said that the remission of sins would be freely given to men, because they of themselves could bring nothing of their own, but that there would be the Mediator for recompense. That, then, is how the blood which flowed from the side of our Lord Jesus Christ is testimony that the sacrifice which He offered is the recompense of all our iniquities, so that we are acquitted before God. It is true that we must always feel guilty of that blood, that is, to humble ourselves and to bring us to a true repentance, and to take from us all presumption. But though that may be, we are made certain that God holds us acquitted and absolved by the Name of His Son, when we come to recognize our faults and offenses. And why? Inasmuch as the Sacrifice of His death is sufficient to wipe away the memory of all our transgressions. Now there

is the water which implies purging. In order, then, that we may be washed from all our spots, let us recognize that our Lord Jesus wished that the water flowed from His side to declare that truly He is our purity and that we must not seek any other remedy to wash any of our stains from us. That, then, is how He came with water and with blood, and by this means we have all perfection of salvation in Him, and we must not wander about here or there, to be helped from one side and another.

Indeed, when we shall look more closely, we shall see that there is a striking resemblance between the blood and the water which flowed from the side of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Sacraments of the Church, by which we have the proof and seal of what was done in His death. For having endured what was required for our salvation, having fully satisfied God His Father, having sanctified us, having acquired for us full righteousness, He wished that all that might be testified in the two Sacraments which He instituted. I say two. For there are no more which are instituted in His Word: namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. All the rest is only frivolous imagination which came from the audacity and temerity of men. Behold, then, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who displays the power of His death and passion as much in Baptism as in His Holy Supper. For in Baptism we have testimony that He has washed and cleansed us of all our pollution's, so that God received us in grace as if we came before Him pure and clean. Now let us recognize that the water of Baptism has not this effect. How can a corruptible element be sufficient for the washing and purging of our souls? But it is inasmuch as the water flowed from the side of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us come then, to Him Who was crucified for us, if we wish that Baptism may be useful to us, if we wish to experience the fruit of it, that our faith may address itself to our Lord Jesus Christ, Who wishes that we seek all the elements of our salvation in Him, without rambling and bending here and there. And then in the Holy Supper we have testimony that Jesus Christ is our Food. And under the bread He presents to us His body, under the wine His blood. This, then, is the full perfection of salvation, when we are thus purified, and God accepts us as if we had only integrity and righteousness in us: and so we are acquitted before Him of being any longer blameworthy, since our Lord Jesus Christ has fully satisfied for us. That, then, is how we must profit from the Sacraments, apply ourselves with all our faith to our Lord Jesus Christ, and not turning to any creatures at all. That also is how we are to be made sure of what was done by the death and passion of our Lord Jesus, and let our memory be daily refreshed by it when God shows us with the eye how much He valued it that from the side of our Lord Jesus Christ there proceeded blood and water.

So this in summary is what we have to remember concerning the saying that the side of our Lord Jesus Christ was pierced. Indeed also in this word, when it is said that the Scripture was fulfilled, may we recognize what has been said at greater length already, that is, that all has been governed by the secret counsel of God, and although the guards did not know what they were doing, yet God put into effect and execution what He had pronounced both by Moses and His Prophet Zechariah. We have already seen the testimony of Exodus. St. John adds as well from the Prophet Zechariah,

"They shall see Him Whom they have pierced."(Zechariah 12:10.)

It is true that God uses that by figure of speech, for He defies the condemners of His Word who were hardened in every rebellion and malice. Or perhaps, he says, "It seems to them that they make war against men who preach My Word, and that they can hinder them by this means. Now it is against Me that they fight, and when they thus despise and reject My Word, it is as if they wounded me by blows of a dagger; and so they shall see Him Whom they have pierced."But that was truly fulfilled in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ; for even in His human body He was

pierced. That, then, is how He was declared the living God Who had spoken from all time by His Prophets, since in His person all that had been promised is seen.

Now it is said consequently that Joseph, having obtained from Pilate permission that the body of Jesus Christ might be taken down from the cross, and that it be given to him for burial, had a clean winding-sheet and bought also some aromatic ointments (indeed, for a great sum, as it appears by St. John) of myrrh and aloes, and that he buried Him in a new sepulcher which he had made for himself (sic), which was hollowed out of a rock. In this sepulcher our Lord Jesus Christ already began to show the outcome of His death, that is, He soon was to come into the glory of His resurrection, and God willed to manifest it completely. This, then, is still an infallible testimony, that, among so many confusions of what we read in the narrative which could trouble us and shake our faith, we perceive that God always cared for His only Son as for the Head of the Church, and for His Well-Beloved, not only in order that we might be able to hope in Him, but that we might confidently expect, since we are members of His body, that the fatherly care of God will also surely be extended to us and to each one of those who hope in Him.

However, one might ask why our Lord Jesus Christ wished to be buried so carefully. For it surely seems that such sumptuousness as aloes, myrrh, and like things was superfluous. In fact, what good is it to a dead person that he is washed or anointed or a great parade is made in honor of him? It would seem, then, that this was not in harmony with the teaching of the Gospel, where it is said that we shall rise at the last day through the inestimable power of our God. So it seems that all such pomp ought to be rejected and forgotten about. Consequently, one might judge that Joseph had a foolish devotion, which would tend to obscure the hope of the resurrection. But we have to note that the Jews had such ceremonies until our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished what was required for our salvation. And the sepulcher was for that time as the sacrifices, and washings, and lights of the Temple, and all like things. For that people, according as it was uncultured, had to be treated like little children. It is true that by all the world the grave is considered to be holy, and God willed that this be engraved upon the hearts of men, even of Pagans, in order that there would be no excuse at all for men to become like brutes, to have no hope of a better life. The Pagans have abused it. But be that as it may, they will be reproached for this to the last day, that they had a great care in burying the dead, that there was no nation so barbarous that they did not always make much of that. They did not know the reason of it any more than of their sacrifices, but it was a sufficient condemnation, when they remained aloof from the truth of God and they corrupted the testimony that He gave them, in order to draw them to faith in the heavenly life. Be that as it may, the grave in itself has always been, as it were, a mirror of the resurrection. For the bodies are put in the earth as if in keeping for a time. If there were no resurrection at all, it would be just as well to throw them away in order that they might be eaten by dogs or by savage beasts. But they were buried honorably, to show that they would not perish at all, although they did go away in decay. Especially the Jews had some ceremonies. It is true that the Egyptians surpassed them in many ways, but they were only fanfares to make a great mourning party, to bewail themselves, to tear their hair. The Egyptians, then, did that, but the devil had bewitched them so that they perverted all order. As for the Jews, who made use of the grave, it was to confirm them in the faith of the resurrection.

So, following what I began to say, our Lord Jesus was willing to be buried according to ancient custom, because He had not yet accomplished all our salvation with respect to the resurrection. It is true that the veil of the Temple was torn at His death. And by that God showed that it was the end and perfection of all things, and that the figures and shadows of the Law no longer remained. However, that was not yet apparent to the world, and there was no one who was capable of recognizing that in Jesus Christ all the figures of the Law had come to an end. For

this cause, then, He still wished to be buried. So much for one item. Now we know that in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ life has been acquired for us, so that we ought to go right to Him, not seeking any other means to lead us than those which He has assigned to us. We have already said that He has given us two Sacraments to serve us as full confirmation. If the manner of burial which the Jews observed were necessary for us, there is no doubt at all that Jesus Christ would have wished only that it remained permanent in His Church. But it is no longer necessary that our attention be arrested by these earthly and puerile elements. It suffices us, then, to have a simple manner of burial, leaving these aromatic ointments, which do not typify the resurrection, which has been manifested in our Lord Jesus Christ. We would only separate ourselves from Him, if we wished to have such base instruction. For we see that St. Paul says,

"If our life is on high, there we must seek it in faith and spirit,"(Colossians 3:1)

and we must be joined to our Lord Jesus. (1 Corinthians 6:17.) Let us reach out toward Him, let us not be wrapped up in anything which might distract, hinder, or retard us from being united to Him as to our Head, since it is said that His body was the Temple of God. That, then, in summary, is what we have to remember about the grave.

There is yet to consider that He was put in a *new* sepulcher, which was not done apart from the particular providence of God, for He could well have been put in a sepulcher which had served for a long time. Also Joseph of Arimathea had his ancestors, and usually in such rich and opulent houses there is a common sepulcher. But God foresaw it from another viewpoint, and willed that our Lord Jesus should be put in a new sepulcher wherein no person had ever been laid. For it also was not at all without cause that He is called the first-fruits of the resurrection and the first-born from the dead. However, one might say that many have died and have been made sharers of life before our Lord Jesus Christ. Lazarus had been raised. And we know also that Enoch and Elijah were translated without natural death, and were gathered into life incorruptible. But all that depends on the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must, then, cling to Him as the first-fruits. In the Law the fruits of a year were dedicated and consecrated to God, when they brought only a handful of wheat at the altar, and a bunch of grapes. When, then, that was offered to God, it was a general consecration of all the fruits of the year. And when also the firstborn were dedicated to God, it was to declare the holiness of the line of Israel, and that God accepted it for His inheritance, that He had reserved it to Himself being satisfied with that people, as a man will be satisfied with his patrimony. Also when we come to our Lord Jesus Christ, let us recognize that in His person we are all dedicated and offered, in order that His death may give us life today, and that it may no longer be mortal as previously. This, then, is what we have to observe with respect to the new sepulcher, that the sepulcher of our Lord Jesus Christ ought to lead us to His resurrection.

However, let us look at ourselves. For although everything which ought to help our faith was accomplished in the person of the Son of God, although we have testimony of it which ought to be sufficient for us, yet in our uncouthness and weakness we are still very far from coming to our Lord Jesus Christ. And for this reason let each one of us, recognizing his faults, reach toward the remedies, and let us not lose courage. We see what Nicodemus and Joseph did. Now we have to consider two things for our example. The first is that they are not yet clearly enlightened concerning the fruit of the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is, then, some crudeness and their faith is still very small. The other, that nevertheless in such extremity they fought against all temptations, and they came to seek our Lord Jesus dead to put Him in the sepulcher, protesting that they were hoping for the blessed resurrection, which had been promised to them, and they aspired to it. Since it is so, then, when we experience some

feebleness in us, may that still not hinder us from taking courage. It is true that we are weak, and God could reject us if He dealt with us in strictness. But when we experience these failures, let us know that He will accept our desire, although it is imperfect. Besides, today, since our Lord Jesus is raised in glory, although we must still endure here many privations and miseries, and though it seems that daily He is crucified in His members, as truly the wicked, as much as is in their power, crucify Him; let us not fail on that account, knowing that we cannot be disappointed in what is promised to us in the teaching of the Gospel, and, although we must pass through many afflictions, yet let us look always to our Head. Joseph and Nicodemus had not at all this advantage which we have today: that is, to contemplate the power of the Spirit of God which showed itself in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet on that account their faith was not entirely deadened.

Now, since our Lord Jesus calls us to Himself, and with a loud voice He declares to us that He has ascended into heaven, in order to gather us all together there, let us persist constantly to seek Him and to follow Him, and let us not consider it an evil thing to die with Him to be sharers in His glory. Now St. Paul exhorts us to be conformed to Jesus Christ, not only with respect to His death but also with respect to his burial. (Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12.) For there are some who would be content to die with our Lord Jesus for a minute of time, but at length they get tired. For this reason I said that we must die not only once, but we must suffer patiently to be buried until the end. I call it death when God wills that we endure so for His name. For though we are not at first dragged to the fire or condemned by the world, yet, when we are afflicted, there is already a species of death which we must endure patiently. But, because we are not so soon humiliated, we must be beaten for a long time, and there we must preserve and persist in patience. For as the devil never ceases to plan what is possible for him to distract and debauch us, so all our lifetime we must not cease to fight against him. Although this condition may be hard and tedious, let us wait for the time to come when God calls us to Himself, and let us never cease to make confession of our faith, and in that let us follow Nicodemus, but not in his timidity. When he came previously to the Lord Jesus Christ, he hid himself, and he did not dare to show himself a true disciple, but when he came to bury our Lord Jesus, he declared and protested that he was of the number and of the company of believers. Since it is so, let us follow him today in such constancy. And although our Lord Jesus with the doctrine of His Gospel is hated by the world, indeed they hold Him in detestation, let us not fail to adhere to Him. Let us even recognize that it will always be all our happiness and satisfaction, when God will accept our service, and let us know that, if we must languish in this world, the fact that our Lord Jesus has come into the glory of His resurrection is not at all in order to be separated from us, but that at the proper time He will gather us to Himself.

Besides, one must not be astonished that our Lord Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day. For it is very proper that He had some privilege above the common order of the Church. In this was also fulfilled what is said in Psalm 16,

"Thou wilt not permit Thy Holy One to see corruption."(Psalm 16:10.)

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, then, had to remain incorruptible until the third day. But His time was set and established by the counsel of God His Father. On our part we have no time assigned, except the last day. So let us wait until we have languished as long as it will please God. In the end we shall know that at the proper time He will find means to restore us, after we shall have been entirely annihilated. As also St. Paul exhorts us to that when he says that Jesus Christ is the first-fruits. (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23.) This is to retard the ardent zeal with which we are sometimes too much carried away. For we wish to fly without wings, and we are offended if God

leaves us in this world, and that at the first sign of struggle He does not withdraw us into Heaven. We wish to be led there in a chariot of fire like Elijah. Briefly, we wish to gain our triumphs before having fought. Now to resist such cupidity and these foolish desires, St. Paul says that Jesus Christ is the first-fruits and we must be satisfied that in His death we have a sure pledge of the resurrection. So it is, since He is seated at the right hand of God His Father, exercising all dominion both above and below, although His majesty has not yet appeared, and though our life must be hidden in Him, that we are there like poor dead persons, and that while living in this world we are like poor lost people. Nevertheless it is proper for us to suffer all that until our Lord Jesus comes. For then our life will be manifested in Him, that is, at the proper time.

This, then, is what we have to observe with respect to the sepulcher of our Lord Jesus Christ, until we come to the last which will show us that not only has He satisfied for all our sins, but also that having obtained victory He has acquired for us perfection of all righteousness, by which we are today acceptable to God, to have access to Him and to call upon Him in Christ's name. And in this confidence we shall bow in humble reverence before His Holy Majesty, praying to Him that He may receive us in mercy, that however poor and miserable we may be, we may not cease to have our refuge in His mercy. Although from day to day we provoke His wrath against us, and though rightly we deserve to be rejected by Him, may we wait nevertheless for Him to show the fruit and the power of the death and passion which His only Son endured, by which we have been reconciled, and may we not doubt that He is always Father to us, especially when He will do us the favor to show that we are truly His children. May we declare this in fact, in such a way that we ask nothing except to be entirely His own, as also He has bought us at such a price, and rightly we ought to be fully reformed to His service. Inasmuch as we are so weak that we do not know how to acquit ourselves of the hundredth part of our duty, still He worked in us by His Holy Spirit, because always the weaknesses of our flesh carry with them so many struggles and fights that we can only drag ourselves along, instead of walking properly.

May it please Him to strip us of all this, and may we be joined to Him.